Quarterly News and Views

Over the Fence

Greetings from Wanganui Vet Services

July 2014 • Issue 20

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Animal Health Reminders

For the next three months:

- Sheep scanning
- Copper supplementation of cattle
- Pre lamb drenching & vaccinate ewes
- Dog vaccination and ram runs
- Lice treatment for sheep and cattle
- Liver fluke treatment

Cows are dried off and sheep scanning has been under way for some time now, so we must be into winter. We have been fortunate so far, as there have not been that many days when it has actually felt like it.

It has been something of a strange year – the dry period did not seem as bad as the previous year, but even when the grass came in autumn, stock did not gain weight as expected and it meant grazing heifers failed to finish as well as expected, and lambs similarly could not be finished. It all comes down to feed quality / energy value and again demonstrates the value of testing and keeping a proper handle on feed quality – particularly supplements.

Our area must have some very good feed or some other magic, however, if you follow the successes of our local racehorse owners. It is great to see how, as a region, we punch well above our weight in stakes earnings for Thoroughbred racing, and this still seems to be improving.

Sheep scanning results are so far looking respectable – it's looking like a small lift in average percentages from the front country which is where most of the early scanning mobs come from. Early indications from hill country are also looking good. We have the same experienced crew in action this year including our Welshman who is back for a month again. John has had a busy year as he is the current manager of the Welsh shearing team as well as scanning sheep and farming. We are threatening to take a bus load to Wales for his 60th next year!

Hopefully you dairy farmers are getting a well-earned break from carrying the rest of us in New Zealand. I am told that any of the Pacific Islands is a good place to be this time of year.

DRENCH CHECKS ARE STILL WORTH DOING

Back in the late nineties there were no 'new' drench families on the horizon; combination drenches had not been developed; however drench resistance had started and farmers were quite fearful they might cop a drench resistance problem and not have a suitable drench available to control parasitism in their stock.

Drench checks became very popular to find out if drenches being used back then were indeed working.

With the advent of new drench families and combination drenches both double and triple since then; drench checks have lost their popularity.

However drench resistance is still occurring and it probably won't be long before the new drench families develop resistance as

MANAGEMENT OF CATTLE PARASITES

The autumn and winter period is the most important time of the year for controlling internal parasites in cattle. Following the summer drought, autumn rain softens the dried up dung pads which contain millions of infective larvae that are released. These larvae soon migrate up the stems of the lush new growth to infect grazing cattle.

Consequently the seasonal prevalence of worm species peaks in the autumn/ winter period. The warmer than usual early winter period adds to the worm peak with an increased threat of clinical parasitism. This period is when beef and dairy cattle face their largest challenge from internal parasites.

Worms cause gut damage and scouring which limits growth potential. Failure to reach target growth rates, reduced body condition and lower fertility rates are among the problems experienced. These effects are particularly challenging in rising 1 year and 2 year cattle striving to reach target weights and reproductive potential in heifers.

There are 3 major worm species affecting cattle; Oestetagia, Trichostrongylus and Cooperia.

Cooperia species have traditionally been considered a minor problem. Perhaps one of the reasons for this was the other two worms are more damaging and overshadowed the effects of Cooperia. However more recent scientific studies have shown that Cooperia can cause overwhelming infection where a considerable reaction results from the the sheer weight of numbers of worms in the gut. This leads to lost production from clinical disease such as scouring and ill thrift.

One of the reasons for the increased prominence of Cooperia is the widespread development of drench resistance of this worm to the mectin (ML) family including abamectin, doramectin and moxidectin. Evidence suggests that this resistance is now widespread throughout NZ.

Fortunately Levamizole is still highly effective against this worm. However Oestertagia the most pathogenic worm in cattle is often resistant to Levamizole. Both Cooperia and Oestertagia species have a similar degree of resistance to the 3rd white drench family.

The upshot of all this information is; the best drench to use is a combination drench containing both levamizole and a mectin (ML) active to have a fair degree of certainty that all 3 worms will be cleaned out without too much risk of resistance.

