



vetco

limited

IN BRIEF

December 2009

Reminders:

- Vetco CLIENT BBQ Friday, December 18, 5pm onwards, bring the family!
- Book your Lepto-wise appointment before calf vaccination time.
- Pregnancy testing with dates is required for the Induction Code of Conduct. Aging is only possible before 12 weeks of pregnancy.
- Focus on meeting target weights for young stock

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Water: the often forgotten food group

Water intake problems may limit milk production, growth and also have an adverse effect on overall health.

Ruminants need a plentiful supply of good clean water for normal rumen fermentation and function, proper flow of food through the digestive tract, nutrient digestion and absorption, blood volume and tissue needs. Open ground-water sources such as streams are not appropriate water sources for dairy cattle due to their high bacterial load, which can lead to illness.

Animals that are milking require more water than dry stock. Their total water requirements are met by the water content of the food, water produced by the metabolism of food and of course the drinking of water.



Drier food will provide less water than more palatable "wet" food ie 10kg dry matter fed as 30% DM silage will provide 23.3L of water whilst 10kg DM of lush 2nd round grass will provide 56.6L of water.

Higher air temperature will also increase water intake.

Inadequate water intake can be due to many factors such as the availability of and opportunity to access water troughs, or poor quality water due to either chemical or bacterial contamina-

tion. These chemicals could already be in the water causing it to be too acidic or bad tasting (iron, manganese, etc) or could be added post extraction (ie magnesium chloride).

Even stray voltage can keep stock away from the troughs.

If your stock have firm to constipated faeces, low urine output, infrequent drinking, are drinking from puddles or urine pools, or an unexplained drop in milk production then these signs may be indicating problems with either water quality or availability.

If you require help in quantifying your cows' water needs, please ring the clinics and ask one of the vets for assistance.

In Calf Update: Benefits of accurate pregnancy testing

Pregnancy testing is a beneficial tool providing good records are kept so data can be analyzed AND utilized.

Knowing the calving dates of your herd allows you to make accurate management decisions regarding drying off, inductions, transporting cows prior to calving and culling. Pregnancy testing also gives a good indication of the overall herd reproductive

performance.

At Vetco Ltd we offer both ultrasound scanning and manual pregnancy testing. We have three backpack scanners and lots of enthusiastic vets who can easily meet all of your pregnancy testing requirements. The benefit of having a veterinarian do your scanning is that cows can be confirmed empty on the day by manual palpation.

Rectal pregnancy testing between 5 and 16 weeks after mating gives the most accurate results. The dates given by the veterinarian or technician are an estimate, thus having a record of the mating dates (or last detected heat) for individual cows will allow you work out when the cows are due to calve.

“The backing gate is to take up space, not to push the cows into the shed.”

Healthy Hoof Update: Backing Gates

During summer, when relief milkers are often milking your cows, it is crucial that you explain to them the rules of your dairy. Specifically, how your team operates the dairy and in particular the way you use your backing and/or top gate.

It is important to remember not to overuse the backing or top gate as this will reduce the space each cow has, resulting in pushing, slipping, forced changes to milking order, and claw injuries resulting in lameness. Here are some tips on how to manage a backing /top gate well:

- Make sure all staff have the same routine and system when moving gates so cows know what to expect
- Do not have the backing gate on for more than 5 seconds at any one time
- Do not use the top/backing gate for the first 15 minutes after the cows are shut in the yard. The cows need space to re-form their milking order for good cow flow.
- Ensure your backing gate moves no more than 1m/5 sec in a round yard or 0.5m/5 sec

in rectangular yards.

- Avoid electric wires on backing gates. Address other reasons for poor cow flow in the shed instead of pushing cows with the backing gate.
- Above all be patient!!!
- Remember - no cows with heads up in the yards.

If you have a problem with lameness or are interested in minimising the risk of your cows becoming lame, consider joining the Dairy NZ Healthy Hoof programme.



Rat Bait and Dogs



Throughout the year, we have many farm dogs come into the clinic with rat bait poisoning. These can be expensive and time consuming cases, often with a poor prognosis.

Dogs (and rats) which have eaten rat bait do not die immediately. Instead, the rat bait blocks the formation of factors which allow the blood to clot, preventing bleeding. Once the previously

made clotting factors run out (generally in a few days), the animal will be bleeding, usually into the gastrointestinal tract (dark, tarry faeces and bloody vomit) or the lungs (very pale gums and fast breathing). Both of these can lead to death from blood loss.

If you suspect your dog has eaten rat bait, please ring the clinic immediately. If it has not yet

been absorbed, we can cause the animal to vomit, and prevent absorption. If the animals are sick and showing signs of bleeding, we can treat them with blood or plasma transfusions as needed and supplemental injections of the missing building blocks. However, this is a much more expensive exercise than making them vomit, so the sooner we see a dog that's eaten rat bait, the better for the owners wallet!

Keeping the cells low: mid-season mastitis

As the rush of calving and mating settles down and milking falls back to a routine beware of becoming complacent and allowing cell counts to creep upwards.

SCC (somatic cell count) is a crude indicator of udder health and it can highlight underlying subclinical infections or an infected cow(s) in the herd which has gone unnoticed. Studies have shown that for every halving of BMSCC there is a 2% increase in production, a good incentive to keep on top of things.

A quick reminder of areas to

keep in mind when looking at cell counts:

- Target levels for clinical cases of mastitis, at this time of year, should be below 2% per month, ie less than 2 cases per 100 cows/month.

