

CUD

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



July 2020

Clinic news

The winter has started off in an uncharacteristically dry fashion which has produced excellent conditions for efficient crop feeding. Unfortunately, it seems that all good things must come to an end with a very wet week having just occurred. Big shout out to those who are shifting stock on crop in what has suddenly become very sloppy conditions. Hang in there! We hope everyone has been able to get some rest or time away from the farm this winter and wish you all the very best for the rapidly approaching season ahead.

We are happy to announce that we will be welcoming Anene du Plessis to the team in August. Anene will be working out of the Milton clinic as a mixed practitioner so please give her a warm welcome to the area if you see her out and about. Jason's foot has made good progress and, much to his relief, he has been able to return to a fairly normal workload. Ruth has a longer road to recovery ahead of her after she broke her arm (requiring surgery), we hope to see her back at work very soon for light duties! You won't see Rob out on farm this spring as he will be taking a some well-earned extended leave from now through till early next year.

Transitioning cows before calving

Simply put, the aim of transitioning cows is to prepare them for calving in such a way that they have minimal calving difficulties and minimal health issues e.g. milk fever. This will have a good flow on effect for milk production and reproduction. Simple recommendations to achieve a good transition are:

21—14 days prior to calving Ideally reduce the amount of crop being eaten and increase the amount of supplement (balage/silage) to prepare the rumen for changes in feed type and volume (stretch the rumen). Opening them up to finish off the crop and offering limited supplement is not ideal preparation. Aim for as close as practically possible to a 50:50 diet of crop and supplement.

10—14 days prior to calving Remove cows off crop - cows to go onto either a calving pad or a springer paddock. Calving cows on crop is no longer acceptable under animal welfare guidelines.

- Provide 20g of elemental magnesium down the throat each day to the springers. This can be in the form of Magnesium oxide or anionic salts (mag sulphate/mag chloride) poured onto the balage/silage to prepare the cow for milk production and reduce the risk of milk fever. Our clients have had great success with these products and we offer two different springer mixes from Agvance and Nutritech – give us a call to discuss.
- Make sure trace elements are adequate. Low selenium levels can cause high levels of retained foetal membranes. We recommend all cows that haven't been getting selenium over the winter, be given a dose of selenium a couple of weeks before due date either as they return home from grazing, or as they are drafted into the springer mob.

Feeding springers on the pad

- diet includes: Silage/Balage/Hay – cows should be offered at least 10kg of feed of a lower energy value (9-10MJME) to avoid excessive energy intake. Save your rocket fuel silage/balage for the milkers.
- Feeding space is important so that all the cows can have access. Ideally feed ad-lib with at least 30-40cm/cow as cows in the lead up to calving often eat small amounts often. If batch feeding then you need to ensure all cows can access the feed at the same time – minimum 60cm feeding space per cow.

Feeding springers on the paddock - ideally choose a paddock that has not had effluent applied.

- Limit the grass intake to 2Kg per cow to reduce the milk fever risk.
- Add in 7-8kg of balage/silage/hay.

Other things to think about:

- Twin and low body condition score cows – these should be removed from the crop now. Run them on grass through till they are due to enter the springer mobs.

Some basics to plan for “Colostrum cow management”

- Remove calved cows from the springers onto ad-lib fresh feed as soon as possible. Don't hold them on the yard for too long post calving as this can cause them to go down with metabolic issues.
- Dust mag oxide 70 grams and Limeflour 150 grams.
- Consider if once a day milking in early August may suit your system.

If you would like to discuss your late winter crop feeding and springer cow transition then don't be shy in giving us a call to lend a hand. We have several vets who have expertise in this area keen to help you.

Teething of Heifers

After seeing some very worn down and chipped baby teeth the other day, one of which had become infected and caused a large abscess under the jaw and some significant weight loss, I thought it would be a good idea to talk about the teeth of our cows.

While cattle use their tongue to grasp and rip off long grass, they use their front teeth (incisors) for grazing short grass and for chipping the bulbs of swedes and fodderbeet. Baby incisors are much smaller and lack the wide, blade-like appearance of adult incisors. This is one of the reasons that younger animals struggle on the harder, high DM% varieties of fodderbeet. Unfortunately for heifers, the transition from baby incisors to first adult incisors (becoming what sheep farmers refer to as a 2-tooth animal) occurs in cattle between 18 and 24 months of age, and often happens during the winter. While undergoing this transition, it is even harder for them to chip bulbs as the middle two baby teeth become loose and fall out. Making sure heifers can eat the food you are planning to provide during the winter should be a consideration you include in the decision making process.

This photo (credit to Mississippi State University Extension Service) shows the difference in size of the first two adult incisors vs worn down baby incisors either side.



New calcium product

Giving oral calcium as a preventative measure against milk fever, or as part of the treatment for down cows, is nothing new. Calpro Bolus provides us with a good option to use in both of those situations. It contains two forms of calcium, fast releasing Calcium Chloride and slower releasing Calcium Sulphate. This product will not have the risk of getting liquid in the lungs that the oral bottles have, and should be nicer for the cow than the pain felt getting a bag under the skin.

Times to use this product include:

- After giving a calcium bag in the vein of a cow down with milk fever. The bolus will aid in preventing any relapse.
- To any cows that seem “wobbly” but aren't down with milk fever.
- Immediately post calving to any high risk cows, i.e. older cows, high producers, overly fat cows.
- Any cows (except heifers) that you assist to calve.
- Late season when you have minimal cows in the colostrum mob and dusting is not as effective. These cows should get 2 boluses, the first immediately post calving and the second 12hrs later.

“Cows Rock!” Competition

Each month, we will try to come up with a suitably bovine set of lyrics. All you have to do is name the Band/Singer and the Song!

And you say, “What does this mean?” and he screams back, “You're a cow! Give me some milk or else go home”

Answers to admin@cluthavets.co.nz by 24th July. Correct answers will go in the hat for a box of beer or reasonably-priced bottle of wine.



Things to do in July

- Rotavirus vaccinate early calving cows (3 weeks pre calving)
- Book in your spring (RVM) consult
- Final check of calf sheds, including checking teats on calf feeders
- Organise your important spring treatments to have on hand
- Organise mineral and trace element supplements for spring
- Reminder to bring any “red drugs” with you to your Spring Consult. We must sight them to authorise them for the next 4 months—EXCEDE LA, EXCENEL, TYLO, TYLOFEN & MASTALONE