

Dairy Farmer Newsletter August 2008



CLUTHA · V · E · T · S ·
Animal Health Centre



Balclutha Vets

Bruce Bissett	B.Ag. B.V.Sc.
John Smart	B.V.Sc.
Andrew Robinson	B.V.Sc.
Jason Darwen	B.V.Sc.
Suzanne Craig	B.V.Sc.
Rob Mills	B.V.Sc.
Teresa O'Riordan	B.V.M.S
Alisa McDonald	B.V.Sc
Hanneke van Kooten	D.V.M.
Hamish Moore	B.V.Sc.
Sid Taylor	B.V.Sc, MACVSc
Ali Maw	B.V.Sc.
Pam Doig	B.V.Sc

Milton Vets

Peter Kalb	B.V.Sc.
Jillian Clark	B.V.Sc.
Bernie Vaatstra	B.V.Sc

Contact Numbers

Balclutha Clinic	(03) 418-1280
Retail Direct	(03) 418-1281
Milton Clinic	(03) 417- 8032
Clydevale Store	(03) 415- 9121
24 Hour Emergency	(03) 418-1280

Website

www.cluthavets.co.nz

Email

admin@cluthavets.co.nz

CONTENTS

Mastitis matters

– Avoiding grades at the first pick up

Water issues

Inductions

Humane treatment of bobby calves

Heifer mastitis survey

Prolapsed uterus

Retained foetal membranes

Healthy Hoof Programme

Magnesium supplementation

Reminders

Retail news

AGM

Practice News

When will it dry out? I don't recall any July as constantly wet and muddy as this in the seven years I have been in South Otago, and now the ground is about as wet as it was after the deluge at the beginning of August last year. While the need to protect paddocks for milking is high, the cows also must be given some time on grass, for their own health, as calving approaches. Some paddocks will need to be sacrificed.

The weather has not been a great welcome to Sid, our new dairy vet. However, he's not going to be around much over the next couple of months anyway, because just before starting work with us he ruptured his Achilles' tendon, playing squash. Once again we have called on our long-term locum, Ali Maw, to help out, and we are also getting Tash in for a few days. In addition, we've also organised some extra cover for the small animal surgery, so that all of the "largie" vets are freed up to deal with farm calls.

Avoiding grades at the first pick up

Each year we get asked to help people with grading on their first pick-up. They fall into two groups:

Inhibitory substance (IS): An inhibitory substance is one that inhibits the growth of bacteria (antibiotics, antiseptics etc). In a case of mastitis this is exactly what we want it to do – slow down the bugs causing the disease. However, at the dairy factory it will slow down the bugs responsible for the cheese culturing process, and so it is unwanted! There are also issues relating to food safety, product quality, overseas market access and antibiotic resistance that make it undesirable for milk containing IS to leave the farm.

In general at this time of year, IS grades are attributed to poorly established systems in the shed, and dry cow therapy.

Now is the time to make sure all of your staff know exactly what milk withholding periods mean, and how with-held cows are dealt with. Cows should be clearly marked before they are given the first treatment, and the mark should be removed (or painted over) when they are safe to go back into the vat. Beware of the large number of males who are red/green colour blind – ie don't see red paint! Use leg and tail bands as well as paint. Run these cows in a separate mob from the milkers, and milk them after the milk line is disconnected from the vat.

Have a board in the shed that everyone can see, detailing the product, the days for treatment, and the day the milk is safe to return to the vat. Transfer these records into your BOFP folder regularly.

A number of ways some people use drugs is “off label” and warrants extending the withholding period. Such uses include giving a bigger dose than stated (eg 2 tubes, or “a bloody big whack” of injectable); treating for longer (most tubes are licensed for only 3 treatments); treating with two different drugs simultaneously (a tube in the quarter and an injectable in the rump).

Finally let your staff know what to do when they suspect some IS milk has gone into the vat. Let them know that not telling anyone is worse than owning up to it!

Dry cow therapy is also implicated in some early-season IS grades. All dry cow has 8 milkings

withhold, regardless of how long the dry period is. This will coincide with the first 8 milkings after calving that can't be supplied because of the colostrum withhold period.

Problems related to DCT may come from:

- Cows with clinical mastitis in the dry period being given DCT rather than milking cow treatments.
- Cows with low milk volume (<5l/day) at drying off. The udder of these cows is already shutting down and the antibiotics are not distributed and processed in the “normal” way

BMSCC: Many farmers have a bulk milk cell count spike on the first pick-up. This may be due to either clinical or subclinical mastitis. There are two ways to minimise the risk of this grade.

