

CLUTHA VETS DAIRY FARMER NEWSLETTER



August 2018



Clinic News

We are well into Spring mode now, with most of you having at least a few cows in milk, and a few calvings coming in for us every day. Everyone seems optimistic for the coming season - with plenty of sunshine on our backs in the last couple of weeks and cows, ground and feed all in pretty good condition. Probably the biggest cloud on the horizon remains *Mycoplasma bovis*. While there is no reason to believe any of the dairy farms in our practice area are actively infected, we all have our fingers crossed that the upcoming round of bulk milk tests will prove that. In the meantime, if you see any unusual diseases on your farm please let us know – particularly “strange” cases of mastitis or more respiratory disease in calves than you would expect.

Our staffing levels are good, and we can assure you that one of our team can be on your farm promptly when you need us. At the northern end of the practice, Bevan Topham will be living on the Taieri and joining the team. Many of you will have met Bevan while he was based in Balclutha over the last few years. At the Balclutha end, new vet faces you might see include Erin Caswell, Andrew Roe, and Andrew Comerford who have been with us since earlier this year. You’ll also meet Sam Bowker, who has left the heat of the British summer to experience a southern spring, locuming for us. He has already cut his teeth on a 7-piece embryotomy (calf cut-up)!

One of the things we have been doing over the last few weeks is visiting calf sheds to offer advice and practical tips to get them set up for success once the calves start arriving. Please contact us if you think this would be of value to your operation this season. And check out our new FB page “Clutha Vets Calf Link” for tips and ideas for keeping your calves healthy this spring.

Things you can do to keep your vet happy:

- 1) Check cows out if you think they might be calving
- 2) Call **early** – early in the day, or early in the job if things are not going well
- 3) Keep your phone handy
- 4) If you call us to calve a cow because you are stuck, stop trying yourself
- 5) Give calving cows a dose of Ketomax while you are waiting for us
- 6) Don’t disappear when we arrive
- 7) Have clean, warm water available in a clean bucket
- 8) Have the tractor ready for down cows

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Ketosis

Ketosis is a disease of lactating dairy cows, which occurs when there is excess mobilisation of fat reserves to meet the energy demands of lactation, usually due to inadequate dietary energy.

Clinical ketosis presents in wasting and/or nervous forms. Wasting ketosis is characterised by loss of bodyweight, reduced milk yield, dullness and inappetence (not eating). Nervous ketosis can show up as a broad range of neurological signs including aggression, incoordination, circling and licking. Treatment for clinical ketosis includes intravenous dextrose and oral monopropylene glycol.

Clinical ketosis is only the tip of the iceberg, and subclinical ketosis is common in dairy cows after calving. Subclinical ketosis has a significant effect in increasing the risk of endometritis and reducing six week in calf rates, and subsequently lower days in milk the following season. The average effect of subclinical ketosis on reproduction is a 7% reduction in six week in-calf rates.

This season we have available a quick, inexpensive on-farm test called "Energy Watch", which gives an instant 'snap shot' of your herd's energy status post calving. "Energy Watch" provides us with a tool where we no longer have to second guess whether this costly disease is impacting herd performance.

15 cows should be blood sampled 5 to 14 days after calving.

Milk Fever

How much is enough?

Two calcium bags is plenty. Uncomplicated milk fever cows should respond to one bag containing calcium. Give a second bag under the skin, or an oral calcium product at the same time, to prevent short term relapse.

Should I give a bag in the vein or under skin?

A lot of calcium treatments can be given by either route. Give first bag intravenously, but if a vein cannot be found and the animal is flat on side, give bag under skin and call your vet.

She got up pretty quick, does she still need a follow up treatment?

Yes. All down cows should be marked for follow up calcium in 12hrs. Oral calcium products (eg.Calol) are ideal for follow up, alternatively another bag under the skin will be fine

What's the difference between all these down cow bags?!

There are 3 main types of metabolic treatment for down cows: CALCIUM, MAGNESIUM and DEXTROSE (Glucose). Some bags have one active present - usually in higher amounts, versus other bags that have a combination of 2 or 3 of these active ingredients.

