



# CUD

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

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**March 2015**

**Clinic News** – A good start to (officially) autumn, and I suspect we will get to enjoy a real Indian summer. On farm feed levels have turned the corner with the ‘just in time’ rainfall and some good growth rates starting to be recorded. Pregnancy testing has kept everyone busy as usual, herd scanning continues as well as heifers, and rechecks have started for some.

On the staff front Clutha Vets wedding season has seen the marriage of (vet) Steve & Liz – Liz worked in our admin in Clutha up until mid-2014; also one of our vet nurses in Milton – Tracy Cullen who married Alex MacColl. Congratulations to them all.

## Choosing Your Cull Cows

Culling some cows early will increase the efficiency of the production system by increasing feed availability, improving body condition score, and improving herd quality. You are unlikely to have the luxury to cull every cow you want – often, you are faced with choosing between evils! Think about ranking the following suggestions in the order of importance to your business, and adding them together for each cow you are considering.

- Recurrent mastitis
- Chronic high SCC cows
- Empties
- BVD Persistently infected cows (these shouldn't be in the herd)
- Johne's risk – clinical cases have to go! Consider milk test positives
- Bad feet – especially cows with recurring lameness issues
- Udder conformation
- Age
- Temperament
- 3 titters

## Drying Off

March is time to be thinking about drying some cows off. By now most cows have given you the majority of their milk for the season, and it is important to be focusing on cow condition. Booking five empties to the works every week avoids a last minute rush, and drying off your 5-10 lightest early calving cows each week gives them time to put on condition before going onto winter crop. Each cow you drop from the herd allows you to feed the others a little better, maintaining production and condition, and conserving grass for the last round. And when final dry-off day comes, the job is that much easier, because a good chunk of it has been done already!

Who to dry off first:

- Light conditioned cows
- Lamé cows
- Cows producing less than 5L a day
- High SCC cows – this is your best chance to effect a cure in a high SCC cow you want to keep. The longer the dry period, the greater the chance of cure.
- Bulk milk SCC tends to creep up at the end of the season as production levels fall. Drying off 10% of the herd with the highest SCC can halve the bulk milk SCC.

How:

- Decide who is going to administer the DCT (+/- teat sealant product) for the herd, and whether their level of training is adequate.
- Provide low energy density feed prior to (not necessary for anyone producing less than 5 or 10 L) and 7-14 days after (everyone) drying off to reduce milk production. For example, feeding hay will keep them feeling full without promoting milk production.
- Ensure cows are clearly marked. Dried off cows have been known to get back into the herd!
- Stop milking completely and suddenly. Reducing milking frequency prior is not recommended.
- Ensure cows are checked for mastitis in the paddock each day for the first 10 days.
- Ensure cows can't see or hear the cow shed for the first 7-14 days to prevent disruption of the teat plug.
- If cows are to be transported, this needs to happen either the day of drying off, or after a couple of weeks – NOT in the middle while the teat plug is forming.

### Early dry off - Combination Dry Cow Therapy

If you are drying off a portion of your cows early, keep in mind that if they are dried off by the start of next month they will have an individual dry period length of a minimum of 120 days. As it currently stands there are no antibiotic Dry Cow products that last longer than 70 days, so there will be 50 days at the end of the dry period where these cows are not protected from developing mastitis. The way to combat this is to use a teat sealant product in combination with an antibiotic, so that your cows are protected for the entire length of their dry period. Trial work consistently shows significant reductions in spring mastitis by using this combination.

### Book in your Autumn Consultation Now

- We will prescribe your DCT at this consult, and if you pick up your DCT on the same day you will receive an additional 3% Discount on top of your membership discount. THIS OFFER IS FOR A LIMITED TIME.
- This is also your chance to discuss all things animal health: BVD, Johnhe's, trace elements, fertility reports, leptos.

### Teatsealing

Heifer mastitis is traditionally found to be caused by *Streptococcus uberis*, an environmental bacteria. Although you may not see clinical cases of mastitis until a week or more after calving, the bacteria enters the udder during the weeks leading up to calving. In the ideal situation the heifer will produce her own keratin plug that sits in the teat canal and prevents the bacteria entering. From studies we know this doesn't happen for every heifer and the natural plug is insufficient to prevent the bacteria entering.

Teatseal® is a product that we place into the udder to act as an artificial plug of the teat canal. Maiden heifers can be treated with Teatseal® to help prevent mastitis, between 4 and 10 weeks before they are due to start calving.



At Clutha Vets, we provide a heifer teat sealing service. You have the assurance the teat seal is being administered in the most sterile manner. There are two options of managing the heifers for the procedure. We can use herringbones or rotaries for those heifers that are handy to and trained to use the cow shed. Alternatively, and sometimes preferably, we have a teat seal trailer (shown right) that the heifers can be loaded onto from either an existing loading ramp or from a race in the yards. The trailer enables your heifers to be teatsealed at their runoffs or wintering locations so you don't have to bring them home early.

Due to the increased interest of this service over the last few years, we are starting to plan early so that no one misses the opportunity to reduce their heifer mastitis. In every one of our teatsealing teams, there will be at least one vet available to check and treat any heifer found to be unwell (e.g. pneumonia, woody tongue, etc) as well as check any abnormalities noticed with the developing udders. If you are interested in having us Teatseal® your heifers or would like to discuss this option of mastitis prevention further please contact the Balclutha clinic.



### Lameness

Getting ready for dry off? Got some dodgy looking feet around the place? Some slow old girls on the lanes, but want to keep them in the herd for next year? Have a think about drafting them out and calling us to have a look sooner rather than later. We can do a lot to help, but some cases will take time to heal. The sooner we get onto it, the more likely we can get them back to normal before the winter mud hits.

Don't forget - cows are prey animals; they will not slow down until things are really bad. Keep reminding your staff to keep an eye out for the early signs of lameness so they can be treated as promptly and effectively as possible. Ask us for a free DVD, or put 'Dairy NZ Lameness Scoring' into your search engine for some useful reminders about the early signs of lameness.

#### **This Month's Retail News:**

- **Eclipse Pour-on 12.5lt pack** – receive a Stihl Miniboss Chainsaw.
- **Eprinex Pour-on** – buy 3 x 5lt get the 4<sup>th</sup> one FREE.
- **Eclipse E Injection** – buy 3 packets, get the 4<sup>th</sup> FREE.
- **Genesis Pour-on** – 5.5lt new price, great deal.
- **Eclipse Pour-on** – 2.5 & 5lt, and various other selected cattle drench/injection qualify for a 'tough-as-guts' Swannndri fleece – only while stocks last. See in store for this promo.
- **Nexeptrin Microjet Cattle Injection** – contains eprinomectin and Vitamin E. Low dose of 1ml/100kg. Purchase 4 packets and receive a FREE Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 (7").
- **Cydetin Pour-on 5lt** – receive a portable Bluetooth speaker with each one.
- **Dectomax Pour-on Herd Packs** – 20lt arriving soon.
- **Kaiwaka Children's Wet Weather Clothing** – come and see the over trousers, bib overalls and parkas from size 2 up. These are particularly well priced.