First, wait until you have an appropriate volume before your first pick-up. The more cows that are in milk, the more the cells in the bulk milk will be diluted.

Second, we recommend stripping all the cows into, and out of, the colostrum mob. This means checking them for mastitis at the first milking, and again before they go into the main herd. At the very least put a few squirts of milk onto a smooth dark surface, to check for clinical mastitis. Better still, use an RMT paddle, or some other detector, to look for subclinical mastitis.

If you do receive grades, we can help. An IS grade will result in an on-farm audit of your systems, that will go through your procedures for dealing with withholding cows (as discussed earlier). Having a vet present at this audit, will reduce the fee payable to the auditor.

If you get a BMSCC grade, we can send a “Grade Buster” squad out to help identify problem cows and try to determine a source of the problem.

Water issues

If your hot water cylinder is still off, now would be a really great time to switch it on. Compromised cows (down, sick, calving etc) do not benefit from being doused with cold, dirty water! Regardless of the job you call the vet to do, clean, warm water will be required. There may even be a job that you would find it helpful for!

Inductions

Many people are wishing to delay their inductions this season until the paddocks have dried out a bit. While this makes good sense (because we shouldn't be inducing cows you can't feed adequately) it also may cause problems.

Under the Induction Code, cows should calve at least six weeks before their expected natural calving date. This is to ensure that the calf dies inside the cow, and is born dead. This is perceived as a better welfare option than a slightly premature calf being born on a wet night and struggling to breath for a few hours before finally succumbing to hypothermia. If you delay your inductions, and cows calve less than six weeks before their due date, you increase the chances of a live calf being born.

The programme we use for inductions involves a long-acting shot, to bag the cow up, followed by a second injection a fortnight later to cause her to calve. This means the first shot needs to be given about three weeks before the desired calving date, or a minimum of nine weeks before the natural due date.

By the time you receive this (8th August) it will be too late to induce anything due before the 10th of October, so you may be facing an extra week of calving. If you have any concerns, please speak to a vet ASAP.

Humane treatment of bobby calves

There is growing concern in our industry about the welfare of bobby calves. Although they are a by-product of dairying, and destined for an early demise, they are living animals in our care, and are entitled to certain basic welfare rights. Bobbys are covered by the Animal Welfare Codes of Practice (see the MAF website).

The meat industry have set a target of 0.7% daily death rate for bobbys (during transport, in the yards at the plant, or condemned as unfit on arrival). Last season only 50% of plants met this target, and some days deaths reached up to 3.5%. They regard this as unacceptable.

Major areas of concern are:

- Age of calves – nothing should go at less than four days
- Adequate feeding – bobbys need to be properly fed. This means they should receive colostrum in the same way heifer

replacements do. They should be fed at least half of their daily food ration within a couple of hours of leaving for the slaughter plant, to help them withstand the journey.

- Don't treat them with antibiotics, feed them Scourban, or give them milk from cows being treated with antibiotics.
- Their collection pen (often isolated from the main calf rearing area to prevent disease transmission) needs to be as dry, sheltered and well bedded as that of the heifers.
- Navels should be shrivelled and dry

They are newborn babies! They are vulnerable with immature immune systems and they are physiologically compromised. They deserve good care, right up until the time of slaughter.

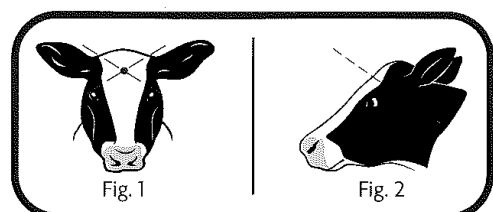
Destruction of bobbys on farm must also be done humanely. They must become unconscious or die immediately. This can be achieved by shooting in the head with a rifle, shotgun or captive bolt gun. You should aim for the centre of the forehead at the cross formed by drawing a line between each eye and the opposite ear. If you are using a shotgun, it should be done outside where scatter will be minimised

The captive bolt is a quick, safe and easy alternative, and can be purchased through us. You do not require a firearms licence. If you are using a heavy hammer, ensure the person doing it has the strength, stamina and knowledge to make a quick, clean blow every time.

