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# CUD

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

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**August 2010**

Spring seems to have come upon us sooner this year, with calvings and associated vet work taking off about a week earlier than usual. Inductions are underway on many farms under the newly revised rules – if you wish to be finished calving by 1<sup>st</sup> October, the first shots need to be underway by 6<sup>th</sup> August. Elsewhere the last bits of winter crop are being finished off by the later calvers, as the early calvers move onto a transition diet of grass and silage. What a great winter it has been! Many herds have reached BCS ideal of 5.0-5.5 at calving, which is great as we look forward to mating.

**Clinic News:** We have enjoyed presenting the six Wednesday night seminars over the last few weeks, and been blown away by their popularity and the positive feedback we have received. Thank-you to every one who has come out on a cold night to contribute to the discussions. Thank-you also to the sponsors – Intervet Schering Plough, Bomac, Dairy NZ, Virbac Animal Health, Merial-Ancare, and Pfizer. Now Spring is upon us, you will have plenty of opportunity to put into practice some of the things we hope you have learnt, and for us to demonstrate that we can put our theory into practice. Bring it on!

**FOUND** at one of the seminars - distinctive Burton snowboard/ski jacket – phone 03 418 1280 (Balclutha)

We are pleased to welcome back Alisa McDonald, and introduce Annie Jackson to our vet team. They will be helping out part-time over the spring period. It is great to have access to these experienced production animal vets at this time of year. Please welcome them warmly when they come up your tanker track.

Jason, Rob and Ainslie have now completed InCalf advisor training, bringing our team to seven. The programme helps us put a formal framework around the reproductive advice we have been offering up until now. One of the conditions farmer lobby groups put around the agreement to reduce inductions was the ready accessibility of this programme, to help all farmers reach their herd's reproductive goals. Clutha Vets are excited to be involved in this initiative. If the prospect of 4% inductions just 2 years from now is concerning you, give us a call – we can help (and it's not just about “more CIDR's”).

## **Mastitis Matters – Frequency of calf removal:**

There are a number of reasons why it is sensible to remove calves from their mothers, and bring freshly calved cows in for their first milking, twice a day. First, splitting the workload over two times in a day means the job is more likely to be done better. Second, it means that the calves can be stomach-tubed with 10% of their body weight of warm, fresh colostrum within 10 hours of their birth (the rule of thumb for all calves). There will be fewer calves on the trailer and they can have their navels sprayed with iodine sooner. Third, the sooner you can get the cow properly milked out after calving, the better you are setting her up for maximum production for the rest of her lactation. Fourth, the more times (and the longer) the calf is sucking on its mother, the greater the chances that it could deposit mastitis-causing bacteria on the teats. Or, if the calf has opened the teat canal by drinking, the cow is more at risk of picking up an environmental infection. Finally, if she already has a mastitis infection, stripping her out promptly and completely is vital to preventing the mastitis becoming worse. It's worth considering whether you can modify your system during the busy first month of calving to achieve this.

**Inductions** are underway on many farms, and going well. The new code specifies first shots must be given between 12 and 8 weeks before the natural calving date. This means that the biggest group we can inject at one time is four weeks' worth of calvings. Therefore, if your mating period was more than four weeks longer than your desired calving spread, there must be at least *two* groups of induction cows. If mating was more than eight weeks longer than calving, there must be at least *three* induction groups.

It is really important to make sure that whoever scans your cows is aware of these regulations and your information requirements. Individual predicted calving dates for all cows are the best, especially for those cows due after you would like to be finished calving.

**Humane slaughter of calves:** Any premature or unviable calves must be destroyed as quickly, and humanely as possible. The preferred options are a .22 rimfire, or a shotgun with 4, 5 or 6 birdshot. The firearm should be discharged between 5 and 25 cm from the front of the head. Aim for the point where lines drawn between each eye and the opposite ear cross, and shoot at a right angle to the forehead. When using a firearm, be aware of what is behind the calf – any stray projectile should lodge in something soft, not ricochet off concrete, steel bars etc. Operator safety is paramount.

