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"Cows Under Discussion" or "Something to Chew On"

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Clinic News – After the warmest July on record, and the balmy August just gone, we are now experiencing our usual short sharp (and hopefully only) September wintry blast. We have certainly had some great days “to be born a calf (lamb) etc”. We would like to welcome Andrew Cobner to the vet team. Andrew is from the UK and is joining us as a locum for a few months to help us through the manic period of calving, debudding, metrichecking, non-cycling etc. Speaking of which debudding is well underway and metrichecking is booking up fast as well. If you have some metrichecking dates in mind give us a call now so that we can fit in with you as closely as possible.

Habits for healthy hooves!

Cows are creatures of habit, and so are we. Cow flow will improve if the stock know what to expect and are handled in the same way, day in day out, no matter who is milking. Many farmers and staff know the ‘rules’ for improving cow flow and preventing lameness but forget to stick with them when push comes to shove.

Now is the time to get cows and heifers used to your milking routine and staff to discuss and agree to a few consistent ‘rules’ for your unit. Below are a few ideas to get you started, what are the most important rules on your farm?

- No heads up: on the track, or in the yard
- Don't use the backing gate until at least 2 rows/platforms have been milked
- Only use the backing gate to take up space: move for no longer than 5 seconds at a time
- Agree a top gate routine and stick with it.

Retained Fetal Membranes "RFMs" "Failing to clean" "Dirty cows"

As a general rule, the number of cows holding on to the afterbirth after calving seems to decrease as the season wears on, so it is not uncommon to have high numbers early in the calving period. This year, however, many farmers are commenting on a higher-than-normal number of RFMs. The rejection of the placenta is an active process. It requires energy, a competent immune system, and a range of nutrients including Selenium, Calcium and Vitamin E.

There are a couple of things to bear in mind if you are having high levels of RFMs. First how well are you providing these nutrients - how is your transition cow (springer - colostrum) diet management going? Precisely when was the cows' selenium status assessed, and when did they last receive selenium supplementation? Second, have you discussed treatment of these cows with a vet? Cows with RFMs can become very sick, very quickly, and may require intensive medical care. Finally, what are you doing to note which animals have RFMs (record numbers or paint them)? Even if they are not acutely sick, they should be examined and treated by about three weeks post calving - leaving them to fight a massive infection on their own is a massive drain on their resources, leading to lower production and inevitably lower reproductive success.

Uterine Prolapses

We've had to deal with a few of these recently, the highlight being a beef cow high up on a Waitepeka hill overlooking the Clutha district, on a balmy spring Sunday back when Otago still held the Shield. The cow was supposedly mostly lying down and very quiet, and eventually, she was (one broken fence and a healthy dose of xylazine later!) Prolapses are often a consequence of Milk Fever, due to decreased muscle tone in the uterus. High risk candidates (older cows, overfat cows, prolonged calvings, twins etc) should be dosed with Calcium at the time of calving. Oxytocin (e.g. 5ml for a 500kg cow) can also aid uterine involution. Chances of success are increased by:

- Spotting them early – no more than 8 hours between checks on springers & freshly calved cows. Call vet immediately.
- Minimising damage – if the cow is down, leave her down i.e. don't give Calcium unless it is life-threatening. If the cow is on her side, carefully sit her up to prevent bloat. Remove other stock. If the cow is standing, she should be gently brought in to somewhere that she can be restrained. Concrete surfaces are best avoided.
- Good facilities – if the cow is down, we need to raise the back end of the cow to create a downhill angle. This can be done by extending both back legs behind the cow. Hip lifters can also be helpful. Either way, at least 2 people (not including the vet) will be required. Plus lots of warm water and a clean apron.

E. coli Mastitis

Acute cases of E. coli mastitis are usually seen around calving time, and can be dramatic, resulting in a very sick cow, often lying down. *Downer cows should always be checked for mastitis!* The milk is usually watery and straw-coloured and may contain small clots. Most of the clinical signs are the result of toxins released by the bacteria, and include a rapid heart rate, subnormal temperature, watery diarrhoea, dehydration and loss of appetite. The cow will look thoroughly miserable! These cases will not respond to conventional mastitis treatments, and need prompt administration of i/v and oral fluids and other supportive treatment.

