Special points of interest:

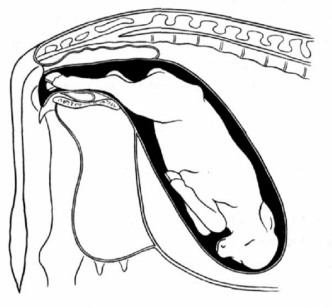
- We recommend all dairy and beef bulls are blood tested and vaccinated for BVD at least one month before use. Please ring the clinic if you need more information.

Inside this issue:

In Calf

With all the changes in the induction code, minimising the number of late calving cows is imperative to your herds reproductive performance. Identifying and minimising the number of non cycling cows is a good way of reducing the number of late calvers next season.

Early identification of problem cows is essential. Identifying pre mating heats with application of tail paint 30 days out from the planned start of mating is a good way of finding these cows. Good animal health records identifying cows which have had problematic calvings or any other health issues (retained membranes, metritis, lameness, mastitis, old age etc) may help give reasons for being a late or non cycling cow. Once late/non cycling cows have been identified management decisions can then



be made as to whether it is worth treating the individual animals or whether they just need a bit more time to start cycling. Checking the mineral status of the herd may be beneficial to you – Vetco offers a pre mating blood sample package with a turnaround time of just a few days. Checking your mineral status in early October ensures that any deficiencies can be well on their way to being corrected before the planned start of mating. It is also worthwhile evaluating your heat detection methods as inexperience in this field may result in cows cycling but not being picked up thus being considered/treated as a non cycling cow. Synchronisation programmes may be of benefit if you are concerned about heat detection in your herd.

There are several choices for treatment of non cycling cows with the 10 day CIDR program being the most popular and in most cases the most effective. The CIDR program demands good record keeping and organisation from farm staff as treatment days are specific and inflexible – mistakes are costly.

Please do not hesitate to contact either the Edendale or Kennington clinics to discuss your non cycling needs – the most important thing is to identify problem cows early and identify the potential causes of late/non cycling cows so the best treatment plan can be implemented.

Tetanus in a puppy - a warning story!

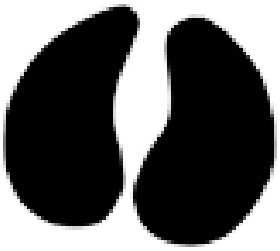
Hugo is a typical Border Collie pup. He came to the clinic for his booster vaccinations in good health. He had been frolicking in some dirt that day, including some potting mix and had collected plenty in his furry coat.

The next day he was a pretty tired puppy, and two days later he was really concerning his owners so back to the clinic he came.

He presented with stiff front legs and shoulders, lethargy and it was presumed he was having a vaccination reaction. This does unluckily occur in about 1 in 100,000 animals. He even seemed to improve with treatment for this, but by the next day he had deteriorated. Hugo was found flat on his face with his front legs fully extended from the shoulders, stiff necked and looking like a star fish. His ears were pulled up and back from his face, jaw locked, his lips were turned up. Treatment for tetanus was started straight away. This is IV penicillin and tetanus antitoxin. He received intense medical treatment and by day four Hugo started pulling through. Altogether his treatment went on for two weeks. Tetanus was confirmed, and the most likely source of the bug *Clostridium tetani* was in the horse manure in the potting mix.

Tetanus facts: Extremely rare in dogs and there is no vaccine – dogs are 300 times more resistant to tetanus toxin than horses (i.e. Hugo was terribly unlucky!). It requires an instigating wound or tooth eruption to cause disease. The closer the entry point is to the head – the quicker the onset of signs. It is the toxin that the bacteria produces that affects the nerves.

Feed Pads



Supplementary feeding has increased this spring and therefore also the use of feed pads and standing off on yards and tracks. This might just be the trigger to increase the number of lame cows in a herd.

