

CUD

“Cows Under Discussion” or “Something to Chew On”



January 2016



Clinic News

As the summer rolls on we are preparing ourselves for the next big job - pregnancy testing. If you want accurate information for the start of calving, now is the time to get testing booked in. Remember, if you need help with recording the results, our techs are happy to assist in between calf weighing and leptovaccination jobs.

Keara is taking leave from the Milton clinic until Spring - she is going to be working as a technical advisor for one of our drug supply companies before heading to the UK to get married. We look forward to welcoming her back fighting fit and rearing to go in August.

The builders in Balclutha are on their summer break - when they get back we'll be falling over each other trying to get away from the sound of concrete cutting.

Summer Sun getting to your cows?

At this time of the year we often get called to examine cows with photosensitivity, particularly where summer turnips are being fed. This is caused by the liver being unable to breakdown chemicals within the feed. These substances spill over into the blood stream, and then react with sunlight in the blood vessels close to the skin. This then damages the skin causing the characteristic sunburnt look on non-pigmented (pink) areas of the skin.

Early in the process it can be difficult to diagnose this disease. They can present with a range of confusing symptoms including: kicking at their guts, getting up and down, fidgety in the shed and kicking their cups off. At this stage the skin, particularly around the udder, will usually be hot and inflamed. Over time the affected areas of skin will become thickened and will eventually die and fall off. These animals should be immediately removed from the brassica crop and provided with shade. Antihistamines and anti-inflammatory drugs may be beneficial if given early in the process; a filtabac cream should be applied to affected teats; and we have a cheap, homemade sunblock available for the larger areas of skin. If a lot of your herd is affected then try reducing the amount of brassica crop they are eating by ensuring they only go onto the crop after they have had a feed of grass or silage. In some cases increasing the daily zinc allowance by a small amount seems to have helped relieve symptoms across the herd.

Antibiotics are ONLY warranted if the skin becomes infected and should this or other complications occur please contact your veterinarian.

Blind Calves?

Polioencephalomalacia (PEM), a disease primarily of calves, has been poking its head up again. It is a disease that is caused by a change in the availability of vitamin B1 (thiamine; not B12!) to the animal. Ruminants normally don't need thiamine to be provided in their diet as it is able to be produced by the rumen bugs. An upset to these bugs or the presence of thiaminases (substances that break down the thiamine before it is absorbed) can lead to animals developing this disease. Clinical signs you may notice are weak calves that stumble or are wobbly in the hind legs; they may appear to be blind even though the eye itself looks normal. Treatment is possible, so not all is lost - please refer to your vet. We have had a few farms affected; in previous years one farm had 18 out of 74 calves affected. So don't forget to watch what your calves are doing over the next few months as early treatment has the best response.

Bulls with damaged nether regions

We are once again at the time of year where we get a few phone calls about bulls with damage from mating. Whilst our receptionists are pretty adept at interpreting all the different terms farmers use, we are ultimately talking about the same thing – the bull's penis and/or prepuce (foreskin)! Fractured penis, infections, ruptured sigmoid flexure, or simple kick to the scrotum, all these type of injuries result in the bull unable to work and in some cases unable to urinate. If the bull is unable to urinate the problem is an emergency and the animal in most cases will need to be put down. Mild injuries may be able to be certified for the works or, given the right treatment, recover quietly in the paddock to be sold later on. Future fertility can't be relied upon but will depend on the type and severity of injury. While most men will act quickly, and with empathy, in dealing with these injuries, we do encourage early veterinary advice in order to limit the pain for the bull.

Milk Fever caused by Fat Hen (pictured top) and Yarr (pictured bottom)

We don't only see milk fever associated with calving at the start of lactation - it can occur at this time of year too. If the cow's diet contains too high a level of weeds such as fat hen or yarr, the oxalate compounds in these plants can bind dietary calcium, resulting in cows with classic milk fever symptoms. The normal story in cases such as these is multiple cows down after grazing a weedy new grass paddock. Management of these pastures needs to be carefully thought out, as mowing ahead of the cows means they can no longer be selective about what they are eating, making the situation worse. Most cows will respond well to IV bags of calcium (the same treatment as for cows down with "normal" milk fever). Dusting with limeflour prior to grazing can help to increase the calcium in the diet and if you have cows affected, dusting with limeflour and magnesium for the few days following can help lift calcium levels in cows that might have been subclinically affected. It is important to remember also that weeds can accumulate nitrate with the potential to cause nitrate poisoning. It is always worthwhile giving the clinic a call if you are faced with a group of down cows!



Tokomairiro A & P Show



Thanks to everyone who visited our tent at the 150th Toko A&P Show. It was a great day with many familiar faces through the tent. Congratulations to both Missy and Rocco Ferguson for their winning entries in the children's vegetable animal competition (see left). The Milton staff also got creative with a fine display of fruit/vege animals. Public voting on the day saw the Milton Vet Tech team take out first place with their "monkeys up a tree", followed by Jillian's dinosaur, with 3rd equal going to the Mills family octopus and the Milton Vet Nurses' "Cows Grazing in a Field". Congratulations

to our competition prize winners on the day - Craig and Isobel Hopkins from Milton in our quiz, and the Kelly family from Kaitangata for voting for their favourite staff vege animal.

Checklist for this month

- Pregnancy testing - if not your time to do it, at least get it booked in
- Lepto vaccination of calves and yearlings
- Weigh calves and yearlings - keep an eye on drench intervals and copper and selenium supplementation
- Send the bulls away - by 21 January to have calving over by 1 October
- Neil Chesterton Lameness Events - Thursday 28 January - ring the clinic to book (see enclosed flier for details)

Retail

A brief list this month - look out for this year's upcoming special deals.

Royal Canin Puppy Large Breed - a very good price of \$111.17 Inc. for this Rolls Royce of dog food - limited stock, get in quick

Merial Ancare Calf Packs - includes 2.5lt Eclipse Pour-on, 5lt Arrest C oral, a drench gun and a Powerbuilt Socket Set all for the one great price of \$807.13 incl. saving \$83.84.

Dectomax injection - receive a bluetooth speaker on every starter pack.

Balclutha Clinic

2 Wilson Rd
Balclutha
03 418 1280
admin@cluthavets.co.nz

Milton Clinic

106 Union Street
Milton
03 417 8032
milton@cluthavets.co.nz

Clydevale Store

Clydevale Road
Clydevale
03 415 9121
clydevale@cluthavets.co.nz



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www.cluthavets.co.nz