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# CUD

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

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**April 2010**

As the season nears its end, and farmers start to think about drying-off dates, most people seem reasonably comfortable with their position. While it is still pretty dry, many farms are above last year's production for the month and are still ahead for the season overall. Herd 6 week in-calf rates are mostly better than previous years (although still short of the 78% InCalf programme target), but gut feeling is that yearling empty rates may be a bit higher than normal (target 92% in 6 weeks of mating).

**Clinic News:** Thanks to all those who responded to the recent farmer survey on the services we offer. We were chuffed to receive overwhelmingly positive feedback, but as Sean Fitzpatrick said after the All Blacks beating Japan by 128 points “there are still a few areas to concentrate on lifting our game”, and we will be working on these. Ian Bathgate (Outram) won the prize draw for all entrants.

Congratulations also to everyone who participated in the Otago Dairy Industry Awards – good on you for giving it a go. Clutha Vets were proud to be major sponsors again this year, and our Animal Husbandry Award was presented to Rob and Jayne Neeley of Momona. Well done also to first and second place getters respectively, Farm Trainees Blake Korteweg (Kaitangata) and Josh Monks (Telford); Farm Managers Gareth Ferguson (Clarendon) and Craig & Laura Shanks (Inchclutha); Sharemilkers Nathan & Debbie Erskine (Milton) and Mark & Andrea Shore (Wharetoa)

## **Mastitis matters – Drying off cows early**

Now is a good time to consider drying off either light cows that are expected to calve early (either naturally, or by induction) or low producers that are contributing more than their fair share of cells to the BMSCC. These cows will have a relatively long dry period, so they are at high risk of developing mastitis during the winter; and because they have had chronic sub-clinical (unnoticeable) mastitis this season they have an increased risk of going clinical around calving next season. Therefore we would recommend giving them the maximum possible mammary protection at drying off.

The most recent evidence shows quite convincingly that the best protection for these cows comes from a combination of both antibiotic dry cow therapy and Teatseal, in each quarter. This has also been shown to give the greatest chance of a cure of chronic mastitis infection, and so is an ideal treatment for those high cell count cows that you just can't bring yourself to cull. If this sounds like your situation, please speak to a vet about the benefits of “Combination Therapy” as part of your Milk Quality Review.

## **Reproduction – What effect does BVD have?**

With the bulk of pregnancy testing all but finished, it is natural for farmers who have had poor in-calf results to seek explanations. This is particularly the case when herds of dairy heifers, which appear to be up to target mating weights, have a high number of empties.

BVD (Bovine Viral Diarrhoea) is a disease that can have a major negative impact on your herd's reproductive performance. This is especially so in animals which have not been exposed to the virus, which is often the case in previously closed herds or with young cattle such as heifers.

The effects of the virus depend on the stage of pregnancy at which the mother becomes infected. Early in gestation it causes an increase in the loss of early embryos; while mid-gestation abortions, mutant and persistently infected (PI) calves may be produced. Late-term infection produces weak calves at birth.

If you have a pregnancy testing result which is poorer than expected then BVD may be an issue on your farm. There are a number of very good tests now available which will indicate whether or not this is the case. Now is a good time to start testing your R1 and R2 heifers for BVD exposure as well as performing bulk milk BVD tests

on your herd. If you would like to discuss this further please feel free to contact one of the Clutha Vets large animal Vets.

### **Lameness – What a pain!**

Lameness problems can occur at any time through the year and always consume a lot of time and energy. At this end of the season the lame mob ‘in the other paddock’ often comes second to other priorities. However, it is very important not to leave lame cows and hope in time ‘they’ll come right’. Too often it happens that cows are left to suffer, and by the time we get called on farm they have become too lame for an easy fix.

A simple white line disease or bruising with subsequent sole lesions can lead to serious injuries when left untreated. Ultimately this can lead to irreparable damage in the joint that can only be treated with a claw amputation or the culling of the cow, with subsequent costs. Claw amputations, although mostly successful, shorten the lifespan of a cow through increased pressure on the remaining claw.

All these factors lead to high costs that can be prevented if the initial problem is dealt with swiftly. So please, for the sake of animal welfare, and to avoid livestock and other financial losses, attend to your lame cows in time.

#### **Things to do in April:**

- Get any final pregnancy testing tidied up.
- Make sure calves have had their second 7-in-1 vaccination, and the yearlings and herd their annual Leptospirosis vaccination.
- LeptoSure clients return completed paperwork.
- Selenium, copper and vitamin B12 supplementation of calves, and yearlings where appropriate.
- Check trace element status of milking herd pre-winter (liver biopsies from live animals or culls)
- Condition score herd, dry off light condition cows
- Order a B-Sure bulk milk test to establish your herd’s parasite burden, and the likely returns from drenching pre-dry-off
- Book your Milk Quality Review, to discuss dry cow therapy options and any other issues with a vet. Remember, we are not allowed to supply dry cow therapy unless you have had a recent veterinary consultation. (See separate flier in this envelope).

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

- **Please feel free to ring any retail branch for prices per dose on the full range of drenches that you may wish to use at drying off, or on young stock pre-winter.**
- **Dectomax** – Purchase two injection starter packs (to treat about 220 cows), or one pour-on herd pack and receive 20kg Eukanuba premium dog food (value \$125).
- **Cydectin pour-on** – either a 17ltr pack for the price of 15ltr, or buy 15ltr and get a bonus fishing pack.
- **Eclipse and Genesis pour-on** – Various PowerBuilt tools are available on purchases of at least 2.5ltr. Or, get an extra ½ ltr of drench instead of the tools.
- **Multi-Min injection** (copper, selenium, zinc, manganese and chromium). Use this season, and be in to win a Digitech Professional Wireless Weather Station.

**Retail Direct Phone Line (03) 418 1281**

There were two neighbouring lifestylers who each owned a pig. Unfortunately the pigs kept getting in together and they couldn’t tell which was which.

Seamus suggested they should cut the ear off one so they’d be able to tell them apart. This they duly did, but when the pigs got in together again the one-eared pig promptly chewed an ear off the other. Fergus then suggested they could cut the other ear off one but the same thing happened again..... and again when they chopped off a tail.

Eventually, (and running out of easily removed body parts), Seamus threw his arms in the air and said “Why don’t you just take the black one and I’ll keep the pink one!”