Regular drenching of young cattle is usually required through the autumn, winter period through to spring to keep internal parasites under control and prevent lost production.

well, so we still recommend doing drench checks to find out if you are using an effective drench.

Drench checks are easy to do. All that is required is a random 10 or so fresh faecal samples from lambs or calves 7 to 10 days after their last drench to check the faecal egg counts. If there are no eggs, the drench is working; if eggs are present the drench is either not working as well as it should be or else there is management issues e.g. under dosing;

A good time to do a drench check is at the weaning drench which will generally be early enough to capture all the worm species and also early enough to make a change or do further investigation if the results are equivocal.

STARVATION/ HYPOTHERMIA IN NEWBORN LAMBS

(An improved method that will save more lambs)

This article has been in a previous newsletter; but is worth repeating because the following recipe to save starved and hypothermic lambs really does work.

The loss of lambs that occurs from scanning to tailing is one of the constraints to lamb production in New Zealand. The national average is about 19% but individual farms can be much worse. Every year, depending on the weather at lambing time, thousands and thousands of newborn lambs die between 0-3 days of age from the combined effects of starvation and hypothermia.

The usual farmer treatment if anything is done, is into a lamb warmer of some sort and fed by stomach tube or teat colostrum or milk

The following method described below will result in;

- A much greater speed of recovery.
- A much greater chance of recovery.
- Once used to it, a more rapid treatment time than tubing etc that is important when time is precious.

THE STEPS

1. Dry the lamb – this reduces heat loss

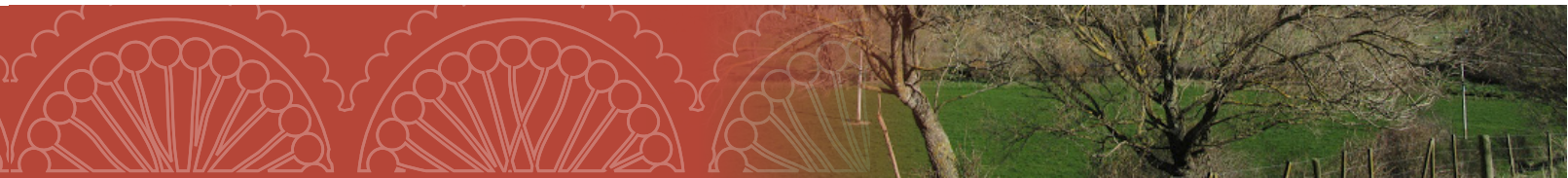
An intra abdominal injection of 10mls per kg of (preferably warmed, but in practice that doesn't seem to matter) 20% dextrose. Hold the lamb by its front legs or it can be lying on its side and using a 60ml syringe and an 18g needle no longer than 1/2inch and inject into the lambs abdomen in front of the naval at a slight angle towards the chest with as much hygiene as possible. (Squirt the site with meths or disinfectant first) The dextrose must be 20%)

We can supply the dextrose and show you what to do. Bring in a lamb that needs treating so we can demonstrate.

2. Warm the lamb – Place in warm air at 40 –45 °C

(Lambs aged 5 hours or more have a much improved recovery rate if they receive an injection of Dextrose before they are warmed because they have already used up the stores of energy they were born with and warming them and thereby increasing their metabolic rate when energy stores are exhausted can hasten their death)

The results from this technique are impressive. Once the initial reluctance to inject into the abdomen is overcome it is guaranteed that you will take to it with gusto, as the results are so impressive. Use a thermometer to assess the lamb. With a temperature below 37°C the lamb needs resuscitating. Once above 38°C take out of the warm air and start feeding preferabl¬¬y colostrum (100-200mls) by stomach tube if necessary then back on to mum or 50ml/kg colostrum or milk replacer three times a day



TRANSITION MANAGEMENT OF COWS

The transition period covers the period 3-4 weeks prior to calving through to 3-4 weeks after calving and is a brief but critical time where as much as 80% of the herd's disease costs are generated.

