

Vetco Ltd

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We're on the web!

www.vetco.co.nz

"It is normal for cows to lose condition after calving"

Start the season as you mean to go on

Many farm teams never get around to discussing and agreeing on milking time routine. Each dairy shed seems to have its own design "quirks" that, with a little skill and experience, can be made to function well with good cow flow. It is crucial to discuss your milking time routine with your farm team.

The way people react to poor cow flow during milking (e.g. using backing gates to push cows instead

of to take up yard space) can often cause cows to be under pressure in the yards as they wait to be milked. Due to the increased pressure lameness levels can start to increase, particularly white line injuries.

It is important that every person working with cows understands how to optimise cow flow though your shed at milking, without putting cows under pressure and causing lameness.

The Healthy Hoof Programme includes a skill development section made up of both lameness prevention and treatment modules, as well as a diagnosis of the causes of lameness on your farm. If you have any questions about lameness or the healthy hoof programme please ring the clinic.

In calf update

Calving is fast approaching, and while the main objective at this time of year is to get the calves on the ground and milk in the vat, it is also the perfect time to start thinking about getting cows back in calf.

The goal should be to ensure all cows are cycling in the first 6 weeks of mating. Cows of body condition score 5.0-5.5 at calving have a better chance of cycling early compared with cows of lower condition. Body condition targets include: not more than 15% of cows less than 5.0 at

calving, not more than 15% above 5.5 at calving.

It is normal for cows to lose condition after calving, since they don't have the appetite to match their energy requirements after calving, hence the emphasis on maintaining good quality pasture. Well planned inductions will help close the calving spread and give the late calving cows a chance to cycle early and get back in calf to AI.

A copy of the induction code can be obtained at either the

Edendale or Kennington clinics to ensure the cows that you would like induced fit the induction criteria.

If you have any queries about the In Calf programme or would like some help analyzing your reproduction records, please speak to our resident In Calf advisor, Jill at Edendale.

Special points of interest:

- Clinics are open 7 days during calving
- Transition management is key to production
- Drenching cows at calving gives greatest returns
- Check trace minerals post-calving to check programmes
- Identify induction cows now for magnesium supplementation

July 2009

Clinic hours during calving

To assist you during calving our clinics at Edendale and Kennington will be open at the weekends commencing Saturday 8th August and concluding on Saturday 3rd October 2009.

Opening hours are 8.00am to 5.00pm.

Outside these hours an emergency veterinarian can be contacted by calling the normal clinic number. If the vet is currently busy, please leave a message and a vet will contact you as soon as possible.



Please remember we provide a free on farm delivery service that operates daily (this includes the above weekends). Orders received before 10.00am will be delivered to your farm the same day. Prescription animal remedies can be delivered provided the appropriate veterinary consultation has taken place.

Since cashflow is an important component of any business's financial health, our delivery service is designed to prevent the necessity of forward purchasing products that you may require, allowing an as-needed farm purchasing policy.

Vetco is well aware of the challenges facing our dairy clients this year. If you are concerned about any aspects of your animal health programme please talk to our veterinarians.

Transition management

Good management is sustainable under all but the most extreme of circumstances. Looking after your stock's needs as expeditiously as possible should ensure this season's performance is optimised without jeopardising the next season.

Good feeding is paramount. Energy, protein, trace elements, roughage and water make up the basics of this feed. Grass is the cheapest source of feed and comes at a fixed total cost for the season, i.e. mortgage + fertilizer + rates/insurances + cost of

harvesting + kg of feed grown, is the cost of this feed. Utilising as much high quality feed whilst minimising harvesting costs, will reduce the cost of grass per MJ of energy.

There may still be a cost benefit to supplementing that low ME, high lignin content, first rosund of winter/autumn saved pasture. Molasses may still give a return on investment by improving the utilisation of this pasture. However, don't get heavy handed, as once molasses exceeds 4% of the diet on a dry matter basis, it will start to sub-

stitute pasture and the high ash content will begin to suppress rumen function.

Rumensin improves rumen productivity by reducing methane gas production. This results in less ruminal acidosis and a 7% improvement in feed utilisation. Half of this improved energy intake results in increased protein yield in the milk, the other half goes on the cows back. This improved condition score will hopefully reflect in better health and fertility in the cow.

Drenching for profit in a dairy herd



Few parasites in Southland cause disease by direct physical damage (i.e. liver fluke) or competition for nutrients (i.e. haemonchus). Mostly the parasites exert their negative influence by causing inappropriate immune system response, reduced appetite and depression.

