Over the Fence

Greetings from Wanganui Vet Services

July 2015 • Issue 24

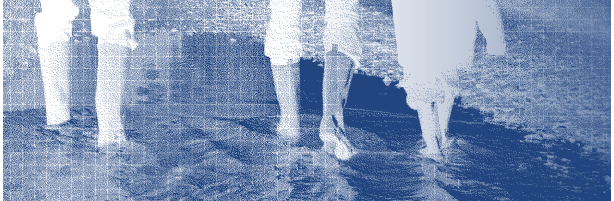
Quarterly News and Views

Inside this Issue:

Animal Health Reminders

For the next three months:

- Copper supplementation of cattle
- Pre lamb drenching and vaccine ewes
- Lice treatment for sheep and cattle
- Liver fluke treatment.
- Calving



Well what a month we have had – floods (the eighty five year floods that come every 10 years), slips, southerly cold snaps, frosts etc etc. Some would say that we are getting a proper winter this year for a change with plenty of use out of our thermals so we really need spring to come early.

I hope that you are all coping with what has been thrown at you – it seems to me people have done an awesome job of getting things back to some sort of functional. I thought that some of the roads that have been opened again would have taken months to fix. The blocked roads and tracks washed out and shredded farms have made for a challenging season of sheep scanning with several farmers deciding not to bother this year.

Since Christmas, it has been challenging trying to balance feed supply and demand. Feed levels were not great before the floods anyway but things are quite grim on many properties now, with some significant destocking being considered – now that trucks can at last get to the gate.

If you have concerns about your own stock and don't have the resources to correct things, don't hesitate to give us a call. We have strong networks and access to a variety of avenues for assistance, so please don't feel isolated or unsupported – we are here and very willing to help out.

We do remind you of the importance of keeping up regular drenching of both cattle and sheep. We have had lower feed intakes and flood stressors so a drop off in parasite immunity and we are now grazing down to very low pasture levels so cannot afford to slip up on our drench intervals. We have been seeing problems already so be advised to keep this in mind.

In spite of all this, the trend is that sheep scanning results are proving better than last year, cows have started calving with few problems so far and local horses keep winning races so it is not all bad.

TRACE ELEMENTS

It is somewhat out of fashion to talk about trace elements much these days as most believe that they have a sensible supplementation plan for their farm and it is all under control.

We are quite often finding that this is not in fact the case, so a few reminders may be in order regarding the trace elements that we see causing problems in our district.

COPPER

Copper deficiency is often a problem of cattle and sheep in late winter / early spring.

In cattle this can cause poor growth rates, ill thrift scouring and poor conception rates while in sheep we see swayback, steely wool and broken bones in young stock with no signs in older animals.

In our patch we have country which has a primary deficiency of copper – namely all the coastal country and then alot of farms which have stock with low copper levels as a result of interference with copper absorption by other elements – mostly sulphur and molybdenum. Conception rate problems in cattle and broken bones in lambs are the common symptoms we see in Wanganui.

You cannot test for copper problems through soil or foliage tests – an assessment of levels can only be done from animal testing. This is by blood tests or liver sampling and as levels can be expected to be at their lowest in late winter, testing before this time will best help you manage problems for your property.

Most cattle on hill country properties in this area can benefit from copper supplementation in late winter and this is usually all they will need. This is most easily done by a single injection.

SELENIUM

As with copper in our region, the coastal strip is all generally low in selenium but many other hill country properties also have low levels.

In sheep we see higher percentage of barren ewes as a result of embryonic mortality and sperm problems in rams, lamb deaths within a few days of birth due to white muscle disease and poor lamb growth rates. In cattle we see ill thrift in young growing cattle, decreased milk production and poor fertility.

We have had several instances of poor fertility associated with low selenium levels recently, so it is worth monitoring levels on your farm. This is easily done by getting some bloods tested at any time.

Supplementation can be done by dressings with fertiliser or directly with injection, oral dosing or pour on. Some cattle need supplementing every three months, but in sheep selenium levels can often be maintained by having selenium in the drench and vaccine.

It is worth noting that just because your neighbour has tests done and finds that everything is fine with respect to trace element levels, this does not necessarily apply to your property. Similarly, levels can change, so it is still worth testing levels of these two elements in particular every few years.

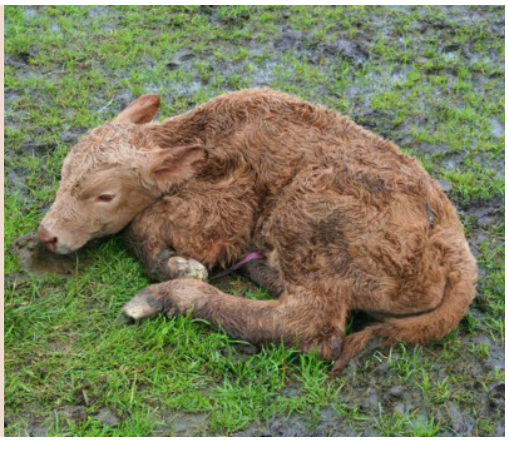
Give us a call and we can organise some testing for you and discuss the most appropriate animals for sampling.