As with a heavy blow to the head, a calf stunned with the captive bolt should immediately be bled out by cutting the throat with a sharp, stiff knife. The cut should be from ear to ear, severing the wind pipe and all major blood vessels and exposing the spinal cord.

At the end of the procedure there should be no heartbeat, no breathing, and no blink reflex.

Cutting the throat of a calf without first stunning it is unacceptable. The unusual nature of the blood supply to the bovine brain means it can receive oxygen (remain alive and distressed) for some time after you think the throat is adequately cut.



Heifer Mastitis survey

This season Clutha Vets is pleased to be part of a national survey to establish the true cost of heifer mastitis. The study is funded by DairyNZ and run out of the Animal Health Centre in Morrinsville. We will be monitoring ten farms in our practice area to represent “southern South Island” dairy farms.

On each of three farm visits, Joanna De Vegt, will be collecting records of how many heifers get mastitis and how they are treated, the time taken to manage them, and recording aspects of heifer management that contribute to mastitis incidence. This will be followed up by monitoring production records for those animals through the season, and culling results at the end of the season.

The overall goal is to establish just how much heifer mastitis costs on “real” farms, and what the major factors contributing to the disease are. In the end, the aim would be to produce a cost-benefit analysis for implementing some of the practices that will reduce the problem.

Research work like this is vital to the future of the NZ Dairy Industry, and we are thrilled to be given the opportunity to contribute. It also gives us something different to think about than calving cows, provides revenue to our practice, and demonstrates the regard in which Clutha Vets (and our farmers!) are held around the country.

Prolapsed Uterus

One of the most dramatic Spring emergencies we get called to is the cow who has prolapsed her uterus. If a cow continues to push after she has calved, but before the uterus has closed down, she has the ability to push her whole “breeding bag” right out. This will appear as a great big swollen red mass (up to a metre long and 50cm diameter) hanging out of her vagina (not rectum!). It will usually have fleshy red “buttons” on it – the other half of the cotyledons that you see attached to the membranes when they are passed.

It is an emergency, but seldom a cause for euthanasia! If quickly attended to, well looked after, and if it happens early in the season, these cows often even get back in calf.

Things that make her continue to push after calving (eg RFM's, forced traction) or slow down the contraction of the uterus (fatigue, milk fever)

are the main contributing factors.

What should you do? First call the vet!

Then make the cow safe and comfortable until we can get there. Usually these animals have milk fever, and they are much more likely to die from that than from their prolapsed uterus! So give them a single oral calcium supplement (if they can swallow) or a single bag under the skin. Any more than that and the uterus will start to contract (making it harder to get back in) or the cow may stand up (potentially damaging the fragile tissue).

If she is lying down, sit her up, and try to get something clean like a milking apron underneath the uterus to lift it off the mud. If membranes are attached, leave them on; if they are already separated the uterus can be gently washed with warm water. If she is standing and can be calmly walked to the cow shed, do that.

