

Dairy Farmer Newsletter July 2009



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



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Retail Direct	(03) 418-1281
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Balclutha Vets

Meredith Mackenzie	B.V.Sc.
Bruce Bissett	B.Ag. B.V.Sc.
John Smart	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
Hanneke van Kooten	B.V.Sc.
Hamish Moore	B.V.Sc.
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Milton Vets

Peter Kalb	B.V.Sc.
Jillian Wilson	B.V.Sc.
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Welcome to Clutha Vets

Welcome to all of the dairy farmers who have moved in to the Clutha Vets area. It's been quite a change-over this season, and we've tried to get out to meet as many of you as we can. For those we haven't met, we hope to soon - please feel free to drop in to the Balclutha or Milton clinic any time so you (and we) can put names to faces.

Clutha Vets is a "Vet Club".... which means that the practice is not owned by a group of vets, but rather by you, the members of Clutha Veterinary Association Incorporated. The members of the club elect a board to govern the organisation, and the board appoints a CEO (Meredith Mackenzie) who manages the club to meet their aims and the members' needs. The board has representatives of different farm types, and also from throughout the geographic area we service. The current President is Alistair Cocks, a sheep & beef farmer

from Slopedown, and dairy farmers currently serving are Peter Johnston (Paretai), Stewart Morrison (Inchclutha) and Peter Allison (Taieri).

As an incorporated society, the club does not accumulate profits. Instead, any nett surplus is re-invested into the practice or returned to club members. That is on top of the discount that club members automatically get on most purchases. If you are not yet a vet club member, please phone the clinic to join, so you can start taking advantage of the financial benefits.

Dairy vet staff in your area

We aim to provide consistency of veterinary service to our clients, as much as possible. After hours, you will see whichever vet happens to be rostered on, but within normal hours we operate around an area system.

From Balclutha, Jason Darwen will be working primarily in the Clydevale / Wharetoa area, backed up by Teresa O’Riordan and Hamish Moore, who will be coming over from the Clinton / Popotunoa end of the practice. Hanneke van kooten will take primary responsibility for Paretai and down into Owaka, while Rob Mills will be working across the river on Inchclutha and Kaitangata. Bruce Bissett, Nichola Hinchy and Meredith Mackenzie will be “floaters”, deployed as necessary.

Based out of the Milton clinic, our newly arrived vet Sid Taylor will be lending his dairy experience and expertise to the established team of Peter Kalb, Jillian Clark and Roo Wijey.

Spring Emergencies

Clutha Vets is proud to have a team of experienced vets to provide a 24/7 emergency service for all animals, 365 days of the year. Here are a couple of pointers to help you get the most out of the service, and to help us provide it efficiently.

Phone us when you first suspect you may have a problem. A call from you early-on doesn’t commit you to a vet visit; but might allow us to co-ordinate your animal with another one, if there is already a vet nearby.

Regardless of what we are coming to, a couple of buckets of warm water are usually required, to

rehydrate cows, lubricate calvings, prepare for surgeries etc. Warm, because if a cow is already sick, the last thing she needs is 30 litres of icy water dumped into her body core.

If a cow is down, it is helpful for both diagnosing the problem and treating her, if the tractor and some equipment for lifting her are nearby, when we get there.

For calvings, if she can be brought to the shed or yards before we get there, that will also make life much easier for everyone. And if she can’t be brought to the cowshed, a clear description of where she is (including rapid number) will help.

At night, extra light (beyond the vet’s car headlights and torch) may well be required.

Regardless of the job, extra hands on deck are always welcome – especially if someone has to leave to fetch something, etc. Please try to have at least two people present to assist the vet.

Inductions

July is induction month. To get the most out of inductions (extra days in milk, and time from calving to start of mating) it is imperative that they are done early. The table below helps determine which cows should be induced when.

Induce to calve in week	Cows due to calve naturally between week and week		Second shot due in week	First shot due in week
1	7	11	-1	-3
2	8	12	1	-2
3	9	13	2	-1
4	10	14	3	1
5	11	15	4	2
6	12	16	5	3
7	13	17	6	4
8	14	18	7	5

For example (following the top line), the cows that can be induced to calve in the first week of calving are those that would naturally be calving in weeks 7-11. To get them to calve in the first week they will require their second injection in the week before PSC and their first shot a fortnight before this (three weeks before PSC).

Looking at it the other way, if you don’t do anything until week 3, cows that receive their first shot then (third line from bottom) will not calve

until about week 6 – the only cows that can be included in this group are those that would naturally be calving in weeks 12 – 16, so you will be faced with an 11 week calving spread.