THE EFFECT OF WET WEATHER

Just to reinforce alot of the advice we receive about keeping animals warm here's some interesting facts about shivering calves.

Temperature at which calves shiver	Friesian Calves	Jersey Calves
Dry Coat, calm	3°C	9°C
Dry coat, wind	8°C	13°C
Wet coat, wind	13°C	17°C

So leaving recently born calves out in cold, windy wet weather for any longer than necessary is basically a death sentence. Worth bearing in mind.



CALVING REMINDERS

You should provide assistance to calving heifers and cows when any of the following occur.

- Heifers not making progress within 2 hours after the first signs of abdominal straining.
- Cows not calved within 2 hours after the first signs of abdominal straining.
- Calving has not occurred within 3-4 hours after membranes have ruptured
- Delivery has commenced; the calf's legs or head are (just) visible externally and it is obvious the presentation is abnormal.
- Delivery has commenced; the calf's legs or head are (just) visible externally and the calf is not delivered within 30 minutes for cows, 1 hour for heifers.

WORMS

As many or you know, this year there were some From weaning to maturity is a critical period while the young ruminant develops all the systems for maximum production. Worms such as Ostertagia, Cooperia and Trichstrongylus can severely limit the potential lifetime production capacity. The signs of worm infestation are ill-thrift, dirty tails and potbellies.

The goal of parasite control is to minimise the exposure of young animals to worm larva on the pasture. Strategic or regular dosing of young stock during the summer and autumn will help to reduce contamination of pastures in the autumn and early winter when survival of free living worm larvae is high. Late winter dosing will help reduce contamination of spring pastures. Larval uptake by young cattle will be reduced if they graze pastures previously grazed by other species or older cattle, or new grass or hay and silage paddocks.

Treatment of worms is based upon the three major anthelmintic groups available. They are the Benzimidazoles or white drenches the Levamisoles or clear drenches and the macrocytic lactones or avermectins.The anthelmintic group used should be changed on an annual basis to slow the development of resistance by worms to the drench group.

Spring has been a very traditional time to drench cattle. This has been because of the threat of Type 2 Ostertagia outbreaks. This worm has the ability to accumulate over the winter and spring, and remain in an inhibited state in the abomasums. Various factors over the spring, and even into the summer, can trigger these inhibited worms to continue their development. If this development occurs rapidly, the host animal can suddenly become 'wormy' and have severe symptoms leading to death.

Over recent years the cases of Type 2 Ostertagia outbreaks have become much less common. This is because Ostertagia is not the dominant worm in many cattle systems anymore. Because of grazing systems that favour the dominance of the worm species Cooperia, and because of the use of drenches that have a persistant activity against Ostertagia, we do not see the levels of Ostertagia Infestation that we used to see in the past. Nevertheless, spring worm burdens that can interfere with growth rates still occur, and are normally due to Ostertagia.These are usually more subtle these days and often cause nothing else other than a reduced growth rate.

Therefore drenching cattle at the end of winter or early spring is still worth-while. The drench given needs to be able to remove inhibited Ostertagia. This is particularly so if no drenches have been given over the winter. The options available for this are Oxfendazole, Albendazole or any of the endectocides administered anyway.

On farms where cattle are the minor stock class And young cattle graze predominantly sheep areas, or older cattle areas, their risk of spring worm challenges are low. Where young cattle spend the winter on much the same areas for the autumn and /or winter, the risks are much greater. The relative risks can be worked out, and the need for and timing of any treatments can also be worked through. We can certainly help ypou with advice on this as every property is different.

CATTLE ABORTION

At times like this when feed is short and we are getting rough weather, branches can come down from trees can suddenly cause cattle to abort.

The risk trees are the conifer species macrocarpa and radiata pine – these trees contain a toxin – isocupressic acid or ICA within their foliage and bark whether green or brown as do Leyland Cypress and Ponderosa Pine. This toxin can cause abortions in cattle only (no other species) by reducing blood flow to the uterus resulting in oxygen deprivation to the foetus and resultant abortion. As pregnancy advances the risk of abortion from ICA increases.

Radiata pine has extremely low levels of this toxin compared to macrocarpa . It would still be prudent to ensure cattle are not grazing in pine plantations in late pregnancy but it is the macrocarpa, Leyland cypress and ponderosa pine that must be avoided at any stage of pregnancy.

BOBBY CALF BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Fit for Transport

Four days old / dry navel / hard hooves / no disease.