We should be looking out for the following things and have our own awareness of them sharpened when going on farm. *The following factors can contribute to lameness:*

1. Roughness of the concrete surface – it is a fine line between too slippery or too abrasive, both are bad! If you see cows slipping, the surface might be too smooth and if too rough you will feel it under your boots. Small stones and grit on the concrete – this will make the surface more abrasive. Keep pads scraped as much as practical, especially if feeding PKE. ***Optimise the number of cows for the standing and feeding room available on the pad. If you put too many cows on they will have to push and scramble to get fed – this causes problems. You need 3.5m^2/ cow for standing on the pad and 1.2m/cow feeding space – at the least! If on for more than twelve hours this increases to 5m^2 /cow resting space on woodchip or sand and 8m^2/cow on pasture.***

2.Is the approach to the feed pad messy? A nib wall at junctions of track surface and concrete can stop gravel being carried on. When cows are forced to stand on concrete and have no area suitable to lie down, it increases the risk of lameness. ***Concrete feed pads are not suitable for standing cows off for long periods of time and if so the necessary bedding needs to be supplied for comfort.***

3.Ensure starchy and sugary feeds are balanced in the cow's diet. A diet imbalance of these feed types can result in laminitis and lame cows.

4.Be vigilant and make sure all lame cows are recorded. If lameness cases start to increase with increasing feed pad use, then the feed pad or the way it is managed could be the cause. Observe the cows and keep the feed pad scraped regularly.

For assistance with any lameness issues this season please contact either of our clinics to speak with one of our vets.

"Early weaning and high intakes of lush grass may increase the risk of spring eczema"

Spring Eczema

Recently weaned calves may show signs of photosensitization (sunburn) which appears as reddened, peeling skin particularly on white-haired areas of the body. This syndrome is termed "Spring eczema". A similar picture can be seen in adult dairy cows in spring and summer, with swelling around the face, vulva, udder and brisket and reddening of the eyes.

Calves: Although the cause is not definitively known, the current theory of how spring eczema occurs in calves is that the breakdown products of grass are unable to be excreted adequately by the calf's liver which is still quite undeveloped at that age. These grass products circulate in the blood and react with sunlight in the skin to cause sunburn. Early weaning and high intake of lush green grass may increase the risk of spring eczema in calves.

Cows: The story in cows is different to that in calves. Most spring and summer cases are thought to be due to liver damage when cattle eat plants that are toxic to the liver. This is similar to the way Facial Eczema works in the North Island when fungal spores are ingested. The damaged liver then fails to excrete the plant breakdown products that react with sunlight. Plants that have been suggested as liver-toxic are ragwort, lupins and ngaio (not in Southland) as well as blue-green algae. Liver damage due to other causes such as abscessation may also cause eczema. Some plants are thought to contain products that directly react with sunlight – these may include Rape, St John's wort, Alligator weed, Buckwheat and Goat's rue.

What to do:

1. Contact us – vets from Massey University are currently researching Spring Eczema to find out more about what is causing it in calves and cows. They are keen to come down and sample animals where outbreaks are occurring, at no cost to the farmer. We can also provide advice on treatment of affected animals.

2. Provide shade, either via a shed, cover or trees. A cover is also of benefit to protect the skin from sunlight.

3. Remove calves from lush feed and provide hay; remove cows from any identified toxic plants if possible

Supportive care – Filtabac or Zinc cream on burnt skin, Key to reduce inflammation

Acidosis

In the past few months, we have seen a large number of farms affected by acidosis, both clinical (symptomatic) and subclinical (production losses without sick cows.) Generally, the sick cows are the tip of the iceberg, and are an indicator for us that we need to be watchful for subclinical production losses.

Acidosis means that the cows rumen pH is less than 5.2. The high amount of easily digestible carbohydrates in lush spring grass is compounded by the lower levels of fibre, which leads to an increase in the levels of lactic acid producing bacteria in the rumen. This, combined with an increased in volatile fatty acids (VFAs) leads to a decrease in the pH of the rumen to an acid rumen (<5.2 pH.) Since the rumen is normally a pH of near 7 (neutral) it has no protective layer of mucus as the human stomach does. Because of this, when the rumen becomes acidic the walls of the rumen will develop ulcers. These are painful, and cows with rumen ulcers will decrease their feed intake and often go off their milk and then right themselves. The ulcers will become infected and can have bacteria break off and form abscesses in the liver. This, along with an increased acidity in the bloodstream, can cause damage to the livers ability to process chlorophyll, causing a photosensitive eczema such as seen with facial eczema in the North Island. Herds with subclinical acidosis generally also have cows with very watery faeces.