Given the close connection between metabolic diseases, reproductive performance, efficient rumen function and immune suppression a carefully planned transition feeding programme is now seen as a prime opportunity to set the herd up for a successful season.

Information from Dairy Australia would indicate that the return on investment is likely to be $4.00-$5.00 per $1.00 spent.

The 3-4week period before calving is the time when the cow is metabolically preparing for calving, the udder is regenerating and beginning to manufacture colostrum and the foetus is growing and developing very quickly. The foetus can now be likened to a 'true parasite' as it is demanding at least 3kg DM prior to calving

The nutrient demands are rapidly increasing, but the cow's appetite and

SCABBY MOUTH IN LAMBS

Scabby mouth is present on up to 60% of New Zealand farms. Once the parapox virus that causes the disease is on a farm, its there for good and poses a serious risk to lamb productivity. Because the scabby mouth virus is so persistent, vaccination of lambs at docking/tailing is the best option for protection. Lambs need only one vaccination for life and previously unvaccinated bought in stock should also be vaccinated.

Scabby mouth infections spread quickly in unvaccinated flocks. Infection occurs usually through damaged skin, such as abrasions on the skin of the muzzle or hoof. It mainly affects lambs but older animals can also be affected.

Affected lambs fail to thrive, growth rates are depressed and productivity suffers. When hooves are affected lambs can become lame. Scabby mouth can also be passed on to the ewe's udder by suckling lambs, reducing feeding and predisposing the ewe to mastitis.

Scabby mouth is a zoonotic disease, which means it can be spread to humans either via the natural infection or by being scratched with the vaccine. Its called Orf in humans. All steps should be taken to minimise the risk of infection e.g wearing gloves when vaccinating.

The vaccine is a prescription animal remedy, so can only be purchased from Vets on prescription.

NEW LONG ACTING FLEA COLLAR FOR WORKING DOGS

SERESTO is the name of the new long acting effective flea control collar for dogs and cats.

- Long lasting protection for 8 months
- Kills fleas and repels and kills ticks
- Ideal way to ensure working dogs don't spread ticks to cattle with the risk of them getting the new blood borne disease 'Theileria'
- The two active ingredients are rapidly distributed across the entire body through the fat layer of the skin.
- The Seresto collar is odourless and water resistant because the active ingredients are stored in the fat layer of the skin, so being wet won't wash them away.
- It is safe to use in puppies from 7 weeks of age and kittens from 10 weeks of age
- It has a high safety margin for dogs, cats and people.
- It can safely be used alongside normal collars without damaging them
- Cost effective for working dogs compared to other treatments
- Highly recommended for working dogs.

intake is decreasing because the rapidly growing foetus is occupying more and more space restricting rumen fill prior to calving.

Poor nutrition with a negative energy balance prior to calving will have a profound effect on body condition at and after calving and subsequent production and fertility.

With all this in mind, it is very important to feed cows top quality nutrient dense feed leading up to calving that is high in carbohydrate. Carbohydrate is necessary to maintain energy intake and to promote rumen development. An ideal source of carbohydrate is maize silage.

The key point is to feed cows exactly the same nutrient dense feed before and after calving so cows don't have to adapt to a dietary change during the critical calving period. Calving is not an issue because most calving problems are associated with light cows that are under weight. Most calving problems are associated with under feeding. Calves are always born in good condition despite feeding level as they always have priority over the dam. In other words an under weight cow will still deliver a big calf.

WELL GROWN HEIFERS ARE CRITICAL

Even though the cost of rearing a dairy heifer to first calving is around $1200-$1500 only about 36% of New Zealand heifers achieve their target body weight by 22 months of age. On average NZ heifers are 50kg lighter at first calving than they should be producing about 6.5kg MS less in their first lactation. At $8.00 per kgMS that equates to over $50 lost income in the first lactation let alone the reduced subsequent fertility.

Body weight at first calving has a significant effect on a heifer's lifetime performance. The heavier a heifer is at calving, the higher her milk yield for that and following lactations as well as better life time fertility.

