

HUNTERVILLE VETERINARY CLUB

NEWSLETTER—JULY 2013



Fibre For Dairy Cows

In years gone by fibre was something that most dairy farmers tried to avoid having in excess in the cows diet as diets were based almost solely around grass (and often of poor quality).

How things have changed. In the last season we have seen health problems in cows related to a lack of effective fibre in the dairy cows diet where significant quantities of maize silage, meal or grain are being fed.

The two most common health problems encountered have been:

1. *Sub-clinical acidosis - leading to reduced appetite, milk solids production and lameness.*
2. *Abomasal problems—mainly left displacements resulting in cows losing appetite, becoming depressed and eventually dying if not identified and treated with surgical correction.*

If you anticipate feeding large amounts of grain, meal, or maize supplements this season at times when grass is lush and of high quality, make sure you have the ability to meet your cows' fibre requirements.

Yew Tree Poisoning

Unfortunately one of our clients recently had a major disaster with this poisoning. Several weaners died within hours of eating Yew tree prunings that were in a rubbish heap for burning.

Yew is extremely toxic and causes very rapid death by inducing cardiac arrest. The animals literally drop dead and there is absolutely no treatment.

While many toxic plants are relatively unpalatable to stock, this does not seem to be the case with Yew.

If you don't know what a Yew tree looks like, it is worth finding out (our accompanying picture may give you some idea). Yew is most frequently found around churches, graveyards and older homesteads.



***** Congratulations To Gary *****

At the recent Veterinary Club Conference in Rotorua, Gary Winchcombe (our vet) was presented with the Allan Leslie Award for his outstanding contribution to the veterinary profession and veterinary clubs in particular.

Gary has been involved with veterinary clubs for his entire career of 39 years to this point. Before coming to us Gary was head vet at the Rotorua Veterinary Club for 9.5 years, and guided the practice through some very tough times to financial security and success.

We have benefited from Gary's great skills and happy disposition for the last 8 years, long may this continue. Congratulations Gary.

Scanning Results

Scanning of earlier lambing ewes is in full swing and as a rule, as expected, percentages are back in flocks where feed was becoming scarce in March. Some good results have been reported where good body weights were maintained in ewes through tugging.

As a general rule, percentages seem to be back between 10—20% at this stage. Dry numbers are up by 2—3% in some cases. Later mated flocks probably faced greater feed challenges so things are unlikely to get better. For many properties the potential to dock close to last years lamb tallies may be possible if ewe deaths and lamb losses can be minimised.

Great weather at lambing is a large part of this equation but focussing on feeding ewes and minimising the challenges of worms and trace element deficiencies will also help.

Contact us to discuss these issues.



Animal Insurance Policies

We have mentioned this in previous newsletters but it is worth repeating.

If you take out an insurance policy on a dog or bull, ensure you know what you are getting. Some policies cover death or loss of use from accident or injury but not disease.

For instance a dog with a twisted stomach may not be covered if the twist is not considered to be either an accident or an injury. Or a bull that is sub fertile may not be covered unless an actual disease entity or injury can be identified.

Establish clearly what your policy actually entitles you to!!

FARMERS DAY OUT

75km farm bike ride—Kawhatau to the Rangitikei
27 July 2013, 9.30am start, \$35 per person
All proceeds go to the Rangitikei Hunt Club
For further information contact
John Taylor 06 3277491 or Alex Dalgety 021 2223413

Milk Fever In Ewes

We were contacted in the last few days by a client who had a problem with ewes going staggy and sitting down. These ewes were 6 weeks off lambing and had been held around the sheds on short feed waiting for crutching. (Immediately prior to this they had been grazing Lucerne.)

This sounded like a milk fever problem (although 6 weeks was quite a long way out from lambing) and treatment with calcium borogluconate and the positive response confirmed this.

This case highlights the risk factors that induce milk fever.

1. **A high fertility flock with lots of multiple ewes (multiples are much more at risk).**
2. **A sudden feed change in late pregnancy (from Lucerne to grass).**
3. **A restriction in the access to feed (around crutching).**

As we approach lambing bear this in mind when crutching, vaccinating or yarding ewes. Focus especially on minimising the stress on multiple bearing ewes and ensure sudden changes in the type or quantity of feed offered does not occur.

If you have cases of milk fever, early treatment can often save some ewes (although some will abort their lambs subsequently). It is good policy to have a bag or two of calcium on hand to ensure early treatment is possible and don't confuse this problem with sleepy sickness.

Using Copper Injectable Products

As most of you who use copper injections know, these products are suspensions, not solutions, so settling out occurs. This is an obvious problem as:

- It causes guns to get blocked up.
- If the product settles out, some animals get under-dosed with non copper bearing liquid while other animals get overdosed with a thick paste that contains too much copper (this can cause toxicity).

To ensure copper injections handle well:

- Do not store in one position for long periods (invert the packets occasionally, especially a few hours before use).
- Warm copper up (a hotty in a chilly bin is a good option).
- Always give copper a good shake before use and continue to shake constantly as you use it.

Cost of Health Care!

The phone rings and the lady of the house answers -"Hello."

"Mrs Sanders, please."

"Speaking."

"Mrs Sanders, this is Dr Jones at Saint Agnes Laboratory. When your husband's doctor sent his biopsy to the lab last week, a biopsy from another Mr Sanders arrived as well...we are now uncertain which one belongs to your husband. Frankly, either way the results are not too good."

"What do you mean?", Mrs Sanders asked nervously.

"Well, one of the specimens tested positive for Alzheimers and the other one tested positive for HIV. We can't tell which."

"That's dreadful! Can you do the test again?", questioned Mrs Sanders.

"Normally we can, but Medicare will only pay for these expensive tests once."

"Well, what am I supposed to do now?"

"The Medicare helpdesk recommended that you drop your husband off somewhere in the middle of town. If he finds his way home, don't sleep with him."

Would Your Heifers Benefit From Teat Sealing??

Mastitis in heifers at calving has become a real problem in many dairy herds.

This problem has been induced by:

- Growing and feeding heifers better so they bag up before calving and are more susceptible to mastitis.
- The widespread use of standoff pads, wintering sheds, etc that are challenging environments for heifers with a high bacterial loading.

A growing number of our clients are now treating heifers with teatseal to prevent calving mastitis with pleasing results.

For some of you it may be too late to treat heifers this year but why not pay close attention to the number and cost of mastitis cases in your heifers this Spring. Good records will help with making good decisions on teat sealing heifers next year.

Note: the cost of teatseal and insertion (by us) is around \$18 per heifer. Teat sealing heifers can be justified when clinical mastitis rates reach 8—10% in heifers.



Calf Shed Hygiene

Successful calf rearing involves good hygiene. If you are rearing calves this Spring, calf sheds should have been cleaned out well before now to allow light and air into the shed.

Before putting in new bedding for calves (ideally a deep layer of untreated wood peelings), spray sheds down with a suitable disinfectant such as Virkon.

Don't forget to also give milk and meal feeders a good scrub down and disinfection also.

After Hours Vet

Emergencies:

Shop Hours:

Email:

Phone 06 3228 058

8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

huntervillevetclub@xtra.co.nz

