



CUD

“Cows Under Discussion” or “Something to Chew On”

P.O. BOX 231, BALCLUTHA

BALCLUTHA CLINIC
Wilson Road - Phone (03) 418-1280
Fax (03) 418-1750
Merchandise Direct (03) 418-1281
enquiries@cluthavets.co.nz

MILTON CLINIC
Union Street - Phone (03) 417-8032
Fax (03) 417-8031

September 2007

Spring has sprung, and like you, we are flat out. However, hopefully *we* are seeing more twisted uteruses, rotten calvings, prolapsed uteruses, sick and/or down cows, scouring calves, and BMSCC grade investigations, than any of *you* are! Unlike endless rounds of paper work and consultations, this is the stuff of James Herriot, that inspired many of us to become vets. In general we enjoy these calls (especially in the daylight, with warm sunshine on our backs), because results are definite, and measurable in terms of the benefit to clients and their cows.

Clinic News

You will probably have noticed a number of Toyota Hilux 2-WD diesel twin cab utes scooting around the dairy farms, with Clutha Vets emblazoned across the side. After a good financial year in 2006/07, the board of your vet club (not wishing to accumulate excessive profit, and having already paid back 4.2% on total vet spending to all club members as additional discount), decided to invest in more capital. These vehicles, for vet use, were one way of doing this. If you have any comments about Jason, Andrew, Alisa, Hanneke or Bernie's driving, please contact Bruce directly. No more anonymous late night, high speed flights to Clydevale, you guys!

Dave McInnes and Jill McCloy (Clydevale) were the lucky winners of the Headstart weather station, part of the promotion associated with our Spring Supply night.

Calving Cows

Further to the article in the August Newsletter, remember that the sole measure of success in calving a cow is not whether or not you can (without a vet, but by brute force, persistence or any other method) get the calf out of the cow. You can really only regard the calving as completely successful if the cow comes into milk, milks the season, and gets back in calf for next year. This is the main reason why you may wish to call a vet when the job is difficult. Vets are more likely to achieve this and give cows the after-care they may need: thorough checking and perhaps flushing of the uterus; IV antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, and oxytocin; fluids, starter drench and cow cover; and advice on ongoing care.

Mastitis Matters

Over the winter, one of the projects we have been working on at Clutha Vets is establishing our own in-house milk culturing system, for mastitis cases. The key advantages are that the turn-around will be quicker, and the price cheaper (\$8 per sample, bulk discount for larger numbers), than sending them off to Invermay. We will be happy to culture any milk sample to determine the bug causing the disease, its probable source, and the treatment most likely to be effective.

It is a good idea to sample all cows with mastitis before treatment; the samples labelled with date, cow and quarter; and frozen. Then, in the event of treatment failure, or an unacceptable number of cases, we have reference material to go back to. We can supply sample pottles, and if you are unsure of how to take a sterile sample, ask any vet when they are on farm.

In-house milk culturing is part of our ongoing effort to improve the mastitis investigation package we can offer you. We have been involved with a number of Grade Buster (IS and BMSCC) investigations already this season. Fonterra may reimburse some or all of this cost if you are being financially penalized for the grades. Our investigation involves visiting at milking time to check both the cows (RMT, milk out, teat damage etc), and the plant as it operates at cow level under “real” conditions.

Care of Downer Cows (a brief refresher)

First, get a diagnosis. If she's peeing and pooing, she's unlikely to have milk fever, so just putting more and more metabolic solution into her won't help. If her legs (especially only one) is powerless or uncoordinated, she may have nerve damage (paralysis), or even a dislocated hip (often fixable, if recognised early) or a broken leg. A vet visit (have the tractor ready) is warranted.

Then meet her basic needs – regular fresh feed, and if she's not eating, 240ml of Ketol twice a day. Water – a 20l drench drum with it's side cut off is low enough for her to easily get her muzzle into, and less likely to be tipped over. Protection from the elements - if you can't get her under a roof, at least put on a cow-cover and surround her with hay bales. Rotation and physio-therapy - turn her from side to side at least four times a day and actively move her legs to prevent pressure sores and maintain blood flow. Hip lifters have a role in helping to manoeuvre an animal if you are working on your own, and can be used to assist a cow to stand, or help her to balance; but should **NOT** be used to carry cows around the farm, nor should cows be left hanging in them for more than 5 minutes.

Sufficient care of a downer cow has been estimated to take about 20% of a labour unit. If you can't provide this amount of input (and not many of you can at this time of year), or if a cow has been down more than a couple of days and is not improving, do the humane thing – or get us to.

Reproduction (What?? Already??)

With the swing away from pessaries for treatment of “Dirty” cows, we now tend to talk about “At Risk” cows. These are the cows at risk of having a uterine infection, and therefore trouble cycling and getting in calf. At risk cows include those with dead calves, assisted calvings, twins, induced cows, retained membranes and smelly discharge. They are most easily identified at calving time, or while in the colostrum mob. One really successful approach is to mark them with tail tape as they occur for three weeks, then change colour for the next three weeks. At the end of this second period, get the cows from the first lot checked by a vet - by then the last cows to have calved in that group will be at least 21 days on, and would be well on the way to clearing themselves, if they were going to. At the end of the next three week period, check those from the second group, and re-check the first group etc etc. Hopefully there will then be fewer nasty surprises at PSM.

Getting the most from your animal health budget

When I was calving a cow recently, I was staggered to learn from the farmer that he had lost 23 cows (so far) this season. At the rumoured \$2000 each, that's nearly \$50k lost. There's no way (on a vet's salary) that I could take that level of loss lying down, but what staggered me more was that the first we had heard of the problem was a casual comment in passing.

Driving 80km return (after hours), untwisting the uterus, delivering the calf, and giving some follow up treatments cost him about \$200, a nett saving (on dead cow) of \$1800, and a return on investment of 9X. A (massive) \$1000 investigation into the dead cows may have saved the lives of only 10 of them (\$20000) with a return on invest of 20X. Why call for the 9X return, but not the 20X? We know a fair bit about cow health (and death!), all you need to do is ask for help. The same reasoning would apply to our mastitis, metabolic, lameness, heifer growth, mating management and other herd health packages.

Calf Scours – No Joke!

Most calves with the scours require oral rehydration, and electrolytes (salts and sugars), not antibiotics. However, the Clutha Vets antibiotic of choice, if there is a bacterial component suspected (and preferably confirmed by sampling), is the **Amphoprim bolus**. Contrary to what may appear on some prescription forms, the correct **standard dose** is ONE tablet per 50kg (ie **ONE TABLET PER CALF**) once a day, for 3 – 5 days. This can be increased to two tablets in cases of severe, bloody scours. As with all antibiotics, they should not be used in bobby calves.

This Month's Retail News

- Arrest C – combination **oral drench** for calves – Buy 20ltr get 5 ltr free.
- **Calf milk powder** – Milligans. 20kg for \$89
- **Jute cow covers**. Nurse those struggling cows through to mating \$36.44
- Cydectin **pour-on**. Buy 15ltr, get 2ltr free (340 cows total). Nil milk, nil meat, nil bobby withhold.
- CVA Annual Reports including both chairman's and CEO's report! Left over from the AGM, great bed time reading for all the family. Buy anything, get two copies free!