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Drying Cows Off. Planning For Next Season.

I imagine most of you will have your planned dry off date/dates in the calendar or at least have an idea of when it'll happen. Some cows however won't make it to this date.

Cows gain weight most efficiently during lactation so ideally should do their weight gain before dryoff. A good rule of thumb is that your herd should be at your desired condition score for calving when you dry off.

The hard part comes from the weather this season.

Pasture growth rates have been dismal at times and cow condition has suffered.

For these really skinny cows it may not be feasible for them to put on enough weight before dryoff. These are the candidates for the once a day mob and early dry off.

To put on one condition score a cow needs 1500MJ of energy excess above their usual requirements which is about 140 kgDM of grass.

This basically means an allowance of 11kgDM/cow/day will give a gain of one condition score over 60 days IF SHE IS DRY (500kg cow).

This shows that it takes a long time and a fair amount of feed to put condition on so you need to consider when to dry cows off now.

Better condition now means a lot more milk next year.

Sudden death. The outbreak that ruins breakfast.

There will be many of you out there who have been unlucky enough to have an outbreak of sudden death in your animals. The typical story is that they were checked at night and were completely fine, the next morning there were dead animals all over. Certainly ruins any breakfast.

Despite the emotion and frustration with your find its important not to lose your head. This is a critical time to think straight. There are many causes of sudden death in any species be it sheep, cattle, pigs, alpacas, guinea pigs etc. however the cause doesn't change how you first deal with it.

Firstly BE SAFE! Some causes of sudden death are 'zoonotic' meaning people can catch them. Most cause severe dysentery but can

be extremely nasty in elderly and youngins. Keep the children away from the paddock!!!!

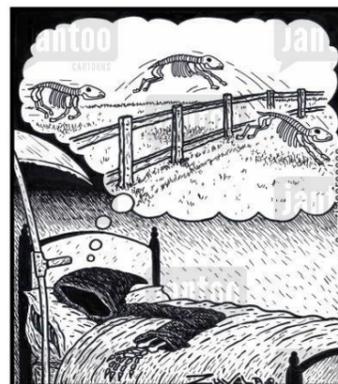
Anything that goes into the paddock can transfer the disease elsewhere. All equipment, including vehicles should be cleaned prior to entering the paddock and definitely cleaned and disinfected thoroughly when leaving the paddock.

Stocking rate should be reduced by spreading the affected animals out to reduce stress. All animals that aren't affected should be kept completely separate. They shouldn't go on affected paddocks for at least two weeks after the outbreak, they shouldn't share a fence with affected animals (could even set up a hotwire to create a 'no-mans land'). If being

yarded or taken to the shed then affected animals should be run through after the clear animals to reduce risk of spread.

Also dead animals decompose quickly! If post mortems need to be done then time is of the essence! The fresher the carcass the more useful it is.

This is mostly aimed at sheep farmers but the principals hold for any animal.



Special Points of Interest;

- Free Rugby Jersey with selected Merial Ancare Sheep Drench (while stocks last).
- Free Swandri Fleece Pullover with Eclipse Pour On (while stocks last).
- We have been seeing a lot of working dogs with Kennel Cough. If you have a number of working dogs or dogs moving on and off your property, then seriously consider having your animals vaccinated for kennel cough.

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Teatseal—Stopping Mastitis before it Starts!

By the time you read this Vetco should have a shiny new heifer teatsealing trailer on its way.

These trailers are a quantum leap in streamlining the process of teatsealing heifers. They allow the procedure to be done at runoffs even if facilities are relatively poor.

For those of you who are unaware what teatsealing is, it is essentially plugging the heifers teat canal with an inert plaster-like substance. This 'seals' the teat and thus prevents entry of dirt and bacteria into the teat canal.

This drastically reduces the occurrence of mastitis during the dry period and especially when the teat canal begins to open at calving. Most mastitis in the

first 100 days of lactation is picked up in the dry period or at calving.

The research into how effective teatseal is has shown a 68% reduction in mastitis in the first two weeks of lactation. There is an even higher reduction of mastitis at calving.

Calving is an extremely busy and potentially expensive time of year.

Treating heifer mastitis is an added chore that no one wants or needs. Reducing heifer mastitis decreases time spent treating mastitis, decreases antibiotic usage, decreases

cell count, improves milk yield from the heifers (less in the penicillin mob) and reduces udder damage in these young girls when their udders are in a

critical stage of development.

Teatseal contains no antibiotic but still has an 8 milking withhold. It can be easily stripped out when she calves before milking. It must be administered under extremely clean conditions to prevent sealing bugs in. The trailer allows this to be done very effectively by trained, competent personnel.



Please contact the clinic if you are interested in booking your heifers in. Administering 4 weeks pre calving and given after 15 weeks pre calving is ideal.



Rams. Are they up to the task?

These woolly lads are easily forgotten about but now is a good time for them to come to the forefront of your mind. Topping is coming fast and rams need to be in the form of their lives to put on a good show for the ladies.

In simple maths if you are lambing at 150% and have a ratio of 1:100 (rams:ewes) that's 150 lambs by each ram. Lets say you're getting \$90/lamb then that's \$13,500 each ram earns you per year (\$6,750 if the ewes claim their share). That's a decent stack of dollar bills by anyone's book. Makes a 5'in'1 booster, drench, decent grass and ram palpation look pretty cheap.

Ram runs are organised through the vet clinic every year. I encourage you to partake in them. Even if your rams have been checked in previous years they can become unsound during their time off. Checking them is relatively

cheap and allows you to boot out any boys who can't do the business. After all, you need healthy swimmers to make babies. Any particularly valuable rams can also have a semen evaluation to ensure the sperm are straight, strong swimmers. If they swim in circles, swim weakly or don't swim at all then they are never going to find their destination.