Retained foetal membranes

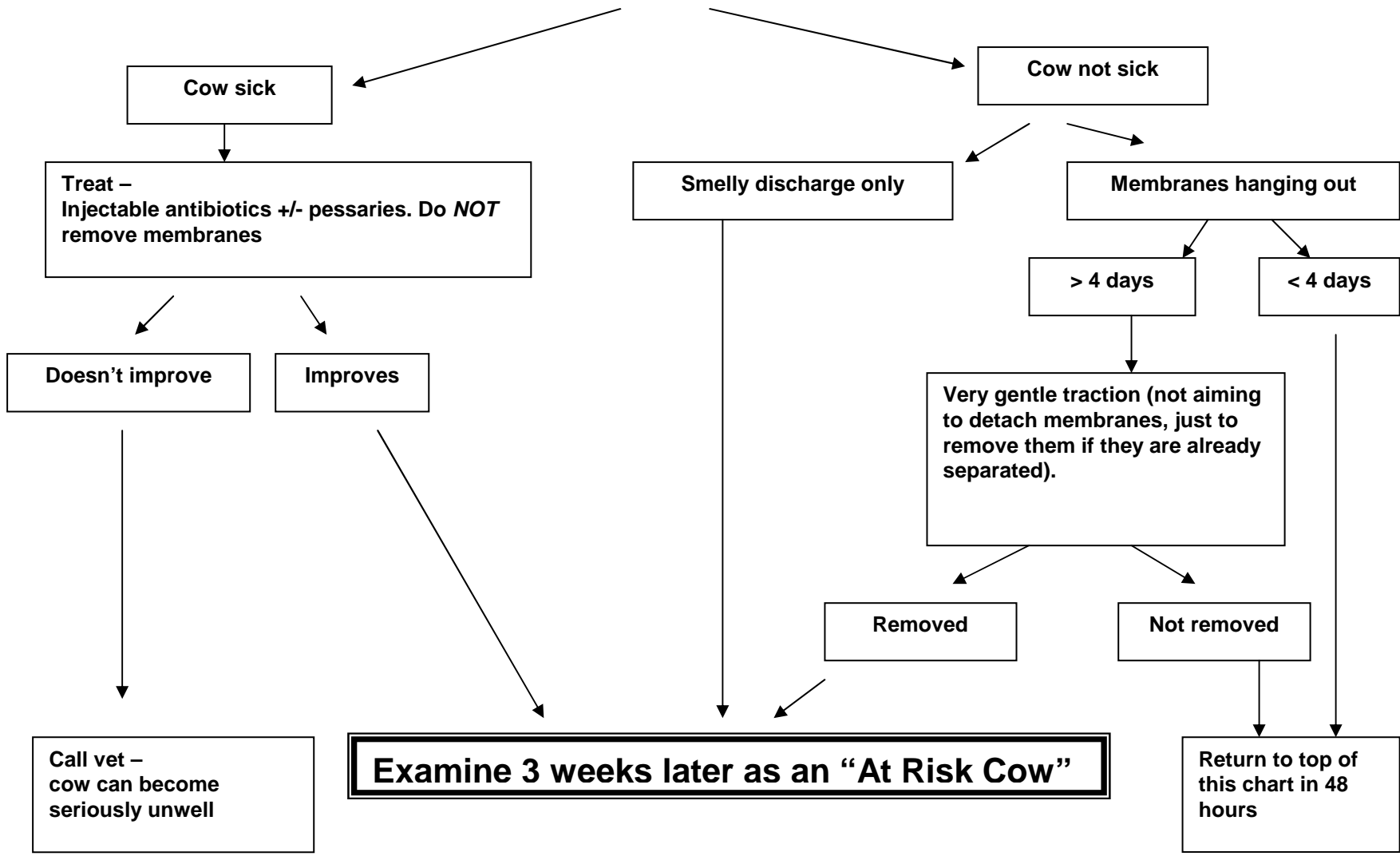
It is sometimes said that the more different ways there are to treat a disease, the less likely it is that any one of them works well every time! Never is this more true than with RFMs.

Some people pull them, some people leave them, some people tie weights to them, some people chop them off. Some people treat with pessaries, some with iodine flushes, some with salt water, some with metricure. Some people inject antibiotics, others selenium and oxytocin. Some people try herbal and homeopathic remedies.

In veterinary circles, the tendency in recent years is that “less is best”. If they are not ready to spontaneously detach within a few hours of calving, the only way they will come away is by rotting out. Anything we do to interfere will only slow the rotting and may damage the uterus. In other words, in most cases, just leave them alone, but check the cow in three weeks time, by which stage she will either have cleared them out, or be ready for metricure.

The exception to this rule is when a cow becomes sick, in which case injectable antibiotics and maybe even veterinary attention is required. On the next page is a flow chart you might like to put on the cow shed wall, indicating the modern approach to RFMs.

RFM > 12 hours



The Healthy Hoof Programme

The Healthy Hoof Programme (HHP) has been developed by DairyNZ over the last few years to focus on the prevention of lameness in dairy herds. It consists of several stages that will take about a year to complete and can be continued after that year. It's carried out by "providers", based in veterinary clinics, which have been trained by DairyNZ.

The steps in the programme are:

- Diagnosis and action plan. The first contact with the provider starts with a brief interview to assess the farm and cow management. Afterwards the provider will be present on the farm while the cows are being brought in and during milking. Observations during this time and the information from the interview will help the provider to create an action plan which highlights factors that are likely to contribute to the lameness problem and offer recommended solutions.
- Skill development, divided into two parts. The first part is "Prevention Training". All farm staff should be present during this training. Topics including lame cow identification, types of lameness, stockmanship improvements and causes of lameness will be discussed. The second part is "Treatment Training" and involves the staff dealing with treatment of lame cows. Knife sharpening, identification of a lame cow and the structures in a cows claw, proper tying up of feet, attaching a cowslip/block and different types of lameness will be discussed and, where possible, practiced.
- Monitoring and recording of lame cows. This is very important as it provides information about progress in reducing lameness and gives you an idea about the main lameness problems present on your farm as well as repeat offenders.
- Six monthly update. All records will be reviewed by the provider after 6 months and highlight improvements or ongoing problems.
- Review the season and renew action plan. Progress on the farm will be reviewed with you at the end of the season and a new action plan can be developed for the coming season.