Please remember the other conditions of the Induction Code:

- Cows for induction should be between 3 and 8 years old
- Cows with a history of chronic illness (lameness, mastitis, photosensitivity) should not be induced
- Cows to be induced should have minimum BCS of 4.5 and maximum 6
- Induction cows should be fully fed as Springers, on grass, and home from winter grazing from the start of the induction process. This includes magnesium supplementation.
- Trace element status (copper and selenium) should be assessed and extra supplementation given as necessary in the lead up to calving.
- You should be committed to a continual reduction and eventual phasing out of inductions.

The Induction Code will expire in 2010. It is likely that inductions **will** be allowed to continue after that, under a newly developed “Industry Guidelines” that will be enforceable under the Animal Welfare Act (for you), and under the Veterinarians Act (for us).

Critical aspects of the new guidelines are likely to be a commitment by individual farmers to a continual reduction and eventual phasing out of inductions; a more robust method of policing farmers who continue to induce a high percentage of the herd; and a strong element of support to help farmers succeed without inductions.

Recognising the calving cow- Our sheep expert's view

A lot has changed in the 30 plus years I have been in clinical practice in Balclutha. One change that has *not* been for the better, is the seeming inability of many dairy farmers/dairy workers these days to accurately identify cows having difficulty calving. The percentage of emphysematous (read “rotten”) calvings has increased dramatically in the last 10 – 15 years. For example, last season I personally only had

one live calf from a dairy farm calving, but countless stinking rotten ones.

From talking to colleagues I know this is not just a South Otago problem but a far wider problem. Okay, I know herds have got bigger, some staff are relatively inexperienced etc etc but really this situation is just not good enough. A survey carried out at Clutha Vets last year showed that the success rate (in terms of a live cow & her getting in calf again) was, not surprisingly, far worse in these situations. It's not just about vets having to do a revolting job, it's about animal welfare, and your bottom line.

Hence follow some hints on perhaps how to improve this situation:

- Staff training. Make sure your staff are at least familiar with the various possible signs of a cow calving – restlessness, standing with an arched back, tail in the air, getting up & down, straining, maybe evidence of a slight discharge.
- Time. Make sure that there is plenty of time, many times in the day, to actually look closely at each springer. On larger farms, with a hundred or more cows in the springer mob, it can be a full time job for one person, just keeping an eye on, and assisting, them.
- Notebooks and cell phones (clocks). Get staff to *write down* the numbers of animals they are suspicious of, and the time. Then, when they go off duty, they can pass this info on to whoever is taking over. Or at lunchtime, it will jog their memory to go back and have another look at that animal.
- If there is no progress after 2 hours (maybe slightly longer in heifers) get her in and stick a (clean) arm in & check.
- If you're not sure about a particular cow – has she calved, is she calving, for goodness sakes don't prevaricate - check.
- Whatever date your planned start of mating is, cows will start calving up to 14 days before (or after) this – there is that much natural variation so you need to be vigilant well before the PSM date. We always get a lot of disasters at the start of calving.
- If you calve a cow, I don't care if you've just extracted a 60kg calf from a 350kg bag of bones – **always, always** stick your hand back in & check there is not another calf in there. Twins are getting more common! And when you've pulled out the twin, put your hand back in and check for the triplet!

- If your staff spot a cow having calving difficulty just before they are due to go to the pub, don't penalize them by making them hang around till it's sorted. Reward them with a bottle of wine or a 24 pack for being so perceptive, and stay back *yourself* to sort it. That way, they won't look the other way the next time the situation arises.

Rotten calvings are almost unheard of in many places overseas – let's try & improve the level of management so that the same applies here!

Happy calving. (John Smart)

Trace elements for the coming season

Many people come to us with requests for trace element testing at different times of year. Often this is as a result of a production, reproduction or health issue that has been going on for some time. To try to prevent these problems from occurring, we are in the process of developing a year round "package" of trace element blood and liver tests. The aim is to have a package that measures the key minerals, by the right method (blood sample or liver biopsy), in the right number of cows, at the right time of year to head off any problems. After you have enrolled, we will phone you when visits are due, and we will back this up with written reports detailing results and providing recommendations. All this will be done for a set annual fee, that can be spread out across a number of months.

Following on from that, we are forever being approached by different companies to promote their trace element mineral supplements, and by farmers to give an opinion of the products they have been approached to buy. When deciding which mineral mixes to stock and supply, we take a number of factors into consideration, including their product range (levels of the various elements; organic / inorganic; ability to produce "customised" blends; pack size; liquid/solid; etc); price and the back-up the company is available to provide, to you and to us.