Active and alert / no injuries / fed and watered

On the Farm

Feed colostrums to all calves

Give calves access to good quality water at all times

Protect calves from the wind, rain and cold at all times

Handle calves gently and with care at all times

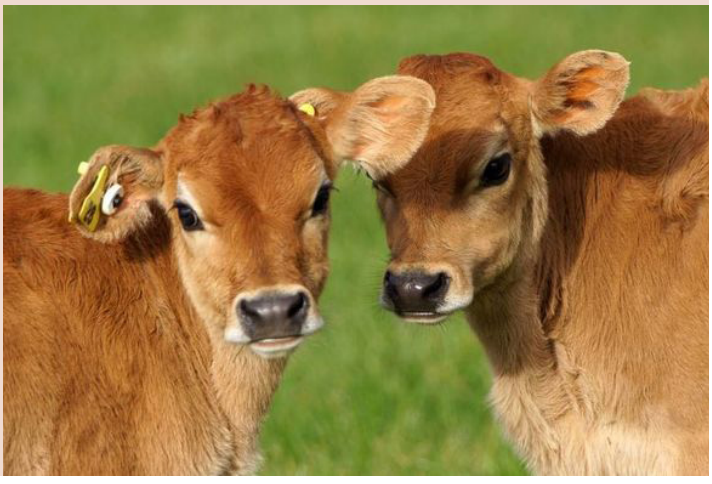
Only select fit and healthy calves for transport.

Why care about your bobby calves?

They aren't replacements; they aren't worth much and they aren't going to be around for long so why care about them?

Well for a start, the Animal Welfare Act 1999 places a 'duty of care' on all those involved with livestock. Failure to meet the needs of a bobby calf may lead to prosecution.At the very least, calves require a warm, sheltered environment and regular feeding in order to meet their welfare needs while in your care.

Meat processing inspectors take an active interest in bobby calf welfare and follow up on all cases where problems are identified. This year MAF welfare group will be taking particular interest in bobby calf welfare as well, so be advised to look after them.



WEDDING FAIRY

A married couple in their 60's were celebrating their 40th Wedding Anniversary in a quiet, romantic little restaurant...

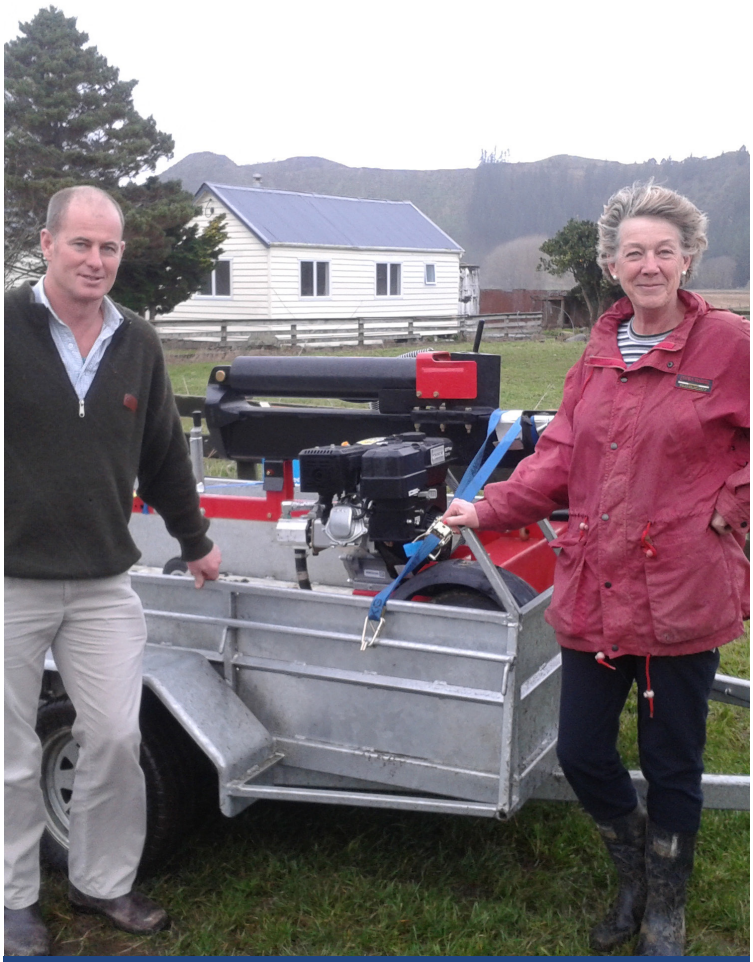
Suddenly, a tiny yet beautiful fairy appeared on their table. She said, "For being such an exemplary married couple and for being loving to each other for all this time, I will grant you each a wish."

The wife answered, 'Oh, I want to travel around the world with my darling husband." The fairy waved her magic wand and poof! – Two tickets for the Queen Mary II appeared in her hands.

The husband thought for a moment: "Well, this is all very romantic, but an opportunity like this will never come again. I am sorry my love, but my wish is to have a wife 30 years younger than I." The wife and the fairy were deeply disappointed, but a wish is a wish.

So the fairy waved her magic wand and poof!... the husband became 93 years old.

The moral of this story: Men who are ungrateful buggers should remember fairies are female....



The Winner of the Merial Ancare Wood Splitter was Bo Polson.
(Bo lost a lot out of her shed, in the recent floods,
The wood splitter was saved!)

WANGANUI VETERINARY SERVICES
35 Somme Parade, Wanganui 4500
Telephone: 06 349 0155 A/H: 06 349 0486
www.wgvets.co.nz