With the programme comes a toolkit, with information and posters about identifying lame cows, identifying structures in the claw, the different types of lameness, recording sheets and

basically everything that will be discussed with the provider.

The HHP has trialled on over 30 farms around New Zealand in the last two years, and on these farms it has increased awareness, knowledge of lame cow treatment, identification of key factors for improvement and aided in the design of new sheds.

How do I get involved?

If you are interested in joining the programme, please contact DairyNZ to register or pick up a registration form from Clutha Vets. You will then be asked to choose a provider from a list provided by DairyNZ. DairyNZ will then contact the provider, send him/her the toolkit and give the details to contact the farmer to arrange a date to start the programme.

The cost for the programme is between \$1500 and \$2500, depending mostly on the time spent on the farm. This might seem a large amount of money, but one chronically lame cow will cost money in time, treatment costs, milk loss, potential reproduction losses and sometimes even culling, which can add up to a considerable amount of dollars.

For more information:

www.dairynz.co.nz/healthyhoof or come and talk to us at the clinic.

Magnesium supplementation

By now your magnesium supplementation should be well underway. With any luck you have enough mag on farm to cope until the Olympics are over and the Chinese factories can get back on track with making all our stuff!

Last season we had a number of farmers who experienced metabolic problems (down cows) for various reasons, and their response was to increase the magnesium allowance. The same may be tempting this year if the weather remains cold and wet. However it is not necessarily the right thing to do, and may make matters worse!

In our August 2007 newsletter are some guidelines for appropriate supplementation rates. You can access this, and all the recent newsletters via our website, which has had an overhaul recently, and contains heaps of useful info and links.

Have a look: www.cluthavets.co.nz

Brief reminders

☺ **“While you’re here.....”** is something we hear a little bit too often at this time of year! We are happy to do whatever jobs need to be done, and understand the efficiency of doing a number of jobs at a single visit, but it’s much better if we know about them in advance. “A quick look at a lame cow” can put us behind for all the ensuing calls booked in, and it’s not always easy to come back to look at it later.

If you’ve got some “while you’re heres”, please do the other farmers who are expecting us that day the courtesy of calling the clinic. Even if you think we’re already on our way. Then, extra time can be allowed and we can keep vets, receptionists and farmers happy!

☺ **Prescription Animal Remedy (PAR) consultations.** By law, these need to be reviewed every 12 months. If we have not had a chance to catch up with you this season, let’s get it out of the way sooner rather than later. It’s an opportunity to discuss any of the animal health issues concerning you, and make some plans for the future.

☺ **Cow brains.** The cow “brain scheme” is still in place. Overseas markets require us to look for Mad Cow Disease (BSE) before we can say we don’t have it. As part of this, MAF will pay you for the brain of any cow that we believe could be a potential BSE case. This is a way of retrieving some money from a cow that would otherwise be worth nothing.

Certain criteria must be met (the vet must see the cow alive, she must be less than 9 years old etc), and certain clinical pictures are suitable (downer cows, nervous disease). If you think you may have a suitable case, speak to a vet to arrange her brain collection.

☺ **Withholding periods on induction drugs.** The long acting steroid injection we give to start the induction process and use as a “second first shot” has a 12 day milk withhold period from the time at which the injection is given. The first five or so days of this period will be before she has calved, and she probably will not be being milked. The next four days (after calving) cannot be supplied regardless of how and when she calves, and what milking has been done before she calves. So in most cases there are only 2-3 extra days that milk must be

withheld.

It is ok to feed this milk to bobby calves and heifer replacements, but it is not colostrum, and should only be fed to calves a week or more old. A live calf born to an induced cow, that does not require euthanasia, and makes it to four days old, can be sent on the bobby truck.

The short acting “drop shot” (usually a bit tougher on the cow) has a 2-milking withholding period but again, this milk can be fed to bobbys and viable bobbys can go on the truck at 4 days.

