Dairy Repro Summary

Most dairy herds have now been scanned. There is still the odd herd to be tidied up and a number of heifers left to scan so the data produced below is current to mid-March and obviously required us having access to the data to be included. *There is a number of farms we have scanned that aren't included below as we don't have the right access or information.*

	Average 2018	Range 2018	Averages for the last 3 years		
			2015	2016	2017
1st conception rate	45%	26 – 66%	47%	45%	45%
6wk in calf rate	67%	48 – 79%	67%	66%	64%
Empty rate	14%	5 – 33%	14%	15%	15%

First service conception rates

This is the percentage of animals that held to their first AB insemination. The average for this year was 45% with a range of 26-58%. We had 3 herds on OAD for the entire season and they had an average conception of 55% with a range of 47-66%.

It is no surprise that conception rates were down with the wet spring conditions and cows likely in a negative energy balance for longer periods.

Our CIDR conception rates followed the whole herd conception rates, with an average of a 5-10% lower first service conception rate. That is, if the herd achieved a conception rate of 55% then the CIDRs performed at 45-50%. But if the herd was down at 40% conception rate, then the CIDRs can only be expected to have a 30-35% conception rate.

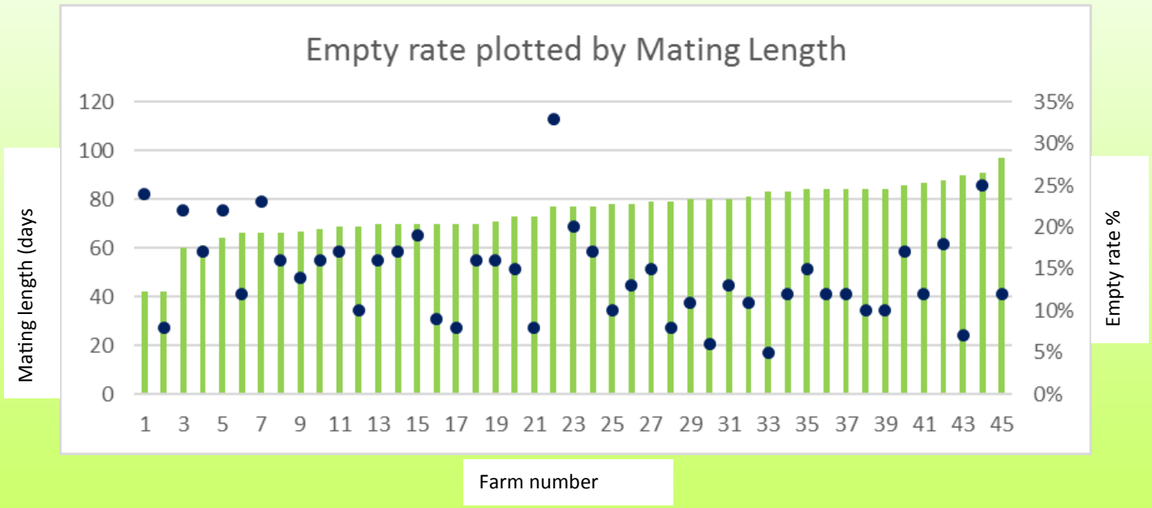
6 week in calf rates

It is surprising that 6 week in calf rates have held this year. The 2 key drivers of 6 week in-calf rates are first service conception rate and 3 week submission rate. The farms that still achieved a good 3 week submission rate (target 90%) had the higher 6 week in calf rates. It makes sense; you need to submit cows in order for them to get in calf. **The majority of farmers did have to use some intervention to achieve these better rates (i.e. CIDRs) but will be rewarded with more days in milk next season.**

Empty rates

Again, the average empty rate was on par with last year. It is very difficult to compare empty rates from farm to farm without taking the mating length into account. The following graph shows mating length (in days) plotted with the empty rate for 45 farms that we had enough data for. You can see it is not fair to say that farm 1 and farm 44 had the same repro performance, when farm 1 mated for 40 less days. Similarly, farms 43 and 44 mated for the same number of days but farm 44 had a 20% higher empty rate.

Contact us if you want to discuss your herd's reproduction performance.



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SOUTHERN RANGITIKEI VETERINARY SERVICES LIMITED
233 State Highway 1 Bulls & 48 Tutaenui Road Marton

MARCH 2018
DAIRY MOOSLETTER

What's Inside

233 State Highway 1, Bulls
48 Tutaenui Road, Marton
Email: team@srvs.co.nz
www.srvs.co.nz
Tel (06) 3222 333

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Shave date : 28th March 2018 5.30pm @ the Bulls Clinic

Earlier this month Tim and I had a catch up with Peter Hammond, the Regional Food Safety Manager and Jess Shelgren, the veterinary technical advisor, both from Fonterra. A few interesting points were raised and discussed, so I just wanted to pass these comments on to you all.

