

CLUTHA VETS DAIRY FARMER NEWSLETTER



CLUTHA
VETS

October 2019



Clinic News

Just like you, we are flat out. We don't have crop to get into the ground or silage to cut, but between the last calvings, the end of calf debudding, Metricheking and organising Repro programmes, there are not too many idle hours, and we're all struggling to stay awake for those 11:15 Rugby World Cup kick-offs. Our vet team have representatives from England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, South Africa and New Zealand, but the office sweepstake has also allowed wider support to keep it interesting.

Scottish vet Jennifer Ross has joined us as a locum, to help out over the coming months. She is a mixed practitioner and has been working recently in Central Otago.

Most of you seem to have your "still to calve" mob down to a reasonable size, and we're getting plenty of calls to check which cows are still in calf. Also plenty of requests to "give them a hurry up" – sorry, the answer is no!

As I write this, the sun is out on a glorious South Otago morning – it's about time after a pretty rugged couple of weeks. We wish you all many more good days, and a successful start to your mating.

By now everyone should be aware of the new regulations around dehorning and debudding of cattle. Last year MPI announced a range of new animal welfare regulations, issued under the Animal Welfare Act 1999. The various regulations are being phased in over a period of time, with the cattle dehorning one coming into force a few days ago, on the 1st October. The regulation states that all cattle, regardless of age, must receive pain relief before their horns/horn buds are removed.

In parallel with the regulations about specific procedures, new regulations around the penalties for infringements have been introduced. There is now scope to receive instant fines for acts of non-compliance, which makes it easier for animal owners to be "punished" for their indiscretions. Previously such cases had to go through the court system which, due to the associated time and costs, tended to mean that only the most serious infringements ever ended in any form of punishment.

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Yearling Mating

The starting point for compact calving next year, and a good mating 12 months from now, is to get the first calvers in early! Some people overlook the benefits that an AI mating programme can provide here. Synchronising yearlings for AI not only increases the rate of genetic progress in the herd, but it also ensures the bulk of them calve right at the start (even before the cows). This gives you time to focus on managing them as they calve, and it gives them more time to get cycling before mating next season. Alternatively, you can move your PSC a little later, without losing days in milk, by AI'ing a big block early in the period.

We can help with programmes that condense heat detection and AI onto a single day, 3 days or 9 days. These all require careful communication between you, your vet, the grazer, semen provider and AI tech. The programmes need to be sorted well in advance of the proposed AI date(s). So, if your PSM for the herd is 3 November, and you wish to AI the heifers around 30 October, we need to be making plans now. If you haven't AI'ed heifers previously, this may be the season to take advantage of the many benefits it can provide.

Mating Targets

The industry target 3 week submission rate is 90%. Why? A 90% submission rate, combined with a 60% conception rate, will create 78% 6 week in calf rate. Those who achieve a 6 week in calf rate of 78% can have a short mating of just nine weeks, and still have only 5-8% empty. This would be the dream of every farmer I am sure!

You should have a figure in mind at the start of mating, as to how many cows you need to submit each day to reach this target. You can perform a simple calculation to assess how you are tracking - you should mate on average 4.3% of your cows each day. The target numbers are shown at 5 day intervals below:

Day	% mated	Herd size		
		400	600	800
5	22	88	132	176
10	43	172	258	344
15	64	256	384	512
21	90	360	540	720

Heat Detection

Any AI programme is critically reliant on good heat detection - picking the right cows and putting them up at the right time. The whole team needs to be on board with finding the cows, and having them drafted and ready for the AI tech.

Time and labour commitments are common limiting factors when trying to implement an effective plan, yet most herds have aspects of heat detection that can be improved. Combining several different methods of heat detection will always achieve a better result.

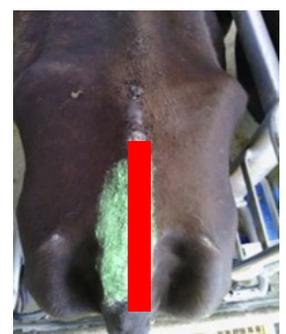
- As well as checking at milking time, monitor on the way to and from milking, and perform paddock checks.
- Add heat detection aids to tail paint - scratchies, KAMARS, bulling beacons etc. Teaser bulls may also play a role here
- Treat tail painting like Michelangelo would!
 - Remove old paint and excess hair beforehand.
 - Apply paint from the base of the tail forward for 20-25 cm including the top of the elevated ridge just behind the hip bones.
 - The strip of paint should be about twice the width of the tail paint nozzle, and symmetrical.
 - With "underpainted" cows it might be hard to tell when the paint is rubbed.
 - With "overpainted" cows, the paint may stay on, despite rubbing.

Incorrectly applied tail paint



Tail paint is too wide, off centre, too far back and too thick!

Correct application



4. In the shed:

- Commit a single, senior and experienced member of staff to the job.
- Check TWICE each day to detect more subtle heats and allow rechecking of doubtful heats.
- Look at the whole cow - other rubs, muddy flanks, bulling string, behaviour.

5. Paddock checks:

- 2-3 times per day.
- 2hrs after milking once the cows have all eaten.
- Quietly on foot - no dogs or bikes!