Another option is to use a captive bolt (we can supply these, and train in their use). A blow with a blunt object is **not** recommended. The person doing this must be physically and mentally robust enough to do the job right first time, and every time. **Because neither of these tools can be guaranteed to kill the calf outright, they must be followed up a careful assessment of any signs of life. If there is any doubt, the calf must be bled out.** The cut should be from ear-to-ear, exposing the spine, and severing the wind pipe and all major blood vessels. This should be done with a sharp knife at least 15cm long.

**Iodine Navel Spray for Calves:** We are now stocking and recommending the use of a “spirit based” iodine spray for all calf navels. The alcohol in this spray will have a greater drying out effect on the navel than the Vetadine we have promoted up until now. Vetadine is still the iodine antiseptic of choice for wounds where “drying out” is not a desired effect.

Once a navel becomes infected, and pus is oozing out, spraying the outside with antiseptic will no longer be enough, and injectable antibiotic will be required. Our recommendation in this case is 6ml of Bovipen into the muscle once each day for 5 – 7 days. It is important to treat these aggressively, because from the navel, infection can spread rapidly to the liver (causing fatal peritonitis) or into the joints (causing irreversible damage).

**“The Brain Scheme”** is still in place to prove to our trading partners that BSE is not present in our national cattle herd. If you have live cattle between 3 and 9 years old that show either a non-responsive metabolic disorder; or progressive, non-responsive nervous disease; or “downers” with no obvious injury; they may qualify for the scheme. If we submit their brain, you will be charged only our mileage (no vet fees), and you can claim \$133 (+GST) from Biosecurity NZ. Alternatively, remember Forde’s Petfood now come to South Otago regularly to destroy and remove injured stock (phone 03 236 1199). The reason for telling you this is that we would rather see rapid euthanasia of suffering animals, with some compensation for you, than animals left to die slowly in the paddock.

#### **Things to do in August:**

- Get your animal health and production consultation for prescription drugs for the coming season out of the way, if you haven’t done so already.
- At the same time, be ready to prepare your “Farm Induction Plan”; first inductions should be underway on all farms by mid-August.
- Rotavec vaccination, for later calvers, 3 weeks before they start calving.
- Precalve Selenium supplementation where recommended, and Magnesium supplementation for all cows from three weeks pre-calving.
- BVD blood test 15 yearling heifers pre their first mating (now is good!). The same bloods can be used to assess mineral status.
- Clutha Vets AGM. 8pm 10<sup>th</sup> August. Henley Hall, Centre Rd, Taieri (you drive past it if you follow the signs to the airport, coming from the south). Guest speaker Graeme Gale from Helicopters Otago. They operate the Otago Rescue Helicopter as well as doing general aviation work.

#### **Retail News (direct phone 418-1281) – all prices net of members discount and GST incl.**

**Rumensin** Trough Treatment 60ltr \$1125 (seven only)

**Metabolic treatment** 500ml flexis “Vetmin” Tub of 20 for just \$236.20 (\$11.81 each) *and* get 1 free.

**Starter Plus energy and metabolic drench** 20ltr for \$115.77, get 1ltr free *and* 1xVetsan RTU free

Purchase 3x 5ltr Eprinex **pour-on**, and get 1x 5ltr free

With 20ltr Eprinex **pour-on** (or 10ltr Eclipse or Genesis) receive Typhoon all weather jacket or pants free

With 5ltr Eprinex **pour-on** (or 2.5ltr or 5ltr Eclipse or Genesis) receive a free LED headlight.

All Merial Ancare **drenches** have deferred payment available – September charge / October payment

Full range of Nutritech **minerals for your Dos-a-tron** available. Speak to the team about your requirements and pricing

Spirit-based 10% iodine **navel spray** 500ml for \$31.44 or 4ltr for \$102.52