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# CUD

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

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**September 2009**

**In the last week, August seems to have stopped pretending it's October! However the remarkably fine, dry start to the month has got the season off to a flier on most farms. Many people are over half way through calving, and there have been remarkably few problems. Long may it last!**

Clinic News: At the AGM, Craig Sheppard, a dairy farmer from Paretai, was elected as a new director of Clutha Vets. He replaces Peter Johnston, who we thank for nine years service. At the subsequent board meeting, Peter Allison, a former dairy farmer on the Taieri now living at Waihola, was elected to the chair, replacing Alastair Cocks. Alistair's greatest challenge was to guide your vet club through the retirement of Bruce Bissett from the CEO post (we are all enjoying having him available to draw on his considerable clinical skills three days a week), and the appointment of our “new” CEO, Meredith Mackenzie. The third dairy farmer rep on the board is Stewart Morrison of Inchclutha. You should feel free to discuss any matters relating to the governance of the Club, with any of these directors.

Well done Roo, who for the sake of Daffodil Day, shaved her head last week. She deserves a Clutha Vets beanie!

## Mastitis Matters

Nationally and regionally, the drug companies tell us that the sales of mastitis treatments are well down on previous years, and our local experience would reflect this. In part, it will be due to the excellent weather and ground conditions in August, but the use of DCT and Teatseal at the end of last season, will also have contributed significantly. None-the-less, we have already started the Spring round of Gradedbuster Visits for herds with high BMSCC, to avoid demerits; and Milking Management Visits to identify and rectify the causes of clinical and subclinical mastitis problems.

Both Fonterra and Open Country offer “demerit relief” when a supplier has vet assistance to resolve somatic cell count grading. They will cover the cost for the vet visit and mileage (but not drugs used), up to the amount that the somatic cell count demerits have cost them. Please don't hesitate to contact us - if you are having problems, we can help.

## Reproduction

It is time to be thinking about the cows “at risk” of having a post-calving infection in the uterus. After about three weeks, any cow that has not cleaned up will benefit from assistance. Don't leave it till Metrichecking the whole herd at PSM, get the at-risk cows from your list checked and treated now, so they don't become non-cyclers or sub-fertile. Cows to concentrate on are those calved in the first fortnight of August, with retained membranes, smelly discharge, induced calves, other dead calves, assisted calvings etc.

## BVD in bulls

In John Pickering's presentation to farmers at the T&C, he drove home the message about the effect of BVD infection in your bulls. Getting them tested before they come on farm is vital, so you know they do not bring the disease with them, but getting them vaccinated is equally as important. If they are naïve, but meet the disease in your cows, they can easily become infected themselves. This will dramatically decrease their fertility, and they will spread the disease further amongst the cows they mate. Insist that the bulls you buy are both blood tested negative, and vaccinated, before they come onto your property.

### **Health issue – Parasites in adult cattle**

While we have traditionally believed that parasite worms have little impact on adult dairy cows, trial work shows quite the opposite. A single Eprinex treatment resulted in an extra 0.03kgMS/cow/day over the lactation, worth about \$33 per animal on a \$4.50 payout. NZ data also showed heifers treated with Eprinex at calving, conceived 12 days earlier at the following mating. Combined, these results show an excellent return on investment in a low payout year (money for nothing!).

What would the benefit be for your herd? A simple bulk milk test (when 50% of the herd are in the vat), can give a measure of the impact parasites are having on your cows. This test is much more reliable than faecal egg counts, blood tests or guessing, and will give you real information about the value you will get from de-worming your cattle.

**Infovet:** Many dairy farmers have now signed up for InfoVet, and we are seeing some positive results in terms of using the information available to solve on-farm problems. However, it can only be used this way if good quality information is entered into MINDA in a timely fashion. Most importantly, get your calving records in, and remember to also enter disease events – mastitis cases, metabolic problems, inductions and retained membranes. Get the most out of your MINDA fee by using it as fully as possible – if you are not sure what it is capable of, and how to take advantage of that, give LIC a call.

**Debudding** of young calves is a service that has seen massive growth in the last couple of years. We sedate the calves before burning the horn buds out under the protection of local anaesthetic. It is quick, quiet, and stress-free, and does not require you or your staff to be present! At the same time we can check for umbilical problems, and remove extra teats. Calves are best done between 2 and 6 weeks of age. As a safety precaution, calves should not be fed within three hours of our arrival.

### **Things to do in September**

Get the at-risk cows from the first half of August checked.

Consider the benefits of drenching the cows for worms.

Assess your BVD risk – blood test bulls and yearlings; organise antibody test on the bulk milk when 90% of herd is in the vat.

Commence BVD vaccination of bulls; and yearlings and milkers, as appropriate.

Start calf debudding.

Reproduction Management seminar: 9am – 4pm, 7<sup>th</sup> October. Essential tools for getting the best results this mating. Phone the clinic to book your place.

### **This Month's Retail News (quoted prices include GST and member's discount)**

- VetMin 4-in-1 combination **metabolic treatment** (milk fever and grass staggers). Tub of 20 for \$244.
- **Calf milk powder** (Milligan's) \$71.65 per 20kg. Free delivery on orders over a tonne.
- **Calf meal** (Sergeant Dan's / Clutha Vets) \$25.73 per 20kg or \$24 per 20kg on tonne orders.
- Merial-Ancare **pour-on** Eprinex \$4.73 for 500kg dose; Genesis \$2.81 for 500kg dose; plus extra bits!
- Nutritech Clutha Vets **daily in-water mineral supplement**. Contains only the essential elements proven to be necessary, and at the levels required locally. About 3.5c per dose, phone for a quote.

**Retail Direct Phone Line 4181281**

The IRD suspected a South Otago Dairy farmer was not paying proper wages to his staff and sent a representative out to interview him.

'I need a list of your employees and how much you pay them,' demanded the rep.

'Well,' replied the farmer, "There's my herd manager who's been with me for 3 years. I pay him \$700 a week plus free room and board. He also gets a slab of beer for a Happy Hour every Friday."

'The calf rearer gets \$400 per week plus free room and board. She doesn't work on Sundays and I provide payed satellite television for free in her room.'

'Then there's the half-wit. He works about 18 hours every day and does about 90% of all the work around here. He makes about \$20 per week, pays his own room and board, but I buy him a bottle of whiskey every Saturday night. He also gets to sleep with my wife occasionally.'

'That's the guy I want to talk to...the half-wit,' says the agent.

'That would be me,' replied the farmer.