We have decided to support Nutritech – a New Zealand owned and operated company that we feel has the products and the expertise to meet all of the needs of South Otago dairy cows. As you assess your herd's mineral supplementation for the coming season, bear in mind that there are a lot of "snake oil salesmen" out there, but based on the mineral tests we perform and our

training in animal nutrition, this is a company whose products we are prepared to stand behind. Speak to the Clutha Vets retail team about what they can supply, or we can arrange a farm visit for you to discuss your mineral requirements with their field rep.

Vet only drugs

The main way we handle the requirements of the "Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act", is via an annual consultation with each client. At that time we come up with as list of basic PAR's (Prescription Animal Remedies) that a vet okays for use in your herd in the coming season. You can then purchase and use any of those (and only those) PARs without further consultation with a vet.

Retail staff cannot sell you any other PAR's. If there is something else you need to pick up, without someone coming to see the animal, please phone ahead in advance and speak to a vet.

If you have not already done so, please make an appointment for your annual Animal Health Consultation, before the madness of Spring arrives. This is different from the Dry Cow (Milk Quality) Consultation you will already have had. It will also be an opportunity to cover off the consultation requirements for inductions this season, and raise any other animal health queries you may have. Sometimes we do this consultation on farm, with the farm staff on hand, that way it becomes a good staff education opportunity, and makes sure the appropriate info gets through to all staff.

Infovet

Infovet is an exciting new tool we will be using to manage data for your farm. It is a web-based computer program that pulls together information from a wide range of existing sources (eg MINDA, Fencepost and our clinic records), that can then be used by us on farm, to help make sound, information-based, decisions. Better decisions mean more cost-effective solutions for solving and preventing farm problems

For the clients enrolled, InfoVet was used successfully at Milk Quality Review time, to view BMSCC trends, herd test records (culling and treatment options for individuals), and mastitis incidence rates. This revealed some interesting and important information (otherwise unnoticed or

unavailable), that guided management choices over drying off.

In the Spring, Rob, Hamish and Peter will be carrying laptops in their vehicles. This will enable cow-side recording and printing of visit records, prescriptions, treatments and withholding dockets; with uploads to MINDAPro.

As the season goes on, and more information becomes available, we will be able to create benchmarks and alerts for reproduction and mastitis measurements; and analyse 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. We will raise it again at your Spring consultation, or contact Ainslie (Balclutha) or Louise (Milton) to take advantage of this exciting new tool.

BVD

Now is a good time to blood test your replacement stock to ascertain their BVD status. This information, combined with knowing your milking herd's status (from a bulk milk test) will help decide the best way forward with managing the disease.

If last season's calves are mostly naïve to the disease, at the very least you will need to be careful about which other stock you mix them with (including the bulls you use) between now and the start of their mating. Or you may wish to consider vaccinating them before then. A sudden exposure of this group to BVD is probably the most dramatic impact the disease could have.

If blood tests reveal the in-calf heifers have a high level of the BVD exposure, but the herd bulk milk test was low, you will need to be careful about the heifers introducing the disease to the herd after they calve. Vice versa, if the heifers are low and the herd are high in BVD, you may run into problems with getting your now in-milk heifers back in calf at their second mating.

The starting point for these decisions is getting the right information, and now is a good time to do that.

Confused? Come to our seminar in Balclutha on Wed 29th July. Schering-Plough-Intervet are

sponsoring the guest speaker, John Pickering from the "Control BVD" group, and the buffet meal to follow. We will have buses coming from the Taieri and from Clinton / Clydevale. Contact the clinics for more details, or to register.

The "strongest" mastitis treatment

As we review mastitis problems and mastitis treatment on each farm during the PAR consultation process, lots of farmers ask "Which is the strongest antibiotic?". The only real answer to this question is another question "Which is the most appropriate antibiotic?".

Recent New Zealand trial work shows that plain-old penicillin is still a perfectly reasonable drug choice for treating most mastitis cases (*Strep and Staph*). Based on the bugs found, and the likelihood of their antibiotic resistance, 95% of clinical cases should respond to treatment with a penicillin-based product.

Also, while a number of factors influence the likelihood of getting a cure (age of cow, number of affected quarters, stage of lactation), one of the most important is the length of treatment.

For these reasons, we are sticking with our recommendations that on nearly all farms, penicillin-based products should be the first up treatment for mastitis in the spring time.

We are lucky that the various drug companies have been working hard to get "extended therapy" licences approved for a number of these products, meaning that they can be safely used well beyond a standard 36hour treatment course, greatly increasing their chance of success.