So which colour bag do I use?!

Don't over complicate things. Work out a robust plan with your vet that works for you and your staff. For a down cow at calving any bag containing calcium will work, Calpro375 given slowly in the vein is ideal. It's also prudent to give Dextrose 40% in the vein for ketosis (low energy).

Here is a quick guide to metabolic bags:

CALCIUM ONLY: Calpro375 (dark pink) *slow intravenous only*, Calpro250 (orange) *under skin or intravenous*

GLUCOSE ONLY: Dextrose 40% (pink) *intravenous only*

MAGNESIUM ONLY: MagnesiumSulphate20% (yellow) *under skin only*

COMBINATION: Calpromag (green) *under skin or intravenous*, Glucalphos (brown) *best given intravenous*

Weird & Wonderful Calves

As we limber up our arms for a busy couple of weeks, here are some examples of rare and unusual causes of fetal dystocia (difficulty birthing caused by the fetus) to keep in mind.

Hydrocephalus

This malformation is due to fluid collecting in the head (the condition translates to 'water head'). There are a number of causes including genetic, nutritional (specifically vitamin A deficiency) and some viral infections. At calving the increased size of the head causes difficulty and blockage (as I'm sure you can imagine). If mild, calves may be born normally and go on to live a relatively normal life.



Achondroplasia ("Bulldog Calves")

A malformation caused by inhibition of bone development, these calves can be identified by their large head (some bulldog calves may also have hydrocephalus) and thick short limbs, making traction difficult.



Double Monsters/ Conjoined Twins

Imagine the frustration of twins without being able to separate them! This bizarre condition is caused by damage to the blastocyst (the earliest stage of embryonic development) as it is about to split to form twins. The results can be varied and may not necessarily lead to fetal death (as the picture shows).



Schistosomus reflexus

This is a rare congenital defect but you'll know it when you see it! Thought to be a genetic disease, schistosomus is almost as if the calf has been turned inside out. The abdominal organs are outside the body and the joints are often fused in flexion (ankylosed), making calving these very difficult.



A Pom's First Impressions of NZ



Sam Bowker, who is undertaking an 8 week locum role from England at Clutha Vets, shares his first impressions of dairying in NZ. Sam grew up on a mixed livestock farm in South West England, the principal enterprise being a 180 cow, autumn calving dairy unit, and has been working as a farm only vet in Cheshire for 3 years. He is in NZ for 5 months, starting with 8 weeks at Balclutha before heading up to the North Waikato for a couple of months before finishing with some travelling.

Since having arrived in Clutha 10 days ago to start the calving season, I have already noticed a number of differences between UK and NZ systems. To start with, I'm having to adjust to the terminology (cowshed = parlour, herdhome = cowshed etc!) and measuring milk production in milk solids rather than litres. Another difference is the temperature: having left 30C heat in England and a worsening drought (farmers are having to either bring cows inside to feed winter rations or are taking forage out to the fields), my thermostat has had to adjust quickly to frosty conditions, with a beanie hat the essential piece of kit! In addition, the landscape is staggeringly beautiful – everyone told me that the creation was stunning and it certainly hasn't disappointed.

A rising number of UK farmers are looking at NZ systems of dairying, with focus on cost of production increasingly important in volatile milk markets, and one thing I am keen to learn whilst here is how grazing systems are used to maximise milk from grass. It has been interesting to see that the majority of dry cows are wintered away from the main farm on crops, enabling a protection of the grazing platform and higher stocking densities during lactation. Transition from the dry period to lactation presents a number of problems in the UK, with plenty of clinical (and sub-clinical) ketosis and LDAs (twisted stomachs) seen, so it will be interesting to assess whether feeding dry cows on crop alleviates some of these problems (bearing in mind lower milk yields compared to the UK Holstein!).

