

## Calving Period Mastitis - Control Activities

As we head into spring again here is a revision of the important bits from the SAMM plan in regards to helping reduce the likelihood of mastitis.

### Calve cows in a clean environment

- Reduce exposure to environmental mastitis
- Calve onto clean pasture
- Do not calve cows on standoff areas

### Minimise Mastitis

- Remove the calf from the cow as soon as possible after it has had a good drink of colostrum (within 12 hours of calving - it is a very good idea to stomach tube all new arrivals with 2L of warmed colostrum even if you have seen them drink)
- Completely milk the cow out by machine. Milk twice daily from first milking onwards

*Be aware that this milking out practice may increase the risk of milk fever in high-conditioned, older cows and any others with a previous history of milk fever*

### Teat Sanitation

- Post-milking teat spraying throughout the entire lactation is proven to reduce the incidence of new mastitis by up to 50%

### Minimise Teat Damage

- Minimise damage to teats as this is a major cause of new infections.
- Make sure the machine is functioning correctly with a full machine test

### Newly Calved Cows

- Run as a separate colostrum mob
- Withhold milk for 8 milkings (cows) or 10 milkings (heifers)
- Extend this period if cows do not milk out properly

### Fast Efficient Milking

- Ensure milk letdown, especially in heifers
- Milk out all quarters of all cows twice a day
- Avoid over-milking and under-milking

### Leaking Cows

- Milk prior to calving to ease pressure
- Teatspray every time through the shed at spring concentration
- Do not put milk into bulk tank

### Teat Spray

- Spray teats with an effective sanitiser after every milking throughout the entire lactation
- Maintain teat condition - up to 15% emollient in cold muddy conditions
- If teat condition is a problem consider teat spraying with added emollient for a week before calving
- Ensure whole surface of teat is sprayed. Use at least 20ml/cow/milking
- Use a teat spray which has "Passed Protocol A 1997"
- Use according to label instructions including mixing at higher concentrations during periods of high challenge (muddy conditions)

## Avoid Early Season Grades - Take No Short Cuts!!

If you've ever been unfortunate enough to be hit with an IS grade at the start of a new season or know someone who has, it is a pretty sure bet that you don't want to be in that position ever again. With that unpleasant thought in mind here are some reminders of things that can increase the risk of getting an IS grade this season:

### Risky practices:

- Treating cows with DCT during dry period, eg. for dry cow mastitis
- Very low volume supplied at first pick up
- Cows on once-a-day milking
- Bought in cows with unclear DCT history
- Re-using filter socks
- Cold washing the plant

### Things you can do to reduce the risk:

- Remember that cows need to be withheld for the first 8 milkings after calving and heifers the first 10. Don't take shortcuts such as sneaking cows in after 3 days or 6 milkings and heifers a day early - it isn't worth it.  
*You should note that the pre-collection tests are notoriously temperamental and even more so in the presence of colostrum so by sneaking a few cows in early you could be putting yourself at unnecessary risk.*
- Change your filter sock after every milking, especially if you have had problems with IS grades before. I know it seems like a hassle, but re-using the filter sock, even with a low number of cows, will increase your risk.
- Hot wash after every milking at the start of the season, especially if you have had problems before.

Milk volume is very important!!

In Farmlink Fonterra says "to ensure the highest quality milk, **the first milking into the vat must be agitated.** Depending on your vat size, as much as 400 litres may be required to achieve full agitation, so you should be aiming to supply at **least 1000 litres of milk** at the first collection of the season. Supplying this volume will significantly reduce the chance of grading for bacteria, SCC and added water. It will also reduce the chance of grading due to the presence of DCT residues."

## Sheep Scanning

Once again we are pleased to have David Lloyd scanning ewes throughout Taranaki. With good grass growth bearing problems may occur. With good lamb prices this season emphasis will be on maximising lamb survival rates so we strongly recommend drenching your ewes with a livestock survival drench. Ewegard is not available this season so see John for other options. Congratulations to David on his recent engagement.



## July 2011

By the time you get to read this newsletter I will be stalking the village cricket grounds of England following my two sons with the Taranaki Wanderers. A bit of a dilemma there; stay at home in the cold and wet of a Taranaki July or go to England for 3 ½ weeks and watch cricket? Tough decision but in the end I chose England. You all mean a lot to me; but not that much!