RVM documentation: a reminder that **you need to keep the paper work we authorise for your dry cow therapy**. Many of you had to ask us to resend it through this year, *so please be aware of this when we hand over the paper work this season*. The reason we cannot put it all with your RVM paper work is because RVMs are done May/June for the coming year, and DCT authorisations are completed in April/May. We were also told that future shed inspections will be looking at the correct storage of all drugs. We will add the recommendations into the paper work, so it is up to you to follow them. Shed inspectors will be looking for non-RVM compliance and recording of other animal health products i.e. drenches and young stock treatment.

VCNZ is expecting all 'RED' classified antibiotics to have 3 monthly authorisations - remember our red antibiotics include nil milk withhold for footrot drugs, Excede LA, Cobactan, Marbocyl, Tylovet/Tylofen and Mastalone. *This may be able to be a phone consult, so watch this space.*

Combination therapy – e.g. using an intramammary at the same time as an injectable antibiotic. There is not a lot of data to support the use of this and therefore using two antibiotics at the same time needs to be discussed with a vet and withhold periods adjusted. It is the antibiotic residue that is the biggest worry, and therefore using an antibiotic at the same time as an anti-inflammatory is more acceptable and the longest WHP should be used for an antibiotic/NSAID combination.

PKE – it still stands that as of September 1st Fonterra will start grading PKE users that have a high FEI reading. Up until this date you can feed as much PKE as you like. There will be no special dispensations for animal welfare reasons or weather events. Fonterra are saying that farmers need to be more adaptable and therefore consider other options such as de-stocking, changing the farm system and looking at alternative feed sources.

- *Kristina*

FACIAL ECZEMA

The spore counts are on the rise and we are starting to see clinical cases of Facial Eczema in sheep, which means liver damage is also likely to be occurring in dairy cows and young stock.

Skin lesions are only the tip of the iceberg but that is what everybody sees on the outside. Facial eczema studies show that, if about 3% of the herd/mob are showing skin lesions, then **up to 50% can have liver damage**, which is where the real impact occurs.

Dairy cows have extreme metabolic demands and the liver is an essential part of these metabolic processes. In addition to photosensitivity and markedly reduced milk production in the current season, effects further down the track include increased slipped calves, chronic wasting cows and a higher incidence of ketosis and non-responsive downer cows at the following calving.

Young stock are not exempt from the effects of facial eczema – animals that have liver damage will have reduced weight gains, which in turn affects their future milk production and reproductive performance.

Minimising the impact of Facial Eczema is achieved by:

- Administering zinc, either in the form of an oral bolus (which lasts 4 weeks) or through feed/water – <u>all dairy cows should be receiving zinc supplementation at full FE dose rates by now</u>
- Pasture spraying with fungicides to prevent fungal growth. This works best when applied to *growing pastures.*
- Pasture management – Ensure cows are grazing to target residuals (grazing too low increases the amount of spores ingested) and avoid any paddocks that you know are 'hot' when spore counts are high (these are often sheltered, lower lying areas).

Once there the liver is damaged there is no magic fix – all we can do is provide supportive therapy to give the animal the best chance possible.

Anti-inflammatories and anti-histamines help reduce the pain of skin lesions; cows with skin lesions must be given protection from sunlight, either by applying a sun-blocking cream daily to affected areas (eg. Filtabac®), putting on a cow cover or giving access to a shed or trees for shade. Severely affected animals should also be drenched with an oral tonic like Manderson's Mix or a Starter drench, and injected with Selenium + B12 if they haven't already, to help support their immune system.

Spore counts have been high for all of March and we anticipate them to stay high well into April therefore *<u>prevention plans should be happening now</u>*.

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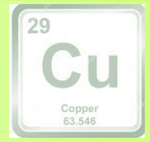
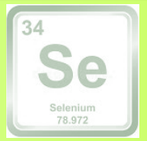
Trace element testing





Trace element (TE) supplements have been widely used within New Zealand, especially in areas with TE deficiencies. This has resulted in significant improvements in the productivity of all cattle.
Patterns of deficiencies are usually unpredictable and require specific tests to determine the lacking element.