Heavier heifers will have more reserves which can be utilised to produce more milk in early lactation when their own energy requirements are a lot less than the energy required for milk production. As well the heavier the heifer is at calving, the closer she is to her mature body weight and consequently over her first lactation less energy needs to be partitioned for growth for her to meet her mature body weight. This energy can be used for milk production.

Although the effect of additional live weight on milk production in the first lactation is affected by the mature body weight of the animal and her genetic potential; typically an additional 0.1 – 0.2kg of milk solids is gained for every 1kg of live weight gain at first calving.

Establishing target body weights with age and monitoring regularly by weighing is really important to maximise the return on investment.

MINIMUM LIVE WEIGHT TARGETS DAIRY HEIFERS

Age	% of mature weight	Jersey	Crossbred	NZ Friesian	American Holstein/ Friesian
6 mths	30%	120kg	135kg	150kg	165kg
15mths *(mating)*	60%	240kg	270kg	300kg	330kg
21mths *(May)*	90%	360kg	405kg	450kg	495kg
Mature *(calving)*	100%	400kg	450kg	500kg	550kg

BOBBY CALVES

A reminder to Dairy Farmers that it is an offence to present a bobby calf for slaughter containing residues of antibiotics or residues of any other animal remedies that have with holding periods.

The penalty for presenting a calf for slaughter containing residues of antimicrobial substances is up to $20,000 for an individual and up to $100,000 for accompany.

THE RULES

- A calf treated with any antibacterial directly including an antibiotic or sulphur drug cannot be slaughtered as a bobby calf.
- A calf that has been indirectly exposed to an animal remedy including an antibiotic or sulpha drug by drinking contaminated milk before the with holding period has elapsed must be placed on "residue free" milk for a minimum of 7 days before being submitted for slaughter.
- If a pregnant cow has been treated with an animal remedy and she calves within the meat withholding period of the product, the calf should not be submitted for slaughter until the cow becomes eligible for slaughter.(eg, antibiotics, dry cow therapy, dips, drenches etc).

TIPS ON CALVING A COW

- Give assistance after 2-3 hours from the start of first stage labour with a cow and 5-6 hours with a heifer or earlier if obviously having trouble calving
- Good hygiene practices are essential to help avoid uterine infections and delayed conception.
- Clean down vulva and surrounding area with copious amounts of disinfectant and warm water. Use a soft brush for cleaning.
- Also clean both hands and arms up to the shoulders. Ensure nails are short
- Small hands best(woman!) when repositioning an abnormal presentation
- Use a protective apron to keep self clean
- Use plenty of lubricant on hands and arms and in the birth canal
- First thing to do is to decide whether it is a normal or abnormal presentation.
- Important to determine if the legs presented are back legs or front legs. A back leg has a hock. A front leg a knee.

Normal = Anterior presentation: Head and front feet first. Soles of feet pointing down
Abnormal = Posterior presentation: Back legs and rear end first. Soles of feet pointing up
= ***Head back:*** Front feet presented with head back down one side.
= ***Foot or feet back:*** Head presented with one or no feet presented.
= ***Breech:*** Tail first with the hind legs extended forward under the body.
= ***Transverse ventral:*** Belly first
= ***Transverse dorsal:*** Back first
= ***Upside down:*** Head and feet presented but upside down

=Twins; If there is more than 2 feet in the pelvic canal it is essential that you determine whether it is twins or perhaps a transverse presentation when both front and back legs can be presented at once. Sometimes it is deformed. Don't start pulling until you are sure that you have identified either the two front or back legs.