It has been good to quiz some of you on grazing management already, with a number of variants on rotational grazing becoming apparent. Different rotation lengths, number of paddocks and the use of

irrigation are all different factors that seem to contribute to the plan; one thing I have been impressed with is that everyone seems to have a plan! One difference from the UK is that there seem to be fewer restrictions on fertiliser application which enables greater flexibility in controlling grass growth – the NVZs (Nitrate Vulnerable Zones) in the UK can limit what farmers can do to promote grass growth. Don't be surprised if I question more of you about this topic while on farm – I'm very keen to learn the principles of Kiwi dairying!

From a veterinary perspective, I've noticed a few differences reflecting the differences in farming. Bull vasectomies are rarely performed in the UK but are certainly something worth considering (heat detection is a problem all over the world!), while the proactive RVM consults seem to be a logical way of prescribing medicines (in the UK it tends to be a review of what has been used in the last 6/12 months with ongoing targets as part of a wide-ranging herd health plan). Calving cows is slightly different as well – firstly smaller cows make life slightly easier, but it seems to be rare to attend a calving where the calf is live (in the UK it would be well over half). We had an excellent fetotomy workshop at the clinic for the vets, which I've already put into practice (see photo) – this is something we would very rarely do in the UK.

I seem to have learnt a lot even in 10 days, but hope to gain a wide-ranging understanding during my time here. I am interested in the whole system, ranging from business strategy (contract-milking and share-milking are rarely practiced in the UK) to daily on farm operations to health management of block calving systems, so please feel free to share any knowledge you have! I look forward to meeting some of you over the next few weeks.



Your vets

Balclutha Clinic

John Smart	BVSc
Jason Darwen	BVSc
Rob Mills	BVSc
Hamish Moore	BVSc
Catherine Copland	BVM&S
Peter Heslip	BVSc, MACVSc
Annie Jackson	BVSc
Steven Butler	BVSc
Ruth Andrews	BVSc
Anna Burrell	BVSc
Erin Caswell	BVetMed
Andrew Comerford	MVB
Andrew Roe	BVSc

Locum -

Sam Bowker	VetMB
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Milton Clinic

Peter Kalb	BVSc
Jillian Clark	BVSc
Sid Taylor	BVSc, MACVSc
Barbara Christensen	BVSc, MACVSc
Martha O'Connor	MVB
Tom Wallbank	BVM&S

Things to do in August

- Get the cows calved and into milk!
- Complete your spring consultation (including RVM authorisation) before things get manic
- Pre-calving selenium treatment and rotavirus vaccination
- Blood test cows for calcium, magnesium and ketones
- Get BVD vaccination underway
- Mark cows for metrichecking in 2-4 weeks time

Retail

- Boehringer Ingelheim -
 - Eprinex Pour-on - NIL withholding and proven \$\$ back responses!
 - Get an LED Lensor Headlight on selected products
 - WIN a spot on the Wanaka Wine Tour!
- Win a family Spa with any Zoetis product. Vaccines & drenches included!
- Last chance for coffee machines OR cake mixers on selected BOSS Pour-on
- Get a Whittakers chocolate bar with a six pack of Calform Phosphorous
- Get some Malteasers with Meaty Bites for Father's Day!

Heifer Teatsealing Awards 2018



Some of the categories have been changed slightly but none the less, we have come together to give you the winners of the following categories for 2018!

Best pusher: *Veronie ter Woorst*

Quietest heifers: *Ian Bryant and Mat Luke*

Best yard setup: *Phil Neame and Robert Scurr*

Best meal provided: *Rhonda Bamford and Christine Benny*

Fastest job: *Alasdair Brown*

Congratulations to all the winners.

Your prizes can be collected from either the Milton or Balclutha clinic.



Moovie Quiz



Jason's been at it again. He's found another cow-related movie for you to name the title, with a bonus for naming one (that one should be easy), or both of the actors pictured calving a cow!

All correct answers in by 31 August will go in the draw for either a box of beer or a bottle of wine, and if neither of those appeal you could have a flash box of chocs!

Answers to "Jason's Moovie Quiz" to 03 418 1280 or email admin@cluthavets.co.nz