The take-home messages are:

- stick with penicillin based products for treating mastitis
- think about using injectables for severe cases or when multiple quarters are affected
- remember the roles of oxytocin in aiding let down of all that mastitic crud in the udder (getting rid of that twice a day, before antibiotic treatment is vital); and anti-inflammatory in aiding antibiotic penetration and cow comfort & recovery
- rather than quickly jumping to a "stronger" antibiotic if your treatment seems not to be working at first, keep treating with the same product out to it's maximum licenced use; you are more likely to get treatment success.

Upcoming events

Spring First Aid Seminar (8th July). Ideal for new staff, anyone new to the dairy industry, or as a refresher for experienced staff. Focuses around calving the cow, calving problems and sick cows and calves (downer cows, calf scours etc).

Calf Rearing Seminar (9th July). A great opportunity to learn how to grow your replacements to their greatest potential from birth to weaning. Topics include housing, nutrition and disease prevention and treatment.

Both of the above seminars 9am-3pm (lunch included), at Balclutha Clinic. \$200 per person, places limited, book on 418 1280.

Spring supply night: Thursday 23rd July Balclutha and Milton clinics 5-8pm; Clydevale store 12.30-3pm. "No product reps, just vets". Free advice, great in-store specials – one night only; barbeque and prizes.

BVD Information Evening With John Pickering from "Contol BVD". Seminar and dinner sponsored by Intervet Schering Plough. Balclutha, 29th July. Courtesy coaches from Taieri, Milton, Clinton and Clydevale. RSVP to either clinic.

Clutha Vets AGM 8pm 25th August, Rosebank Lodge, Balclutha. Guest speaker Dr Gary Waghorn, of DairyNZ "Current research for future profit from livestock farming - identifying efficient animals, cost of greenhouse gases, and the importance of too much nitrogen."

Milking before dawn Ruth Dallas

In the drifting rain the cows in the yard are black
And wet and shiny as rocks in an ebbing tide;
But they smell of the soil, as leaves lying under trees
Smell of the soil, damp and steaming, warm.
The shed is an island of light and warmth, the night
Was water-cold and starless out in the paddock.

Crouched on the stool, hearing only the beat
The monotonous beat and hiss of the smooth
machines,
The choking gasp of the cups and the rattle of hooves,
How easy to fall asleep again, to think
Of the man in the city asleep; he does not feel
The night encircle him, the grasp of mud.

But now the grey hills in the east return, are soft
And grey with mist, the night recedes, and the rain.
The earth as it turns towards the sun is young
Again, renewed, its history wiped away
Like the tears of a child. Can the earth be young again
And not the heart? Let the man in the city sleep.

Checklist for July

- Make an appointment with a vet to sort out authorisation of your Prescription Animal Remedies (PARs) for the coming season
- Rotavec vaccination for early calvers.
- Selenium pour-on or injection pre-calving (where advised, based on mineral checks).
- Plan your Inductions, and get them underway. For an 8 week calving spread, the first injections should be given about 3 weeks before PSC.
- Start magnesium supplementation for Springers three weeks before PSC
- Prepare calf sheds – feeders, bedding, water supply, straw, milk powder and meal.
- CVA Spring Supply night – great specials in store Clydevale, Milton and Balclutha 23rd July.
- Set up a shelter (deer poles, corrugated iron and a cyclone gate, with sawdust bedding) near the cow shed to use as a hospital area for downer cows and after tough calvings.
- BVD blood test for calves and heifers
- BVD seminar 29th July
- Ensure winter milking machine check is complete, and replace rubberware as required.

Retail News

New product: Hi Trace with Rumensin. Is a supplement containing cobalt, copper, iodine, selenium and zinc. It combines the benefits of essential inorganic trace elements and the "extra energy" benefits of Rumensin.

Rumensin. Don't forget cashback is back. Get \$150 cashback off each 60L drum. Offer available for a limited time and orders must be in before the end of August to qualify. Special price \$1124.99 nett gst incl. + get your Prezzy Card for qualifying purchases.

Merial-Ancare Cattle Pour-Ons. Selected pack sizes qualify for either a pair of Swandri muck boots or a windstopper jersey.

Dectomax Pour-on. Back-country clothing packs to give away with every 15L Dectomax pour-on tub pack.

Cydectin Pour-on. Purchase 15ltrs and receive an extra 2ltrs at no extra cost

Clutha Vets/Sgt Dan Calf Meal. Per tonne rates now available, speak to one of the retail team for further information.