Copper (Cu)

Copper is a vital component of the immune system and has a basic role in the production and metabolism of red blood cells.

Clinical signs you can expect to see when your cattle lack copper:

- Diarrhoea, ill-thrift and decreased milk yield
- Abnormal gait, bone abnormalities, increased incidence of fractures in heifers
- Changes in coat colour and condition, dark-coated cattle hair tends to become lighter and roughened, especially with the hair around eyes and ears
- Copper deficiency can affect productive performance in cattle including delayed puberty, altered inter-oestrus interval, anoestrus, cystic ovaries and delayed or impaired ovulation

Testing:

- Unfortunately, soil Cu level has limited value in predicting the copper status of cattle. The most accurate test is 5-6 liver samples from cows pre-winter. Copper is stored in the liver so this ensures that the cows have sufficient stores to support themselves and the foetus' growing skeleton.

Selenium (Se)

Selenium needs to be an important part of trace element supplementation due to the general lack of Se in NZ soils. Selenium is an anti-oxidant; it is required for the normal growth and fertility of cattle and for the prevention of several health disorders. Selenium deficiencies can affect most domestic animal species, in any age and any time of the year.

Clinical signs you can observe when your stock is lacking in selenium

- Reduction of milk production and reproductive performance, poor conception rates
- Increased rate of retained foetal membranes
- Poor growth rate
- Scouring and ill-thrift
- White muscle disease

Testing:

- 5 blood samples from cattle of different ages. This gives us easy-to-interpret-data which we can compare year on year.

It is also important to remember your young stock and get them tested if they haven't been on a supplementation programme. A heifer entering the herd with copper/selenium deficiency will be poorly grown and fail to last long in the herd due to poor production and poor reproductive performance.

Give us a ring if you need further information on testing, prevention and treatment of trace element deficiencies on your farm.

Dave Angove retiring

At the end of March Dr Dave is retiring from SRVS after over 25 years with us and nearly 50 years as a practicing clinician. We will miss his experience and wise quips but wish him all the best for his retirement. We are hoping that Dave will be available to help out on the odd occasion, however some of you may wish to call into one of the clinics to speak to Dave personally before the end of the month.

Turnip Photosensitivity

Brassica crops such as turnips, rape and kale are very useful feed source for filling feed deficits in the 'summer dry' as they often produce a very high DM production per Ha. Turnips are generally a very safe crop, but some problems can be encountered; one health problem seen with cattle grazing turnips is *photosensitisation*. Photosensitisation occurs when the skin becomes hyper-sensitive to sunlight due to the presence of 'photodynamic agents' (light sensitive agents) in the blood, leading to the damage of skin cells, especially those in non-pigmented (white) areas. The photosensitisation works in a similar way to Facial Eczema, damaging the liver, causing a build-up of agents in the bloodstream, reacting with light and causing photosensitivity.

Crops are at its greatest risk of causing photosensitive signs when the crop is fed before maturity, excess nitrogen fertiliser has been applied, or when the crop has been stressed by water restrictions. This year we have been seeing large numbers of photosensitive cows on turnip crops which we believe is mainly due to the stress from a lack of water they received during summer and then a lot of late germination when we did eventually get rain. This year the bulb-to-leaf ratio has been low which is another issue, and the presence of mycotoxins and weeds in the crops has potentiated the problem.

Early signs of photosensitivity will include pain and discomfort, as well as a reduced milk yield at milking time. Initially the udder, lower limbs and non-pigmented areas of skin will become inflamed and swollen and as the disease progresses, the skin will turn to leather and begin to peel off. Farm staff at milking time should be aware of what to look for as it is essential to treat and separate affected animals as soon as possible. Photosensitive cows

Transitioning on to Winter Crops

Year on year we continue to see large problems with feeding winter crops, so the **time to plan how winter feeding will work is now!** It is so critical to transition cattle properly to avoid problems and achieve profitable winter grazing while gaining condition. *Kale has been popular for a number of years but now fodder beet has become the number 1 winter crop.*

The main issue we see is acidosis in cattle that have not been transitioned properly. It is caused by the excessively rapid fermentation of excess carbohydrate, which changes the energy metabolism in the rumen and allows a rapid build-up of bacteria that produce lactic acid. **The increase in lactic acid production leads to acidosis (acid blood); inflammation of the rumen, severe dehydration and death.**

The signs you see depend on the amount of carbohydrate eaten, and range from decreased milk production, anorexia, a very dull weak ataxic cow, to rumen distention, profuse foul smelling diarrhoea, sunken eyes, recumbency, and death. *Some cows you may just find dead.*

Transitioning the cattle correctly is vital to minimise the risk. Offer sufficient supplement during the transition period and gradually decrease it as crop allocation is increased. Fodder beet allocation should be increased by 0.5kg DM/cow/day; Kale by 1kg DM/cow/day with pasture and supplement making up the rest of the allocation. Ensure cattle go onto the crop with a full belly (generally hay fed first). *You need to ensure you have sufficient hay for the entire crop feeding*. This is something many farmers are still struggling with obtaining due to the lack of hay around this year. Straw is a suitable alternative if you can't source enough hay.

