

# HUNTERVILLE VETERINARY CLUB

## NEWSLETTER—JUNE 2015



### A Great Spell Of Weather

After a very dry period the rains did arrive and grass growth has been great. Feed covers and stock condition entering winter are looking good on most properties and it looks like winter has now arrived.

Excellent regrowth has also occurred on brassica crops that have been grazed and had nitrogen applied to them.

However the arrival of rain did bring some animal health problems that are referred to in this newsletter.

expect to deal with in future seasons we probably need to adapt our drenching strategies to combat the worm challenges that arise this season. Four week drenching intervals have proven to be inadequate on many properties. On these properties it may be necessary to use shorter drenching intervals of no more than 3 weeks once rain arrives. Intervals can then be extended once the high larval challenge has passed.

On the other side of the coin, during the dry period larval challenges were generally low and in many cases 4—5 week drench intervals were quite satisfactory.

Following these high worm challenges it is a good idea to implement exit drench strategies with Zolvix or Startect as mentioned in our April Newsletter.

*PS. Worm problems also occurred in lambs grazing Brassica crops, Plantain, Chicory and Lucerne, so don't automatically assume that these types of feeds are immune from problems.*



### Kowhai Poisoning

The Kowhai is a widespread tree throughout the Rangitikei region and on occasions it does appear to cause poisoning in cattle. We recently had a case where 3 Friesian bulls died while grazing river bank sidings.

It is uncertain how the toxin in Kowhai works however the seeds and leaves appear to be the most toxic part of the tree.

Take care when grazing cattle in areas where Kowhais grow. Pay particular attention to fallen trees and the disposal of Kowhai trimmings.

### Subclinical Facial Eczema

In early April I was disappointed with the condition of some of my 2.2th ewes on Ferriby in the Mangahoe Valley. It certainly wasn't a worm problem and these ewes had been relatively well fed. Although no clinical cases of facial eczema had been seen on the property (although some spore counts I had done had demonstrated moderate rises) subclinical eczema was a possibility.

Blood tests on the bottom end 2.2ths showed that mild liver damage had occurred in 30% of the animals. Although these ewes have now generally improved significantly, it will be very interesting to see how they scan. It also raises questions as to what other fungal toxins (such as zearalenone) may also have been present and impacting on ewe and lamb performance.

### Dry Summer / Autumn and Worm Challenges

As we predicted in previous newsletters the last 6 weeks have seen some very significant worm challenges. With the arrival of rain, suspended larval development was reactivated and very high infective larval challenges occurred which by all accounts caught many farmers out.

Drenching intervals of 4—5 weeks proved to be too long and lambs were carrying significant worm burdens by the time of drenching. Worm challenges, despite regular drenching, have been severe enough to significantly impact on lamb growth rates if the reports we have been receiving are anything to go by.

If this dry summer / autumn weather pattern is something we can

### Farewells

Following Anna's departure last month, Malcolm has also decided to head to warmer climates.

On Wednesday June 24 we will hold a farewell for Malcolm (and a belated one for Anna) in the lounge bar of the Argyle Hotel. Drinks and nibbles from 7.30 to 9pm. All members are welcome.

Congratulations to our new veterinarian Jordan who last month graduated from Massey.



# Cutting Costs?? Track Maintenance Is Not An Option!!

Given the low pay-out dairy farmers are obviously looking for areas of expenditure that can be cut out or held back. In the past when budgets have needed to be tightened track maintenance is one area that has been deferred. Having seen the results of this decision in past seasons we would recommend you try to avoid track maintenance deferral if at all possible.

Poor tracks are a liability at the best of times and if they line up with a wet Spring you can virtually guarantee an epidemic of lame cows, especially heifers.

The time and cost of treating these lame cows and lost milk production are only the start of the problem. Significant weight loss almost always occurs and affected animals get in calf late or end up dry. Some lame cows, especially where treatment is delayed or inadequate, end up with chronic joint infections or abnormalities and have to be culled.

A short term saving will almost certainly result in a long term cost. Don't defer track maintenance if at all possible. Further to this, don't 'procrastinate', the sooner track work is carried out the longer your tracks get to settle and be in tip top condition for Spring.

## Vets On 4 Wheelers

As we are obligated to do as a business we are reviewing our work and safety policies. One area of real contention is our vets riding on 4 wheelers which, according to some reports, we should not be doing!!

However it is our belief that this is the safest and in many cases only way we can get vets around farms, if the driver of the 4 wheeler is an experienced and sensible operator. We have never had a vet injured while travelling in this manner and even the national accident figures support this view. (It is sole operators who predominantly injure or kill themselves on 4 wheelers.)

With this assessment in mind we will continue to ride on the side of 4 wheelers if you remain happy to carry us, and we will wear helmets but that is another story!

Our staff have been advised to get off and walk in risk situations, so please advise them to GET OFF if you feel their and/or your safety is compromised. If safer methods of transport are available and practical (side-by-sides or utes) we should use these to ensure our safety and your legal liabilities are met.

These changes in work and safety policy have real implications for farmers and all those professionals and tradesmen who work on farm. Some of the current guidelines appear to be coming from sources that are misconstruing figures or do not understand what happens out in the real world. I would encourage all of you to make your views known to the politicians and agricultural leaders before some very bad ideas become set in stone!!

In the hospital the relatives gathered in the waiting room, where a family member lay gravely ill. Finally, the doctor came in looking tired and sombre.

'I'm afraid I'm the bearer of bad news,' he said as he surveyed the worried faces.' The only hope left for your loved one at this time is a brain transplant. It's an experimental procedure, very risky, but it is the only hope. Insurance will cover the procedure, but you will have to pay for the BRAIN ..'

The family members sat silent as they absorbed the news. After a time, someone asked, 'How much will a brain cost?'

The doctor quickly responded, '\$5,000 for a male brain; \$200 for a female brain.'

The moment turned awkward. Some of the men actually had to 'try' to not smile, avoiding eye contact with the women. A man unable to control his curiosity, finally blurted out the question everyone wanted to ask, 'Why is the male brain so much more than a female brain?'

The doctor smiled at the childish innocence and explained to the entire group, 'It's just standard pricing procedure. We have to price the female brains a lot lower because they've been used.'

### Edale Lamb Fundraiser

In April farmers received a pamphlet asking you to donate a lamb from your works draft to help raise funds for a hospital unit for the elderly at the Edale Home in Marton. If you have not already done so the Edale Age Concern would really appreciate your support.

*Any queries to Graham Morrison 06 3278085.*

### **Cattle Bloat Deaths on Plantain**

As the hectares planted in plantain continue to grow, cattle numbers grazing plantain have also increased. We have recently dealt with a case of bloat deaths in dairy weaners grazing plantain and clover.

Bloating on plantain appears to have different factors involved when compared to typical clover bloat. For example:

- bloat capsules may not be nearly as effective in preventing bloat.
- Some soil types seem to grow plantain / clover swards with a higher bloat risk profile than other soil types.

The take home point at this stage is, if you graze cattle on plantain / clover swards do so with caution!! In the first few days of grazing check cattle frequently for signs of bloat and don't introduce empty cattle into this type of feed.

### **After Hours Vet**



**Emergencies:** Phone 06 322 8058

**Shop Hours:** 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

**Email:** [huntervillevetclub@xtra.co.nz](mailto:huntervillevetclub@xtra.co.nz)

**Website:** [www.huntervillevetclub.co.nz](http://www.huntervillevetclub.co.nz)