Detecting parasitism in animals is more problematic than you would think. The animals immune system in a healthy, well fed, adult cow with a low larval challenge can be sufficient to stop the adult worms in it producing eggs, but not actually kill or expel the adult worm.

“Is the production gain greater than the cost of the drench?”

A recent drench comparison trial showed one particular drench would eliminate all worm egg production in cattle, but when those animals were slaughtered and a worm count performed, the total number of *Cooperia* worms in these animals drenched with this particular drench, were no different to the undrenched mob.

EVERY TIME YOU ANTHELMINTIC DRENCH PASTURE FED ANIMALS, YOU GET A PRODUCTION RESPONSE.

Some caveats to this **bold**

statement are:

Drenching should be done in a sustainable way to ensure that the lifespan of its use as a management tool is as long as possible.

Is the production gain greater than the cost of the drench?

Sustainable use of anthelmintics is undergoing much debate in the sheep industry where effective drenching is a very important production tool. Many theories abound but generally the more parasites are exposed to drenches, the greater the genetic selection pressure towards drench resistance.

Only a small portion of the worm population is found in the host animals with most parasites being found on the pasture, so generally one to two drenches of adult stock a year puts very little selection pressure on the genetics of a farm's worm population.

The economic gain of a drench is dependent upon the time of lactation you treat the cow

Treating cows at calving is very advantageous because it helps control parasitism in the two and three year old cows when their

immunity is most suppressed. The production gain is also the greatest because this is the period when the cow has maximum production potential. A New Zealand trial (WB McPherson et al) showed a 0.03kg milk solid per day gain in cows three years and older.

A significant gain can also be made in dairy cow reproduction. The effect of drenching on reproduction is maximal at 60 days and is lost after 90 days. So to influence mating, the optimal drenching of the herd would need to be late September.

A trial by J Sanchez et al showed a reduction in calving to conception interval of 9 days with a subsequent marked improvement in in-calf rate. In a New Zealand trial on two year old heifers, there was an 11% lift in pregnancy rate.

In conclusion, by drenching your cows in early lactation, your per head production costs will be higher, but your per kilogram milk solids production costs will be reduced. This is because you will have more days in milk, more milk solids per day and a better in calf rate.

Oddspot



A farmer rang the clinic one summer day and asked for a vet to see a cow 'with a bone sticking out of her leg'. With some trepidation a young vet was dispatched. She arrived to find a cow standing calmly in the bales.

The farmer reported that the cow had not been lame the whole season, but at afternoon milking they had noticed this

pointy thing coming from her shin. Could it be a bone?

The leg in question was at least twice as large in circumference than the other hind leg, and on examination had some pus around the offending object.

Figuring it could not make matters any worse, the vet tied the cows leg (safety first!) and pulled the object out.

It was indeed a piece of bone, approximately 12cm long and with several others beside it!

Upon discussion at the clinic, the conclusion was that the cow must have broken her leg over the winter and healed, but bits of dead broken bone with no blood supply had slowly worked its way out over the season.

The cow was fine.

Macro- and Microminerals

Metabolic management of your cows is always important and should never be compromised. Magnesium (via mag chloride and/or causmag), calcium (good soil pH or lime flow if you really must), roughage, adequate energy, managed body condition scores (neither too fat nor too thin), and of course potable water. If you can manage this to prevent the clinical signs of metabolic disease that would provide a sound basis for a productive season. If you can manage

this so as to optimise both production and reproduction you will be in dairying utopia. Trace elements are also an important component of the health and productivity of your cows and replacement supplementation programmes should be monitored to maximize production benefits. As your farming enterprise evolves, so your need for trace elements changes i.e. high roughage, lower ME pastures requires more

Cobalt/Vitamin B12 supplementation, high sulphur, iron, and/or zinc increases the need to supplement copper etc. Trace mineral testing needs to be done to audit and review the success of your chosen trace element programme to ensure it is still meeting your needs. A planned approach to animal health should avoid unpleasant surprises or unnecessary production losses. Monitoring, vigilance, and early intervention are the key.



Calpromag

A Step Forward in the Treatment of Milk Fever

The addition of Vitamin B12 to traditional metabolic solutions has added a number of advantages, the most obvious being increased blood glucose levels and restored appetite. Milk fever, a condition in which there is a diminished amount of calcium in the blood, occurs when there is insufficient intake and absorption of calcium and insufficient resorption from skeletal reserves to meet foetal and lactational demands.



A note about calf euthanasia

We have had numerous inquiries at the clinic lately about appropriate methods of calf euthanasia. If you have any questions about how to humanely euthanase sick or unwanted calves, please speak to any of the vets at either clinic.