For those of you wanting teasers it is good to get them done early. Sperm can still be present in their tubes for up to six weeks meaning they aren't infertile until this time has passed. 6-8weeks is an ideal time to do it. Occasionally we vasectomize monorchid rams (only have one nut). It is important to realize if you want this done that the other testicle is in the belly and has a small potential to still produce sperm. Its fertility is almost zero but don't be surprised

if they still give you a lamb or two. Any age ram can be made into a teaser. Commonly old rams are used to extend their useful life. The ram needs to be mature and the adage that the smellier the better can be used here. On the other hand the younger the ram is the safer he will be in terms of venereal diseases.

Teasers do two things: they bring on puberty earlier in hoggets and help synchronise ewes of any age. Hoggets still need to be well grown, teasers are not an alternative to good hogget management. If being used to synchronise your ewes or hoggets then they should be put in just over one cycle before planned start of mating 20 days is a good start. This means the majority of girls that came on heat when they smell those pungent teasers will return to heat in the first week of tugging.

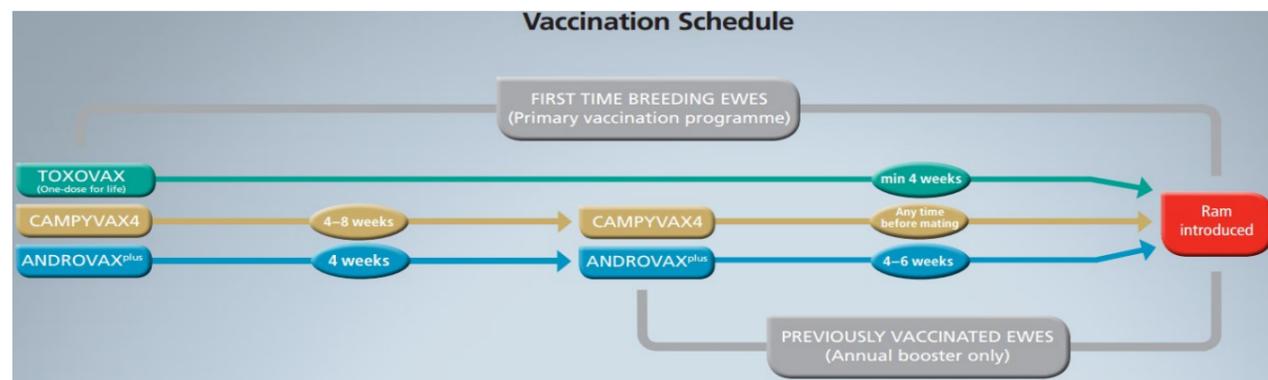


Pre mating vaccines

Its almost time for ewes to be turned into pin cushions. Getting the timing for the vaccines right is essential to ensuring they work. This is most important in the young stock. Below is a

good diagram showing timing of the main abortion vaccines plus androvax. Toxo only needs one dose at least 4 weeks pre mating and only in first lambers. Campy requires two shots

separated by 4-6 weeks preferably before mating. Salvexin-B is not shown here. Timing is slightly different with a shot given at the start and end of mating.



Ewesful or Ewesless? Culling.

There is never a question that if you have ewes, they will eat grass. This much is guaranteed. What has significantly less certainty is whether they are going to produce the goods in the form of lambs to justify their existence.

What can we do about this? There is no way to guarantee every ewe on your property is going to perform, if anyone knows of a way please let us know. Instead we can improve the chances of the majority of the ewes doing a good job. The best way to do this is get rid of any suspect woolly ladies so only the good ones are remaining.

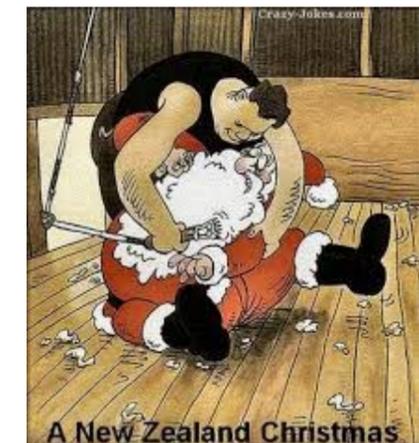
The udder is an important place to start. A good udder produces a lot of milk and subsequently a big lamb (and cocky smiles). Any issues with the udder

impairs milk production and lamb size. Palpate the udders of your ewes, especially old ones! Any suspect lumps and bumps are best done away with. Some have a small amount of scar tissue which can be felt as small, irregular lumps. This is fine. If you have any you are unsure of then we can always double check them.

Condition is also important. Ewes gradually losing weight, especially in old age likely have an irreparable issue and aren't going to recover. Bad teeth is usually the most common culprit. Many farmers will check the front teeth however a fat ewe with bad teeth doesn't need to die. It is the back teeth not front ones that are most important and these cannot be checked in a live animal.

Also ewes who consistently are in the single mob are unlikely to change their ways and should generally be culled.

Any other conditions such as chronic lameness, poor conformation and lambing difficulties should act as black marks against a ewes name as well. Better to have the grass going into feeding 'winner' sheep and not being wasted on 'underperformers'.



Tall Timber and Tall Stories. Roar Season.

I know many of you out there will be starting to get itchy with the infamous roar approaching.

Some of you may have already taken animals in hard antler and this probably only throws coals on the fire and builds the desire for big, stinky, tall timber, master stag.

At the risk of ringing the same old bell I'm going to put a note on safety. We can all agree too many people died from gun shots each year.

Make sure what you are aiming at is what you want to shoot.

We are all relying on each other to be smart in the bush so don't go letting each other down.

I expect plenty of adrenalin filled roaring yarns in the next few months, hopefully I'll have some of my own.