☺ **Calf debudding.** The number of people using our service has grown dramatically over the last few years, and we have had to make some organisational changes to cope! If you have used us in the past, or have indicated you would like to use us this Spring, you will get a phone call from us, with a view to booking in your calves when they are the right age, and at a time when it is most efficient for us to do them (remember, you don’t need to be there, just as long as we know which calves to do!). If you haven’t heard from us by the time the last AI calves are born, please give us a call.

We have introduced a small set-up fee to deal with the fixed time it takes to get underway with smaller and larger jobs, and a surcharge for older calves (over six weeks) which are more difficult to do.

☺ **Milk samples.** Sample containers are available **free** from our clinics for taking sterile milk samples from mastitis cows, **before** treatment. Label with cow number, quarter, date, and treatment, and then freeze. If you are new to the farm, you have bought-in cows or a problem last season, this information is invaluable.

☺ **The sole measure of success in calving a cow** is not whether 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. There is no kudos in saying you haven’t called a vet to a calving in four seasons, if you have left a trail of damaged or dead cows in your wake.

Retail news – Direct phone Balclutha 418 1281

- All Virbac products (including **Headstart**, **Revive**, **Diarrest**, **Niltime** drench) – every purchase goes in the draw for a 50 teat tow-along MilkBar (calf feeder). It *will* be won by a Clutha Vets client!
- All Shoof **calving gear** (ropes, chains, jacks, gowns etc) 10% discount for vet club members.
- **Starter Plus** post-calving energy and metabolic booster. Buy 20ltr for \$137.50 and receive another litre free.
- **Calol** – the best oral treatment for milk fever. A box of 24 qualifies for an 18% discount.
- **CalProPhos** – metabolic bags. Calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and energy now with Vitamin B12 as well. Available very soon
- **Jute cow covers** – 5 foot and larger, \$50.88
- Milligans **Calf Milk Powder** – August members' price (payment 20th Sept) \$93.96 inc
- Alert Spray **Tail Paint** (yellow only) \$3/can
- **Cyductin/Vetdectin** pour-on 10ltr nil milk and meat withholding \$995.54
- **Eprinex** pour-on 25l (500 cows at 500kg) one only at \$2757.55
- Buy 2.5l **Genesis**, 2.5l **Eclipse** or 5l **Eprinex** pour-on, and receive a free pair of Muck Boots. No need for cold feet this Spring!
- Pedigree **Meaty bites** (Working dog Formula). Pay for 20kg, receive 22kg
- Dr Fuzzwort and Chicago **children's wet weather gear**. 25% off all stock in store.

The only cow in a small South Otago town stopped giving milk. The people did some research and found that they could buy a cow from just over the Southland boundary for \$2000. They brought the cow back from Southland and the cow was wonderful. It produced lots of milk all of the time, and the people were very happy. They decided to acquire a bull to mate with the cow to produce more cows like it. They would never have to worry about their milk supply again.

They bought the bull and put it in the paddock with their beloved cow. However, whenever the bull tried to mount the cow, the cow would move away. No matter what approach the bull tried, the cow would move away from the bull and he could not succeed in his quest. The people were very upset and decided to ask the Vet, who was very wise, what to do.

They told the Vet what was happening. "Whenever the bull tries to mount our cow, she moves away. If he approaches from the back, she moves forward. When he approaches her from the front, she backs off. An attempt from the side, she walks away to the other side."

The Vet thought about this for a minute and asked, "Did you by chance, buy this cow in Southland?"

The people were dumbfounded, since no one had ever mentioned where they bought the cow. "You are truly a wise Vet," they said. "How did you know we got the cow from Southland?"

The Vet replied with a distant look in his eye, "My wife is a Southlander."

Clutha Vets AGM

All members are invited to attend the 100th Annual General Meeting of the Clutha Veterinary Association, to be held at the new Lawrence Golf Club rooms (Waipori Rd) on Tuesday 12th August, at 8pm. The guest speaker is Doug Edmeades, an independent, dynamic and outspoken expert speaking on "Fertiliser Facts and Fallacies". Lindsay Watt, who has represented Inch Clutha and Kaitangata dairy farmers on the board for the last 21 years is stepping down, and Stewart Morrison has been nominated to replace him. Come along, hear how the business is running, and have your say in your Vet Club.