

CUD

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



May 2016

Clinic News

...and the exceptional weather continues. Here at the clinic teatsealing is now under way - no muddy yards to battle keeping udders clean! Last week we farewelled Joanna de Vegt. CVA technician of eight years, Joanna is heading up north to be closer to family. Marc McElrea will be rejoining us next week after his annual stint in the US living on deep fried Mars Bars (& being an AI technician); and locum vet - Hanna Loeffler - will be helping out till the end of July. Hanna studied with Steve Butler at Massey, and you will probably see her at the side of the teatseal trailer, or examining one of your cows in the wee small hours of a wet, cold Sunday night!

End of season pregnancy testing

This is a service we highly recommend – the figures speak for themselves! The estimated cost of wintering one empty cow off farm can be in the region of \$518 per animal depending on where they are grazing. The cost of scanning 400 cows - \$780 or \$1.95 / cow incl GST (this is the cost for herds we have already pregnancy tested earlier in the season). If we detect two empty cows the scan has more than paid for itself. The usual rate of new empty cows is 1.5 cows per 100 scanned. Another advantage of end of season pregnancy testing is identifying any cows that have slipped since your last scan giving you time to replace them.

You can often be unaware that cows have slipped as they have not yet begun to cycle. Some of the reasons for an increased pregnancy loss above the 1-2% 'normal' can include eating/chewing on Macrocarpa (including hedge clippings on the ground), BVD in the herd, Neospora, Salmonella, and mouldy feed. If you are experiencing a higher than normal rate of abortions, please contact us for help.

Timing of Drying Off

With the difficult market conditions some of you may be under pressure to milk cows through till the end of May or into June. If this is the case for you then it is probably worth considering the following factors:

- In order to rest the udder, cows need a minimum dry period of about 45 days, however at least 65 days is usually recommended.
- It is important that cows are dried off in good condition (mixed aged cows condition score 4.5 or better; and R3 heifers 5.0 or better) if you want them to milk well and get in calf easily in the coming season.
- Research has shown that weight milked off cows at the end of one season will lead to reduced milk in the following season.

I would therefore recommend removing the light, early calving cows and drying these off now, the good conditioned cows (BCS 4.5 or better) can then be milked through with little impact on the next season. Clutha Vets have a number of qualified body condition scorers available to score your cows during milking to help you identify the individual cow condition.

We have also been hearing reports that banks have been putting financial pressure onto farmers to not send their cows away to winter grazing. Without careful consideration these sort of management decisions have the potential to lead to a serious compromise of animal welfare and the short and long term production for the affected herd. Clutha Vets has a number of people with expertise in this area to help you match feed supplies to animal feed demand. We would be happy to offer impartial advice in this area to help you manage your way through your situation.

Salmonella

We have seen a number of salmonella cases over the past few years. In most cases they are sporadic, but occasionally large outbreaks can occur that can be devastating. Salmonella is spread by infected cattle, wildlife (especially birds), and contaminated water and feed sources, and can survive for months in the environment. Some animals may show no signs of infection, but often will present with mild diarrhoea, or have severe diarrhoea and shock. Typically this is seen as a cow going off milk with dullness, a high temperature, weight loss, dehydration (sunken eyed) and a bloody scour. Some strains also cause abortion.

Infected animals shed the bacteria constantly, or when stressed. Stressors that can cause carrier animals to start shedding in greater numbers include calving, sudden diet changes, transport, or food/water deprivation. For this reason clinical Salmonella cases often occur at calving/drying off, and rapid spread can lead to outbreaks resulting in the death of many cows. Confirmation of infection is diagnosed with a faecal sample, or on post mortem. Early identification of cases and treatment with antibiotics is important, and any cows showing signs of infection should be isolated.

Prevention is through vaccination with Salvexin+B. This reduces the number of clinical cases and severity of disease, but will not completely prevent all cases. Vaccination costs approximately 87c per cow per dose (member's price incl GST). Initially two doses are required four weeks apart followed by annual boosters, given four to eight weeks pre-calving to provide some colostral protection to newborn calves. And remember, Salmonella can also infect humans!

An easy fix pre-winter

Given the choice, would you feed, drench, mineral dose, lepto vaccinate, and twice-winter an animal who was not only likely to produce half the milk of a normal cow and die young, but also cause ill-thrift in her calf mob from her birth, and make the rest of the dairy herd less productive (and later calving) when she arrives? These animals are 'BVD-PIs' – animals born Persistently Infected with bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) virus; lead therapy is the only cure.

There are two reasons to check for BVD in your 10mo+ R1s this May/June – to give your calves the best chance at reaching their potential, and to protect your herd from infected newcomers down the track. We take blood samples from 15 R1 calves, giving us a snapshot of the antibody levels in that group. This gives us a benchmark figure to work with in our control plan, and gives us a chance to get rid of any "PIs" who might be lurking. Testing young stock is a 'corner piece' of the BVD management puzzle. If you don't measure, you can't manage!

Bobby Calf Welfare Workshops

As you may have read in the press, the industry has made a commitment to help address the issues raised in a SAFE exposé aired on the Sunday programme in November 2015. DairyNZ has been working with Vets, Federated Farmers, MPI and other industry bodies on this issue. They have asked Clutha Vets to help deliver training to farmers in this area on Bobby calf welfare. The training has been designed to raise awareness of farmer responsibilities, to clarify the industry agreed standards and to provide support to farmers so that they can achieve those standards. We will be running a workshop in Balclutha on June 7th, and Gore on June 15th. To register go to the DairyNZ website; or email randrews@cluthavets.co.nz with your name, contact number, and which workshop you would like to attend.

Checklist for this month:

- Ring us to organise trace element testing on your cull cows; or to take liver samples on farm
- Blood testing for BVD Antibody on R1 heifers
- Pre-dry off condition score herd
- Lepto vaccinate herd if not already done (13 months max between annual boosters)
- End of season pregnancy test herd
- Book in heifer teatsealing

Retail

Merial Ancare Cattle drench - purchase a Matrix C 20 litre; 2 x 500mls Eclipse E injection; or a 5 litre Eclipse Pour On and receive a Core Vest.

Eclipse E Injection – or purchase 3 x 500mls Eclipse E injection and receive the 4th packet free.

Promo Eclipse Pour On 5.5 litre – purchase 1 x 5.5 litre and receive an extra 1 litre free.

Eclipse 2.5 litre – purchase 1 x 2.5 litre and receive a Hi-Viz vest.

Eprinex Pour On – purchase 3 x 5 litres and receive the 4th free.

Dectomax Injection – purchase 4 x 500mls and receive another 400mls free plus a Victorinox Knife set free.

Dectomox Pour On Herd pack – receive a Victorinox Knife set with this 15 litre pack.

All Trace Bolus – contains minerals and Vitamins and lasts for 8 months. Cattle must be no less than 150 kg. Ask at retail for more information on this great product.

Nexepurin Injection with Vitamin E 500mls – buy 2 packets get the 3rd free. Great dose rate of 1 ml per 100kg and nil withholding.