

Dairy Farmer[®] Newsletter August 2011



Balclutha Vets

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Around the Practice

Most of our vets are back from taking some time out before the spring rush, and most dairy farmers seem to have at least a few calves to feed and cows to milk. Hanneke is still overseas and will not be back until late September, so we have taken on a locum to help cover in the spring. Chris Hopwood is another South African (so go easy on him after Saturday evening's performance), and will be adapting to our South Otago climate having spent the last few years

living and working in Kaitaia.

Some of our vets have been spending time in the gym getting fit and strong for calving time. Steve was on call the other night when a call came in to go out and help calve a cow. He was on his 12th set of 10 repetitions, bench-pressing 165kg. Some things have to take priority. Naturally he finished his set...

Induction Drug Shortage

A batch failure has meant that we are in extremely short supply of the "1st shot" induction drug. A new batch will be released on Monday 8th August, but we are still waiting to hear exactly when we will get our hands on it. Unfortunately, a few early inductions will have to be put off for a week or so, but we are hopeful that not too many will be inconvenienced. The window for inducing cows has consequently been extended so that cows can now be induced between 12 and 6 weeks before expected calving date for the remainder of this season.

Cow Condition and Grazing

Every year in late July or early August we have disgruntled dairy farmers who want us to assess the condition of their dairy cows or heifers coming back from the graziers. Often the animals are in light condition with the heifers also being well below minimum target live weights. Farmers are right to be upset as it is well documented that poorly grown heifers have reduced milk production and reproductive performance throughout their life. Cows with a body condition score below the target of 5.0 have a reduced milk solid production and 6 week in calf rate, which can be calculated. At this stage of the season, while we are happy to provide an unbiased assessment of the animals, in many cases it can be difficult to provide any sort of meaningful conclusions. This is because we often only see the animals once they are back on the home farm and therefore cannot assess pre crop body condition score, feeding levels or management on the crop.

Given the costs involved in winter grazing, and the wide range of experience among farmers providing that grazing, some sort of monitoring must be provided. Clutha vets have qualified staff available to assess your stock, the feeding levels and management while they are on crop. We can then, if need be, along with the grazier and stock owner, come up with some practical solutions which will help ensure that the stock are in the best condition come calving time. The best time to have this performed is back at the start of July when the animals have been on crop for 2-3 weeks. The second best time to do this is NOW, especially if you have stock such as yearling heifers which will be on crop or at the graziers for some time.

Navel Infections in Calves

As calving is upon us again, calf rearers will need to be vigilant for navel infections in calves, know the treatment and more importantly know how to prevent these occurring in the first place.

Iodine Navel Spray for Calves is a spirit-based antiseptic iodine spray for all calf navels. It should be applied to all calves' navels (ideally in the paddock as the calf is loaded into the calf trailer) as soon after collection as possible. The alcohol in this spray will have a greater drying out effect on the navel than the Vetadine iodine sprays available. 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 an injectable antibiotic will be required. Our recommendation in this case is 6ml of Bovipen into the muscle (for a 40kg calf) once each day for 5 – 7 days. It is important to treat these aggressively because infection can spread rapidly from the navel to the liver (causing fatal peritonitis) or into the joints (causing irreversible arthritis).

Spirit-based Iodine navel spray is available from the clinic (see the retail team). If you have a number of active navel infections in your calves you may need to check how effective your current spray and calf collection routines are.

Prolapsed Uterus

We recently ran a Spring First Aid seminar at the Balclutha clinic for people new to the dairy industry or those wishing to update their knowledge. The topics that were discussed included calving and related conditions, common diseases such as mastitis and bloat, handling and administering drugs, newborn calf care and calf scours. We also discussed what situations are considered to be an emergency, requiring a vet visit straight away.

A prolapsed uterus in a cow is one such emergency that needs to be attended to as soon as possible. The cow should be kept as quiet as possible while waiting for the vet to arrive. If she's down, leave her down, but if she's lying on her side, roll her onto her tummy so that she can burp and doesn't bloat up. If she is up, and close to the yards then she can be quietly walked to them. It's important to try not to let her run or move excessively as this is likely to result in damage to, or rupture of the uterus. If she'll be quieter walking to the yards in a mob, then bring in a few other cows with her.

Try to keep the uterus as clean as possible and have a couple of buckets of warm water there for when the vet arrives as they will need it to clean her uterus. A couple of people need to be on hand to help hold her, and possibly to help lift the uterus if she's standing.

The reason that a uterus prolapses is usually because the cow continues to push after the calf has come out. This may be because of retained foetal membranes or a difficult, or assisted, birth.