For best chance of survival:

- *Call the vet immediately – these cases are a medical emergency!*
- Cover the cow & move to somewhere sheltered (hip clamps + strap under armpits!)
- Make sure plenty of warm water available (at least 30 litres)
- Hand strip affected quarters completely (can use oxytocin to help); this should be repeated at frequent intervals (e.g. 4 times a day).
- Mastalone can be administered following stripping of the quarter(s). Other intramammaries & injectables (e.g. Tylo) will have no effect on E. coli.
- Inject anti-inflammatory drug into vein (e.g. Metacam or Ketofen) if vet more than an hour away. Discuss with vet first!
- *Do not treat with injectable antibiotics – the vet will usually administer i/v antibiotics following fluid therapy.*

E. coli is an environmental bacteria and gets into the teat via faecal contamination of bedding, calving pad etc. Wet weather conditions can predispose, as well as immune suppression (e.g. induction cows; low Selenium status). Avoid milking cows with wet udders & teats (clean & dry!). Discuss combination DCT (antibiotic + Teatseal) with your vet.

Light Heifers and teeth eruption

Heifers have usually cut their first permanent incisors (central front bottom teeth) by the time they come into the herd but occasionally, especially younger heifers, this coincides with entry into the herd. This can be a cause of significant weight loss in otherwise healthy 2 year olds because this can be accompanied by pain and sometimes infection as the teeth erupt through the gums. So.... take a look inside their mouth if you have any heifers losing weight without other cause. Generally weight loss effects can be minimised by putting them in a separate mob on "ad-lib" feed until teeth are well up. Occasionally antibiotics are required if they get a nasty gum infection around the erupting teeth.

Tail Trimming

We now have the new improved **Tailwell2** tail trimmer (*see right*). The **Tailwell2** is lighter and draws less power, so more tails can be trimmed per charge. It should be used on a 14-volt cordless power drill, with an operating speed of 1,200 to 1,750rpm. The Tailwell2 is available from our Shoof stand at \$542.13 (Member's price incl. GST). To arrange a demo give us a call and we can come out to your farm.



This Month's Retail News:

- **Merial Ancare Anthelmintics** – Purchases of selected Merial Ancare sheep & cattle anthelmintics between now and September will go in the draw for a spot on Clutha Vets Wanaka Wine Tour. Be wined and dined as you visit some of Central's best wineries, escorted by our resident pisshead (sorry, I mean wine connoisseur) Pihi.
- **Eclipse E Injection & Eclipse Pour-on** – With 4 x 500ml injection & 2.5 or 5lt pour-on, receive 'The Angus Book', a glossy colour book celebrating 150 years of the Angus breed in New Zealand, or receive an LED Lenser headlight.
- **Eprinex Pour-on** – Buy 3 x 5lt and get another 5lt free.
- **Dectomax Injection** – Receive a G Shock watch or Outback hat with every 2 starter packs.
- **Boss Cattle Injection** – A new combination injection of ivermectin, eprinomectin and levamisole for cattle from Alleva. Also effective against lice.
- **Cydectin Pour-on** – Receive an extra 10% free.
- **Combat Topline Pour-on** – Only \$418.21 nett inc GST / 5lt or \$2.34 / 500kg cow.
- **Milligans Calf Milk Powder** – Our price for this season will be \$92.67 nett inc GST for a 20kg bag. Get your order into retail now to secure supplies at this price. 50 x bags \$90.61 nett incl GST
- **Vetmin Flexi** – Tub of 20 \$299.96 nett incl GST – ie \$14.99 each.
- **TeatX** – teat spray. Call in to Clutha Vets for your 20ltr FREE sample.
- **FIL 10ltr** – pails of tailpaint \$120.90 nett