Other Tips:

Use long narrow breaks and back fencing, and cattle have to reach under the wire to access beet.

For graziers with dairy cattle, ideally they should be dried off at least a week prior to transportation to the farm. Diet the first day should be pasture and supplement, and then transition to the crop should commence the following day.

To encourage cattle new to fodder beet to eat it, some beets can be kicked out of the ground and chopped up with a spade in the rows prior to grazing. This can encourage grazing and normally results in all cattle eating fodder beet within a week of transitioning.

Allow enough crop face for all cattle to have access to it, to avoid dominant cows eating too much crop and becoming ill.

Drying off stock

By 2030 the farming/veterinary industry in New Zealand will not use antibiotics for the maintenance of animal health and wellness. Currently the dairy industry only breaks this new goal on one major occasion, *the use of whole herd Dry Cow therapy.*

Before you can even consider drying off or collecting dry cow therapy/teatseal from us you will need to have a **milk quality consult** with your veterinarian. During this consult, we will look at the current season and decide together on the most appropriate use of dry cow therapy in your herd. The more information we have around milk quality in your herd, the more informed these decisions can be. If we are missing information it is very difficult to make appropriate decisions when it comes to selective treatment, therefore we are often forced to consider whole herd treatment which isn't good for our goal *or your wallet*. The most important information for us to have access to is **herd test results**, **mastitis treatments** in the current season, bulk tank **somatic cell counts** and **milk culture** results. For many of you just having your MINDA access and Milk Quality information from your milk company will be enough. However, you will need to have up loaded all treatment information; if this has not been completed then either bring in the paperwork on the day or, ideally, have it entered beforehand. If you simply have no time then bring the paperwork into the clinic and we will enter it prior to your consult, we would prefer to have extra work than not have this information!

A few tips for dry off:

- **Plan ahead** – decide on a dry off date in advance and prepare your staff, diary and animals.
- **Dry off in batches** – in large herds dry off can be a daunting prospect, only dry off a manageable number per day. If this isn't going to work consider getting us in to help you, the more trained hands on deck the better.
- **Cleanliness is godliness** – we cannot stress this point enough, if you want a good result then application must be clean. Train your staff, use as many teat wipes as necessary (they are FREE!) always wear gloves and take your time. If you would like help or training then please ask.
- **Teat spray** – the teats thoroughly after application.
- **Never** – hold animals off on a feed pad or race prior to or after administering dry cow therapy. Let them walk slowly to a clean paddock.
- **Check** – for signs of mastitis after dry off, bring all animals through the shed 2 weeks after and palpate all quarters. Do this weekly until the udders are visibly dried off. Remember to teat spray after each run through the shed.

If you would like help with dry off this year please let us know in advance, many trained hands can mean light work and great results.

Lepto Vaccination Reminder

Just a reminder that all your cattle should be due for a booster lepto vaccination over the next couple of months. The current advice remains the same: calves should have completed their initial two vaccination primary programme prior to being 6 months old and so most of the calves are being vaccinated at weaning and then 4-6 weeks later. Weaners that have been vaccinated under this programme require a booster vaccination April/May so that the booster vaccination in a years time will be in line with the herd. This is because booster vaccinations basically need to be given no more than 12 months apart. There is also a possibility that if immunity from the colostrum a calf had received had prevented the first vaccination from being effective, then a booster now will complete the primary vaccination programme now.

Rising two year old heifers and the cows require their annual booster vaccination April/May, as well as any carry over cows, bulls and other fattening stock.

Massey University trial data has shown that the biggest factor for cattle still to be shedding the lepto bacteria in fully vaccinated herds is when the primary calf vaccination programme has been delayed, especially if they are not first vaccinated until the autumn. The current recommendation is to start the calf vaccination programme from around 10 weeks after the start of calving but calves need to be older than 4 weeks old when they are given their first vaccination. So the first vaccination may need to be given to the later born calves at a later date than the early born calves.