- Correct any abnormal presentation before you start pulling. Usually best to repel the calf to create more room to make it easier to do the correction. Apply more lubricant at the same time.
- Put sterilized ropes or chains around the fetlock joints and preferably around the back of the head and between the jaws as well to give better traction. Don't over apply traction and damage the cow or heifer. Tractors and motorbikes not recommended. A firm steady pull to be applied preferably in time with the dam's contractions.
- The direction of the pull should be directly behind and aimed down to the cow's hocks. It may be necessary to twist the calf slightly to prevent the hips becoming locked as they pass through the pelvis.
- If can't reposition the foetus easily or steady traction won't budge the calf call a Vet without delay before the cow gets too dry, stressed and damaged
- After delivery; inject the cow with 5mls oxytocin to contract the uterus down and help get rid of any retained foetal membranes and help milk letdown.
- Treat with penicillin if the calf is dead or any sign of infection or bad bruising.
- If there is evidence of nerve damage, an anti inflammatory injection is useful
- Any sign of milk fever give calcium. Oral calcium often sufficient.
- Give additional energy if stressed out e.g. starter drench
- Ensure the newborn calf gets a drink of colostrum immediately otherwise tube feed it.

LEPTOSPIROSIS IN SHEEP

Most farmers know that Leptospirosis is a serious disease that can infect cattle and from cattle infect humans. There is perhaps only a few farmers that know that Leptospirosis can also affect sheep. No where near as common but it can happen. We have had more than one case in our practice over recent years

In sheep, Leptospirosis can cause abortions in ewes, red water (red urine) and deaths in lambs. Recent studies at Massey University have found that 97% of sheep farms have evidence of infection. It is also estimated that 10-20% of sheep in NZ are shedding Leptospira bacteria at any one time.

Farmers that do have problems with redwater and deaths in lambs or abortion in ewes can vaccinate to prevent losses.

Two vaccines are now licensed for sheep in NZ after trial work confirmed their effectiveness. Ultravac 7in1 which gives 5in1 clostridial and Lepto protection. Leptoshield that just gives Lepto protection.

A lepto vaccination programme in sheep begins with two shots in lambs from tailing to weaning followed by annual boosters for ewes.

DETECTING AND TREATING DIRTY COWS

Many cows develop bacterial infections in their uterus post calving. Endometritis is inflammation of the internal lining of the uterus, without signs of sickness, and occurs in 10-20% of cows. This is a well recognised cause of reduced fertility, late calving cows and higher empty rates and is also associated with a reduced milk yield.

Recent studies have shown the benefits of checking for and treating infected cows, in particular those with risk factors which mean they are 'compromised'.

Compromised cows include those with:

- Retained foetal membranes more than 12-24 h after calving
- Assisted calvings
- Vaginal discharge
- Dead calf at birth
- Milk fever (hypocalcaemia) within 30 days of calving
- Twin calving
- Ketosis within 30 days of calving
- Induction of calving and abortion

These compromised cows have a much higher chance of developing uterine infections and it is particularly important to examine them. This can be done using a Metricheck device. You can either check cows yourself with the Metricheck or get one of our Vets out to do it for you.

The remainder of the herd may also be infected (with no outward signs) and should be checked also. In fact, this group can typically account for up to two thirds of infected cows in seasonal calving herds.

Metrichecking should be carried out from 2-4 weeks post the individual cow's calving.

Diagnosis

Looking for the presence or absence of a vaginal or cervical discharge is a currently the best way of finding these cows when done early. The Metricheck device is the most accurate practical method of doing so.

The following is suggested to help minimise problems with endometritis:

- Examine all cows (especially compromised cows) to identify infected cows and treat them appropriately.
- Check cows at fortnightly intervals so they can be checked and treated appropriately from at least 2-4 weeks post calving.

Treatment

There are a couple of options for treating cows with endometritis. Which one depends on a number of factors, and is best decided by your vet.

For further information on diagnosing and treating dirty cows after calving, please contact the clinic or discuss with one of our Dairy Vets.

What's **Up**

I DID NOT KNOW THAT!

In 1903 the Wright brothers flew for 59 seconds. 38 years later the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. 28 years after that, we landed on the moon.

When a male bee climaxes, their testicles explode then they die.

Blue whales heart is the size of a VW Beetle and that you could swim through some of its arteries.

Once Charlie Chaplin entered a contest for "Charlie Chaplin look-alikes" and he came in third.

George Washington spent about 7% of his annual salary on booze.

Months that begin on a Sunday will always have a "Friday the 13th."

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