In order to prevent acidosis it is important to give the cows a balanced diet. This means that in some cases, spring grass needs to be supplemented with long stem fibres such as hay or straw. There have been reports that the barley available this year is more finely ground than in previous years, and therefore will produce less saliva from chewing. Cow's saliva is an important buffer as it contains large amounts of sodium bicarbonate.

Each farm is individual, and the grass will change feed value regularly throughout the year, but if you suspect your cows have an acidosis problem please give us a ring. Some of the things we will often put in place on farm with subclinical acidosis:

-Continuing to dust with Causmag through mating

-Adding Rumensin to the system. Rumensin decreases lactic acid producing bacteria in the rumen and increases feed conversion efficiency

-Put sodium bicarbonate in to the water troughs

-Increase fibre intake by introducing hay or straw feeding (1-2kg/cow/day free feeding)

Rumensin Trough Treatment:

$1104 for 60L, treating a 500 cow herd for 24 days at 5mL/cow/day

vetco limited For all your animal health needs

Rural Support Trust The frightful weather in the third week of September has caused massive disruption and losses in rural Southland. When circumstances beyond your control lead to a rural crisis, be it financial, climatic, or personal, the Southland Rural Support Trust is there to assist. The trust coordinators have rural people with local knowledge and a wide range of experiences. The services are free and confidential. The contact phone numbers are **0800 327 646** or **0800 787 254**. From these contacts they will be able to direct you to the services that are of in need to you in the coming months.

Vetco Limited

14 Sweeney Street
Edendale 9825
Ph: 03 206 6170
Fax 03 206 6171

11 Clapham Road
Kennington 9871
Ph: 03 230 4689
Fax: 03 230 4026

We're on the web!

www.vetco.co.nz

Water Buffalo

One of our vets, Karen Nicholson, has been away overseas. Below is a wee bit (and some photos) about some of what she has been doing….

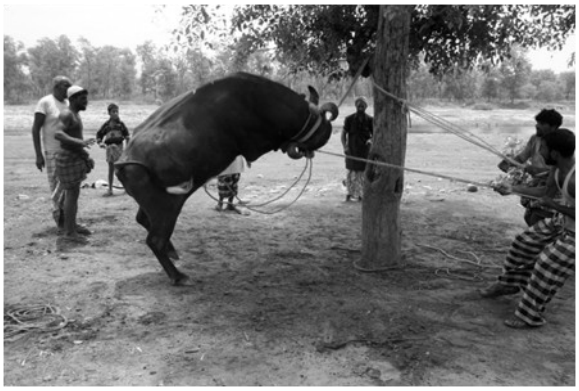
I spent a month working as a vet for Christian Veterinary Mission in North West India near the Ganges River. The people that I worked with are poor semi nomadic farmers who move with their water buffalo from the mountains to the river flats depending on where the grass is growing. The buffalo just graze wherever they can, including in the forest. This is becoming a source of conflict as officials are trying to restrict entry to the forest (as it is tiger and elephant country and therefore they can earn more money from tourists). Their main source of income is from milking the water buffalo (by hand), and the milk is then picked up by motor bikes with milk cans strapped to the back.

The major animal health problems are parasitism (I saw some impressive sized worms, ticks and leeches), getting the cows back in calf, mainly due to the inconsistent quality and quantity of feed, and rearing calves through to adulthood. These people are very poor so every animal counts. They also have little access to health care and schooling and are treated as outcastes, but were very eager to learn as much about animal health as possible (including bringing me a bag of worms that they had found in the faeces of animals that we had drenched).

These people are vegetarians as the buffalo are so important to them, and we were often offered milk products - chai tea and rice pudding were common. I passed on drinking raw buffalo milk though.

I enjoyed the opportunity to help others out and teach them a little more about animal health (its amazing what you can communicate in sign language) but it also re-emphasised how fortunate we are here in NZ, both with the absence of some nasty animal diseases and the access to animal health products.

Oral drenching - no pour ons seen!



No facilities - Just ropes and trees - and bare feet!

Preg testing a buffalo

Milking the herd