- Consider culling cows which consistently have a high SCC or repeat cases of mastitis—these cows are a potential source of infection for other cows.

- Ensure teats are dry before cups are put on. Wet teats (including those which have been

washed) form a droplet of bacteria laden moisture directly over the teat opening which can enter the teat canal as it opens.

- Spray teats well after each milking. This helps kill any bacteria transferred to the teats during milking.

Finally, check the manufacturers recommendations for liner changes and change as required, old liners do not milk out as well and can develop cracks which harbor bacteria.



The future of your herd: young stock health

Young weaned Cattle:

Everything going to plan we expect you will have weaned your young stock off milk at 8-10 weeks of age at the following weights:

Jerseys: 65-75kg, Friesians: 80-90kg, X-Breeds: In the middle.

Growing at a reasonable rate per day these should reach the following weights by 6 months:

Jerseys: 110kg, Friesians: 135kg and X-Breeds: 120kg.

The more grass these youngsters are consuming the more worm

eggs they will be ingesting. Illthrift and scours are often signs of a high worm burden and indicate the need for a drench. Faecal egg counts are available at the clinic, this is a useful tool to use to keep drenching to a minimum without compromising their health. While they are young and manageable it is a good chance to utilize oral drenches with essential trace elements included.

Important vaccines to be administering at this time of year are clostridial vaccines (5 in 1, 7 in 1, 10 in 1) and Lepto (7 in 1 has the

clostridial diseases included or 3 way). All these vaccines require two shots 4 – 6 weeks apart, the earlier the better. However, if fully vaccinated by 3 months of age calves will require a third shot Lepto vaccine before they are 6 months.

Legal requirements: Bull calves require local anaesthetic at time of castration after the age of 6 months. Dehorning requires local anaesthetic after 9 months of age.

“Dehorning requires local anaesthetic after 9 months of age.”

Vetco Ltd is a mixed species veterinary practice which serves the farms and towns of Eastern Southland and Invercargill. There are two clinics at Edendale and Kennington which are open from 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, except Thursdays when there is a late night small animal clinic at Kennington until 8pm. There is a dedicated emergency after hours service which can be reached by ringing the normal clinic phone number.

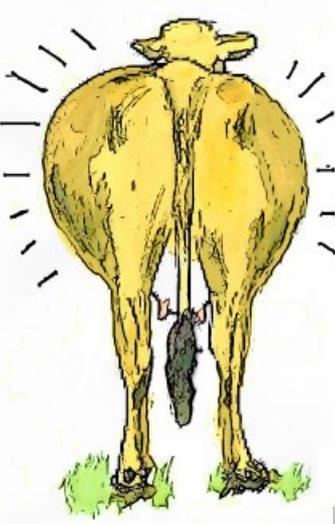
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web!**

www.vetco.co.nz



Bloated? That time of the month is it?

Up to 60% of all herds in New Zealand are affected by bloat, and 40% lose at least one cow from bloat each year, despite prevention such as bloat oil.

Unlike overseas grain-fed cattle, which bloat from free gas, dairy cows in New Zealand fed pasture will become bloated due to formation of a stable foam in the rumen which prevents belching of gas. These gases accumulate due to fermentation of proteins.

Protein rich pasture, such as lush spring grass or high-clover pasture will dramatically increase the bloat potential, which is why most cases in Southland are seen in the springtime, although there are small numbers of cases seen year round.

Once bloated, a mildly affected cow will eat less and produce less milk. A badly affected cow will become so bloated that the increased pressure in her expanding rumen will put pressure on her chest cavity and prevent her lungs from fully expanding. This can eventually lead to death by asphyxiation.

A mildly affected cow will have a slight swelling on the left hand side in the normally concave

area in front of the pelvis. In a severely affected cow both sides can be swollen and the cow will look like a round barrel (see picture) with severe breathing difficulty. The cow may be down due to lack of oxygen.

The most common method of bloat prevention is bloat oil administered in the drinking water, usually through a Dosatron. There are also in-trough dispensers for farms without a Dosatron, as well as bloat capsules and pasture spraying methods. Bloat oil prevents bloat by providing an emulsifier to de-stabilize rumen foam.

Rumensin trough treatment is available as well. Rumensin is an ionophore antibiotic which prevents bloat via decreasing gas and foam formation. In times of high bloat risk Rumensin may not provide adequate bloat prevention and it may be necessary to supplement with bloat oil as well. Rumensin has additional benefits in increased milk production and feed conversion efficiency.

If a cow is found severely bloated or down, the best course of action is to stab the cow. The best place to stab the

cow is in the hollow on the left hand side in front of the pelvis, approximately a handlength down from the vertebrae and a handlength forward of the pelvis. Use a clean knife or trochar, preferably 15cm or longer and double-edged. Make a hole at least 6-8cm long to allow gas release. Try to do this from the other side of the cow as it can be explosive. The wound will need stitching, so please ring the clinic immediately after stabbing. This is a dirty wound and does not always heal well, so as usual prevention is better than cure!

For those cows which are less affected, oral drenching with 30mL of bloat oil mixed with 250mL of water and careful monitoring is often all that is needed. Please remember bloat oil by itself can be caustic, so careful handling is required.

If you have any questions about bloat prevention or treatment please ring the clinic and talk to one of our veterinarians, who would be happy to help identify the most appropriate plan for your cows.