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CUD

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

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May 2009

March and April have been outstanding months temperature-wise, and the ensuing grass growth means most farms' monthly production is well ahead of last year. In many cases this has nearly compensated for the lower production in a difficult spring this season, making whole-season production targets pretty achievable.

Clinic News: After settling in a bevy of new vets over the summer, things should be relatively quiet (staff-wise) through the next few months. We welcome Meredith MacKenzie as the new CEO, Catherine Copland in the Balclutha small animal clinic, Roo Wijey in Milton, and Nichola Hinchey in Balclutha. We hope you will welcome them too, when you meet them on farm. Another one or two cow vets would still be helpful, especially in Spring, and we are pursuing some options.

Mastitis Matters : Preventing heifer mastitis in spring

As we make our way through this year's Milk Quality Reviews, we repeatedly strike high incidences of clinical mastitis in first calvers within a day or two of calving. While these cases are usually fairly quickly cleared up (mostly with Mamyzin and anti-inflammatory injections), most people really want to know what they can do to *prevent* heifer mastitis.

Exciting research data from Waikato shows that treating first-calvers with Teatseal, about 6 weeks before calving, reduced subclinical mastitis by 57%, and clinical mastitis by 25% (for *Strep uberis*, the main bug causing spring mastitis in heifers on most farms, the results are even more impressive).

Clutha Vets and Pfizer Animal Health are pleased to bring Katrina Roberts, a vet from Morrinsville and a leading NZ expert on heifer mastitis to present these and other research findings to our annual Winter Dairy Farmer Meeting. Pencil Tuesday 2nd June, 7.30pm at the South Otago T&C into your diary. On Wednesday 3rd, we will have practical demonstrations on a couple of farms in the district, to prove that it's not as hard as you might think to do the job. More information will follow nearer the time.

Reproduction

In-calf rates seem to be down across the district on most farms this year. In many cases this may be due to the dry summer last season (combined with high payout) that saw many cows milked too long (and allowed to lose too much condition) before drying off. In addition, valuable winter supplement was fed out to try to sustain this, and brassica crops were not as high yielding as normal. The end result was thin cows, calving on to low pasture covers, in a slow growing season – and a poor breeding season followed. We will present some of the data derived from our pregnancy testing at our annual winter seminar on 2nd June.

The challenge is to not repeat it this season! *Now* is the time to be drying off light cows – the DairyNZ target BCS at calving is 5.5. Some farmers are drying off the skinnies who are in calf, to build up their condition; and continuing to milk those empties, who are “milking like trains” with a plan to work them in the spring, when they will probably be worth more, rather than works-ing them now.

Lepto vaccination of all stock classes should now be well underway, if not complete. Calves require two shots of 7-in-1, four to six weeks apart; rising two year olds a single booster about 12 months later, and the whole herd should get their booster about 12 months after that. Ainslie, Joanna and Louise (our techs) have made a good job of making sure these have been done (plus bulls, carry-overs, beefies etc)

and recording them, but some are still outstanding. If you are part of the Leptosure scheme, please make sure your vaccination records are returned to us as soon as they are complete.

PARs – Copper poisoning

2008 saw an increase in the number of reports of cattle dying after copper injection nationally, and, we suspect, locally. The very real potential for toxicity is why copper injection is vet-only (you must speak to a vet before buying it), and why we must go through the process of making you aware of the risks each time you buy copper injection.

To avoid problems, always read (and follow!) the instructions on the label. Only give the injection if you have good reason to believe the animals are copper deficient. Take care with debilitated, stressed or underweight animals, and check the doses given are correct. Shake the packet well during use, and do not give it at the same time as any other treatment (drenching, vaccination, selenium).

InfoVet is a web-based computer program that pulls together data from a wide range of existing sources (eg MINDA, Fencepost and clinic files). It allows you, and us, unparalleled access to data for sound, information-based, decision making. Better decisions mean more cost-effective solutions for solving and preventing farm problems.

Right now, we are using InfoVet extensively at Milk Quality Review time, to view BMSCC trends, herd test records (culling and treatment options for individuals), and mastitis incidence rates – for those clients who have signed up.

In the future we will be able to use it at pregnancy testing time, for cow-side recording of results, with uploads to MINDAPro; recording and printing prescriptions, treatments and withholding dockets; to create benchmarks and alerts for reproduction and mastitis measurements; and for analysis of production parameters with flow-on to solving herd health issues; and a myriad other things.

Sign-up is currently free, and we encourage all clients to join Infovet in time for Milk Quality Reviews. Please contact Ainslie (Balclutha) or Louise (Milton) to take advantage of this exciting new tool.

Dairy Production Systems Seminar Series: Are you keen to learn more about feeding your cows to keep them healthy, and you wealthy? Bryan McKay & Sue Macky, two of NZ's leading dairy vets and consultants, are looking to run their highly successful and practical course from Balclutha, over the next 12 months. If you want to take your herd's performance to the next level, contact Clutha Vets for more details.

Things to do in May

- Book your Milk Quality Review to discuss and organise Dry Cow Therapy options for your herd.
- Mark 2nd / 3rd June in your diary for the "Teatseal in maiden heifers" seminar and demonstration.
- Ensure all stock have received Leptospirosis vaccination.
- Leptosure clients return completed paperwork.
- Organise liver biopsies for copper and selenium status (works cows, or on farm)
- Speak to Clutha Vets about the pros, cons, options and deals for worm drenching at drying off
- Sign up to become part of InfoVet

The devout herd manager lost his favourite Bible while he was shifting a break at the run-off.

Three weeks later, a cow walked up to him carrying the Bible in its mouth. The young man couldn't believe his eyes. He took the precious book out of the cow's mouth, raised his eyes heavenward and exclaimed, "It's a miracle!"

"Not really," said the cow. "Your name is written inside the cover."

This Month's Retail News

Once again, Clutha Vets was pleased to be a major sponsor of the Otago Dairy Industry Awards. Well done to everyone who rose to the challenge and entered – learning more about themselves and their farming in the process.

Special congratulations to Sharemilkers of the Year Matthew and Hannah Sutherland (Adams Flat); Farm Manager of the Year Peter Johnstone (Henley); and Grant and Christine Harrison (Stirling), who received the Clutha Vets Animal Husbandry Award.

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