Cycling Cows - Why wait?

If a cow comes on heat just a few days before PSM she will not naturally return until towards the end of the third week of mating.

But we can use a clever trick to bring her back on and get her served much sooner. A single PG injection given at least seven days after her heat will usually cause her to cycle again within 72 hours, advancing her service (and days in milk next season) by around 10 days. The cost benefit is significant. Please contact us for a precise programme to take advantage of this.

Days	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1 group	Cows cycle pre mating								PSM							PG		Cows cycle again here			
2 groups	1st group of why wait								PSM		PG		1st group cycles again								
					2nd group of why wait												PG		2nd group cycles again		

Options for Non-Cycling Cows

There are a number of different options for dealing with non-cycling cows which include:

- doing nothing (they will usually cycle eventually!)
- preferential feeding
- once a day milking
- running in a separate mob, with or without bulls or teaser bulls
- veterinary interventions – many options available

Doing nothing is certainly easy and cheap (this season), because most of the cows will come up sooner or later. But it is a pretty risky approach and may result in a very spread out calving. Hardly a pro-active approach to a better mating result! Suggesting that not intervening with less fertile cows will increase the fertility of the herd as they are culled out as empties is also risky. We know that a cow's genetics make only a very small contribution to whether or not she becomes a non-cycler. Other management factors are much more important.

Preferential feeding can help – the relationship between nutrition and cycling activity is without doubt. However, by the time we get to the start of mating the damage has been done. To get good activity on the ovaries by now, preferential feeding needs to have been underway for many weeks. The eggs that are released in early November started their journey back in August.

Once a day milking can also have a positive effect on the cows' energy balance, however it isn't entirely straight forward. Again, putting cows on to OAD now will probably be too little, too late. Also, there are significant costs in lost milk production that are likely to far exceed the cost of conventional treatments.

Running non-cycling cows in a separate mob will not cause them to start cycling. There are no social or physiological cues that get cows going. Unlike sheep, there is no evidence that exposure to males will start females cycling. Additionally, if there are large numbers of non-cycling cows, there will be fewer in the sexually active group each day as they naturally come on heat, making it really hard for you, the bulls or teasers to find them.

The only thing proven to reliably increase the pregnancy rate of non-cycling cows is treatment with appropriate hormones. There are many different approaches, and a variety of programmes designed to meet different needs. We would love to work with you to come up with a solution that works for your cows, you and your business goals.

Why not book a Repro Ready Consultation with your vet to go through some of the options?

To Drench or Not to Drench

At this time of the year we are often asked whether it is worth drenching cows with a NIL milk withholding pour-on drench. The answer to this question is yes with the following proviso. We don't recommend whole herd drenching except in exceptional circumstances as this will select for drench resistance. Last autumn we experienced difficult weather conditions which led to some very high worm burdens especially in growing calves and heifers. These conditions will also have caused increased levels of worms on pasture.

Does the type of drench you use matter? The answer to this is yes.

- Eprinomectin, which is the active agent in **Eprinex**, is the most potent broad spectrum drench from the ML family (3 x as potent as Ivermectin) and is the least likely to get into the milk of all of the drenches in this family.

What are the benefits of drenching adult cows with Eprinex?

- Eprinex is also the only pour on drench that has studies in New Zealand showing improved milk production and reproductive performance in cows treated around calving. The fact that cows show an increase in milk production and reproductive performance post-drenching indicates that they do have a parasite burden, and this burden is having a negative effect on them.

Eprinex benefits

- Cows drenched with Eprinex around calving showed a 2% increase in milk production over the season – 7.81KgMS/cow
- 2 year old lactating heifers drenched around calving had a 12.9 day shorter calving to conception interval and a 20% higher first service conception rate.
- When the whole herd was treated there were also repro benefits although these weren't so large

What about the other pour on drenches, do these have any benefits when used on milking cows?

Moxidectin, the active ingredient in Cydectin

- has shown in limited overseas studies an increase in milk production of approximately 1% across the season in treated cows.
- there is no published evidence that Cydectin treatment around calving time improves the reproductive performance of the treated animals.

Abamectin/Ivermectin

- There is no evidence of either a milk production gain or improved repro performance in adult cattle treated with these drenches around calving time.

If you think you would like to look at drenching some/all of your herd in the lead up to mating then please come and talk to us. We have the knowledge and advice to answer your questions and we stock the full range of drenches and drench families to be able to suit your needs and budget.

Retail Promos for October

Eprinex Pour On 25lt. Nil Meat, Nil Milk, Nil Bobby Withholds so perfect for this time of year. Unparalleled Protection and Positive Returns*. Also available with Eclipse and Eclipse E Inj.

- Ice Breaker Long Sleeve or Short Sleeve Packs on selected options.*

Cydectin Pour On - The 17lt Pack is the best buying!

Boss Pour On 5 & 2lt - Get Jamie Oliver Crockery or Cutlery Sets on selected sizes*. (or Limited Oilskin Vests Available)

NEW Clutha Vets Electrolyte 10kg. Be prepared this calving season.

**Limited numbers and conditions apply.*