Hypocalcaemia is usually also a contributing factor. In normal births the uterine muscle contracts quite quickly after the calf has come out, reducing the size of the uterus, however if the cow is low in calcium, which is required for muscle contraction, then it may not contract properly. This means that there is then a large, floppy bag inside the cow that is able to be pushed out if she keeps pushing.

If the cow is down then we often wait until after we have put the uterus back in to give her calcium, otherwise she might get up and walk away so that we end up chasing her round the paddock, and it's easier to put the uterus back in if it is still floppy. Sometimes though, calcium is required sooner to save her life.

The uterus itself looks like a large red bag with lumps all over it (caruncles) protruding from the vulva, and when fully prolapsed can hang down to below the cow's hocks. If undamaged they can usually be quite successfully put back in and the cow should be able to carry on for the season. However she is more likely to develop an infection in the uterus and should be metrichecked about three weeks later. It's possible that she can get in calf again, however the chances of this are reduced if her uterus has been prolapsed.

Aspiration Pneumonia

Aspiration pneumonia is a nasty lung inflammation we commonly see as a result of foreign material being inhaled into the lungs. At the back of the throat the openings of the windpipe (trachea) and gullet (oesophagus) are next to each other, so material destined for the stomach can easily end up in the lungs, causing pneumonia. The severity of the resulting pneumonia is dependent on the thickness, irritability and amount of material inhaled and type of bacteria which may have been in the substance. Animals will show signs of respiratory distress; laboured breathing; coughing; reluctance to move. Nasal discharge is often present which may be feed stained or the fluid inhaled. Pneumonia can rapidly progress to blood poisoning and death. In severe circumstances death may be almost immediate.

Human intervention is commonly to blame for aspiration pneumonia - incorrect administration of oral medicines and/or trauma to the throat (from tubes, drenching guns etc.). Giving oral liquids/drenches is unsafe if there is no suckle reflex, the tongue is drawn out, the head held high or if the animal is coughing/bellowing. Particular care must be taken in debilitated animals. Passing a stomach tube is safer but not without risk, take care that the tube is actually in the rumen not the lungs and ensure all fluid is

drained from the tube before withdrawing it from the animal. We have Aggers stomach tubes in retail (\$638 incl GST) which are sturdy, safe and come with an inbuilt mouth gag. We can show you how to insert the tube ensuring it goes to the rumen.

Diseases disrupting the swallowing reflex can result in inhalation of substances. In adult cattle at this time of the year we commonly see it in milk fever cows. The combination of being down, semi-comatose and bloated interferes with the throat clearing mechanism so regurgitated rumen contents end up in the lungs. Prop up downer cows so they don't lie on their side. In calves it's commonly caused by poor feeding. Ensure nipples don't have too heavy a flow and feeders are set at the correct height so fluid doesn't trickle into the windpipe. Extra care is required when feeding weak, premature calves.

If you think aspiration has occurred, immediate aggressive antibiotic treatment is required. White penicillin 'Bovipen' can be used but must be at a high dose – for a 500kg cow; 75mL into the muscle once a day for at least 7days. Anti-inflammatory drugs should also be given - 15mL Ketofen 10% into the muscle for 3days. More targeted antibiotics are available depending on the circumstance; please speak to a vet if one of your animals has aspiration pneumonia.

Causmag – Check your strength

With magnesium oxide, the 'industry standard' is minimum 90% MgO (54% Mg) but in the last couple of years, some suppliers have been importing 65% strength MgO (39% Mg) and claiming that it is just as effective as normal strength product. The product is OK as long as you use more to compensate for lower elemental content. There is anecdotal evidence of lots more downer cows.

In our August 2007 newsletter are some guidelines for appropriate Magnesium supplementation rates. You can access this, and all the recent newsletters via our website, which contains heaps of useful info and links. Have a look: www.cluthavets.co.nz

Calf Debudding

Now that there a few calves on the ground it is time to think about calf debudding. Clutha Vets offer a painless calf debudding service (using sedation), for calves over **2 weeks of age**. No physical restraint involved and no labour input from the farm! We also check for hernias and navel abscesses, and remove any extra teats at the same time. This is also a great opportunity to ear tag calves, take blood samples for BVD testing or ear notches for DNA profiling.

Clydevale Depot & CRT

The recent decision by PGG Wrightson to close their Clydevale store has left farmers in the greater Clydevale area with a longer trek to town for those farm supply items you often find you suddenly need at short notice (wool bale clips, Roundup, pipe fittings after you've just cut through the alkathene etc!).

