



SEPTEMBER 2017

VET NOTES:

Seasonal Reminders & Various other Stuff

It has been a lovely change to see some sunshine these last couple of weeks! The grass has started growing and some of the pressure is finally off. A brutally wet autumn and winter has left its mark though, and we are seeing more lame cows for this time of year than ever before. Calf scours have also been a big issue this season affecting large scale dairy operations all the way through to small lifestyle blocks and even beef farms.

Calf Scours

Calf scours can be VERY costly to a farming business, mostly in time but also in money and the loss of potentially valuable replacements. As with any animal health issue prevention is always the best option, but if recognised and treated EARLY most calf scour cases can also be treated successfully.

Prevention

- Colostrum, colostrum, colostrum! Studies have shown that 40-50% of calves in New Zealand dairy operations fail to receive immunity from colostrum (failure of passive transfer). We have been testing dairy calves this year for failure of passive transfer and are getting similar results. Remember the 3 Q's: Quantity (10-15% of the calf's bodyweight in litres), Quality (first day 'Gold' colostrum) and Quickly (ASAP but within 6-12 hours of birth).
- Vaccinations: there are vaccinations available for the prevention of rotavirus scours, these are given to the cows prior to calving and protection is delivered via the colostrum. Therefore, any effort to prevent scours by vaccinating cows is wasted unless the calves receive adequate colostrum.
- Hygiene: cleaning out and disinfecting sheds thoroughly between seasons and regular spraying of pens throughout the season. This goes for all equipment used in the calf rearing operation. Remember ONLY Vetsan® kills Cryptosporidium.
- Providing dry, clean, draft-free, not over-crowded pens for your calves will ALWAYS reduce stress and the chances of contracting ALL calf-related illnesses (scours, pneumonia, navel ill etc).

Treatment

- ISOLATE sick calves to a 'sick pen', ideally in a different shed but at least somewhere contact with other healthy calves is avoided. Feed and treat these calves LAST.
- Fluid therapy started EARLY is always recommended regardless of the cause of the scour. Please ring and talk to us about our recommended electrolyte and fluid therapy protocol.
- It is often valuable to know the bug you are dealing with; we can perform a quick test in the clinic to identify E.coli, Rotavirus, Cryptosporidium and Coronavirus.
- Uncomplicated cases hardly ever require antibiotics, but will nearly always benefit from anti-inflammatories (Ketomax® OR Metacam®) so spend your money wisely. Also take the calf's temperature, if over 39.5°C antibiotics may be warranted too; but please talk to us first.
- If the calf goes down, will not rise and is too weak to suck or hold its head up, then veterinary attention is needed ASAP. If you are not willing to provide this then there is little point in prolonging the suffering of a severely dehydrated and scouring calf, so euthanasia may be the only option.
- Call us!! Especially if you have multiple calves affected and they are not responding to treatment. *We are here to help!*

UPDATE: Mycoplasma bovis

What we know: The disease was confirmed in July 2017 on 2 farms in a 16-farm dairy enterprise in South Canterbury. Since its discovery a further 4 infected farms have been confirmed, all have links to the original Van Leeuwen Dairy Group Farms. All affected properties and the remaining 12 corporate farms in the group are under legal controls (a Restricted Place Notice) restricting the movement of stock and equipment off those farms to contain the disease. *What we don't yet know is how far disease may have spread prior to its discovery.*

What you can do: Farmers should look out for:

- unusual mastitis in cattle that doesn't respond to treatment
- arthritis in cows and calves
- late-term abortion
- pneumonia in calves

You should also consider your current biosecurity protocols and talk to us if you want help creating a biosecurity plan for your farm.

What we are doing: Along with keeping in touch with you all, we have also reconsidered and updated some of our own personal biosecurity practices.

The benefit of early Metricechecking

Last year Kiwi vet Dr Mick Clews (in Reporoa), set out to determine if more aggressive Endometritis detection and treatment using multiple visits had an impact on the reproductive performance at the herd level, and to provide guidance to NZ vets offering whole herd metrichecking service.

Cows were metrichecked between 8-28 days post calving. If they were positive (i.e. pus present), then half these cows were treated with Metricure®, and half were not treated and left to 'self cure'. The herds were visited every 21 days; 69, 48 and 27 days before the planned start of mating. If the cow was assigned to the no treatment group, then the cow only received treatment on the last metrichecking visit – the 'traditional' metricheck visit for a lot of NZ herds.

Over 15,000 were checked as part of the study and over 2,700 were metricheck positive. A lot of fancy statistical analysis was performed and the conclusions were as follows:

- Early intervention had no statistical significant effect on subsequent metricheck status when re-examined later – control cows had an apparent 87% self-cure rate, and the Metricure® treated cows had a 90% cure rate when examined 21 days later.

HOWEVER

- The subsequent reproductive performance was significantly improved between the two groups: 59% 6 week in calf rate for the Metricure® treated group, compared with 49% for the self cure group. The 12 week mating result was 78% versus 74% respectively.

CONCLUSION

The difference in the reproductive performance of the 2 intervention groups might be due in part to a decrease in the sensitivity of detection and hence, these cows don't necessarily 'self-cure' but rather become 'more difficult to detect'. Which makes sense as the reproductive tract continues to involute and get smaller after calving, and the cervix tightens up. Therefore, the pus is contained in the uterus rather than leaking out through the cervix -our metrichecking device would no longer detect this.

Therefore, the best chance of detecting metricheck positive would be metrichecking every 21 days starting approximately 69 days pre mating.

This was a really interesting study as it justifies our metrichecking services. It is local data, and we have seen a positive reproductive performance when metricheck positive cows are diagnosed and treated early. We have a number of herds booked in already. Please contact us if you would like to get your herd booked in or to discuss these results further.

Lameness

Lameness: we have been run off our feet treating lame cows these last few weeks. After a wet summer, then a wet autumn, and to top it off, a wet winter it isn't all too surprising. I am also aware many of you have had plans to spend money on your races but the wet weather has meant logistically that hasn't been possible; So now we have to think about management of the problem instead. Lame cows are obviously in pain and under stress. They will often decrease their time spent grazing, opting for laying down instead, leading to decreased milk production and weight loss.

Your job is to:

- **Identify** lame cows EARLY, separate them out and put them in a once a day designated lame/Penicillin mob. Keep these girls as close to the shed as possible and provide plenty of quality feed.
- **Treat** lame cows ASAP. Correct treatment of lame cows will generally provide immediate relief as well as setting them up for a quick recovery. If you don't have the expertise or time to provide this, then please consider getting us out.

Due to their sudden change in lifestyle heifers have generally been the worst affected stock class we have seen this season. For various reasons first calvers are also the hardest stock class to get pregnant early in the mating season. Adding thin sole's, bruising and general lameness to the mix only makes matters worse. It is wise to consider forming a once-a-day heifer mob NOW (at least a month out from PSM) to reduce stress and demands on these girls prior to mating. This herd can then become your lame mob too.

Congratulations to our winner of the calf Thermoo jacket —Grant Webb—

- Grant's Dairy Manager, Andrew Quader

photographed receiving the Thermoo from Sian