We had some spare space at our Clydevale Store so the decision has been made that we (CVA) act as an agent for CRT at Clydevale. Hence the Clydevale store will now carry a range of rural supply "convenience" items on behalf of CRT. You can purchase with (or without) your CRT card and the charging and accounting will occur via your usual CRT account (not CVA). As many of you may have noticed an outside secure compound has been developed to store larger, bulkier items like gates & Novaflo for example.

It will no doubt take a while to fine tune the appropriate range of goods to be carried so if you require something that is not there just let Gary know. Hopefully this service will prove useful and convenient as it will probably be a case of use it or lose it.

Mastitis control in wet, muddy conditions

When conditions get wet and muddy the risk of environmental mastitis skyrockets. Many old routines don't work. There are four key steps:

1. Wash and dry all teats before cups go on. On wet or muddy days every teat must be washed (use low pressure hose) and dried with one paper towel per cow. Never put cups on to wet teats.
2. Strip cows every day to detect, draft and treat clinical cases e.g. front teats in morning; back teats in afternoon. Always wear gloves.
3. Cover 100% of teat skin on every teat with teat spray. Check concentration of teat spray and emollient. Switch to hand spraying.
4. Keep teats clean for an hour after the cows leave the shed. Reduce muddy areas at exit of shed. Set up feeding and other routines so cows don't lie down soon after milking.

If high Cell Counts or clinical cases persist then assess whether you have an underlying problem with teat condition, machine function, or other opportunities for bacteria to spread. Seek professional advice. Speak to a vet about organising a shed visit.

Pre-treatment milk samples are needed to determine the bacteria involved.

Yes, you did read that correctly – "One paper towel per cow" – let's get real about mastitis!

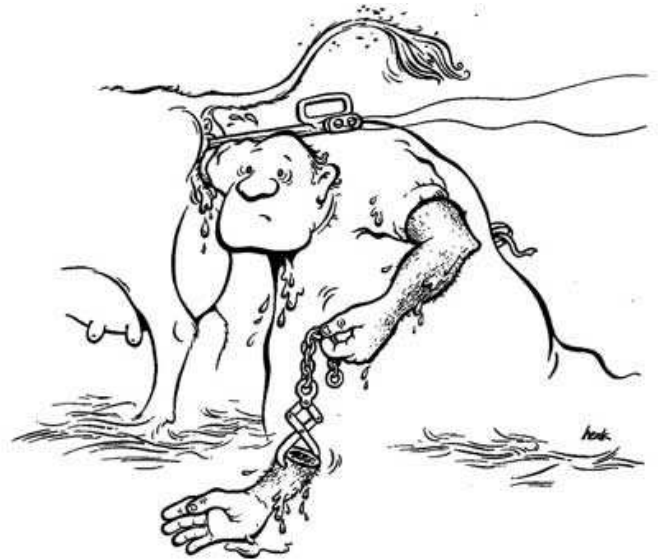
This Month's Retail News

The list of specials this month is as follows:

- **Combat Topline Cattle Pour-on** - Super special – only \$716.83 nett incl GST for 7.5lt. Will treat 300 x 500kg cows for \$2.39 ea.
- **Cydectin Pour-on** – 17lt pack only \$1646.35 nett incl GST. Nil milk, nil meat withholding.
- **Cydectin Pour-on 2 & 5lt** – Get an extra 10% product free.
- **Dectomax Injection** – Buy 2 starter packs and receive a Norsewear clothing pack or a rucksack from Hunting & Fishing.
- **Eprinex Pour-on** – Buy 3 x 5lt and get 1 x 5lt free.
- **Alliance & Converge Drench 10lt** – Get a free Smartdrencher gun with each 10lt pack.
- **Genesis & Cydectin Inj** – Both available on deferred payment. Charge December, pay January.
- **Meatybites Working Dog 20kg** – August Special - \$58.73 nett incl GST.
- **Tux Dog Biscuits 40kg** – These are also on special through August at \$99 nett incl GST
- **Eukanuba Premium Working Dog 20kg** – On permanent special at \$108.72 for 20kg on the Eukanuba Farmgate programme. A saving of \$20/bag. Plus a free stainless steel feeding bowl for each dog and a free Wheelie Storage Bin.

Caption Competition

We've had a bit of a track record in the past with injuries prior to calving (usually due to rugby or skiing!) but this poor fellow really takes the cake.



Send your caption to admin@cluthavets.co.nz and the winner will receive a prize (including calving chains, so you may not need to call us out!). Winner announced in the next CUD.