This newsletter is a collective effort from the whole team and is for obvious reasons directed to all things spring related. Before you get stuck into all the fascinating articles that the team have put together, I would direct your attention to an e-mail I received last week from Murray Holt of DairyNZ. Here it is:

*"Hi everyone. We have just received an **Urgent** message from our Lab in Hamilton that there have been a number of chronic copper toxicities in the North Island in the last few weeks and they are worried it may be a large problem. Cows are recorded as 'going down' or dying suddenly. They look like a metabolic problem or nitrate poisoning. These cows have accumulated too much copper from mineral supplementation and often feed supplements such as Tapioca or Palm Kernel. The cows are tending to fall over when stressed - e.g. a feed change. Calving would obviously be a high risk event. If you have not had an autumn blood or liver test done it would pay to if you thought there is a risk. Dead cows can also be checked. Regards Don"*

Polly returned from the recent NZVA conference with much the same message & she has expanded on it in this newsletter. If you feed a lot of PKE and supplement copper you need to read it and probably give her a call. She did mention it in our last newsletter but since then we have heard reports of deaths in other parts of the country so it's worth another look. I wish you all a very successful spring & new season and look forward to seeing you when I get back in August.

## ASSISTING AT CALVING

You should provide assistance to calving heifers and cows when any of the following occur:

- Heifers not making progress within 2 hours after the first signs of abdominal straining
- Cows not calved within 2 hours after the first signs of abdominal straining
- Calving has not occurred within 3-4 hours after membranes have ruptured
- Delivery has commenced; the calf's legs or head are (just) visible externally and it is obvious the presentation is abnormal
- Delivery has commenced; the calf's legs or head are (just) visible externally and the calf is not delivered within 30 minutes for cows, 1 hour for heifers
- If you see the calf's tongue hanging out

If you think that a cow may have calved (e.g. she may have placenta hanging from the vulva) but have not found the calf, perform a vaginal exam to ensure that she has in fact calved.



If you assist too early, the cervix and vagina may not be fully dilated and by pulling you risk severe damage to the cow and more difficulty in removing the calf. If you cannot feel the calf's head, do not presume that the two legs presented are hind limbs. They may in fact be front legs and the head is twisted back (our most common presentation when called out). Check to make sure you can positively identify the hocks of both back legs and the calf's tail before attempting to pull a backwards calf. If a cow shows signs of discomfort during the course of the day (e.g. getting up and down, licking or kicking flanks, etc) bring her in and examine her. If the cervix feels closed but things are 'tight' and 'not right' she may have a twisted uterus and needs immediate veterinary attention.

If you cannot bring the calf into the correct position within 10 minutes, or if you are not sure what you are feeling or how to proceed, stop and seek immediate assistance. Make sure you keep things as clean as possible by using plenty of hot water, disinfectant and soap plus plenty of lubricant. Always have a clean bucket available to use when calving cows - a quick rinse of a bucket that has been used to carry milk or colostrum is unsuitable.

**Clinic & Farm Supplies**  
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Ph. (06) 764 8196  
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### Office

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### New Product

## BEKINA BOOTS

With four great features that separate them from other boots on the market

- Comfort
- Durability
- Slip Resistance
- Insulation



See John for your  
**Rumensin**  
requirements -

- Drenchable Liquid
- Trough Treatment
- Premix





**3 + 1 PourOn Promotion**  
**EPRINEX**  
**3 x 5 litre +1 free**  
**NO WITHHOLDINGS**  
**Promotion ends 31 August**



### Calf Disbudding

Following the successful continuation of our premium calf disbudding service last season we will be running the same system again this year. We will be de-horning in teams of two - usually one of the vets (Adrian, Lindsay, Jimmy or Leon) with the help of our large animal technician/nurse Jill. We will come and do all your calves between the ages of 2-6 weeks in one go. *This age range is important to ensure an efficient, quality service.* As part of the service we check for and remove extra teats. If you wish we can also give the first blackleg vaccination and this year we are offering to blood test calves for BVD at the same time. (see adjoining article)

Remember, this is a premium service and isn't designed to compete on price. If you want your calves sedated and dehorned in a stress and painfree way, this is the method for you. There are plenty of people out there offering cheaper alternatives. The cost will be a visit fee + \$8.50 (incl.GST) per calf. Phone the clinic to book your calves in early.

### BVD test reporting charge

BVD can be a very complicated disease, but it's possible to control it with the right advice. We want you to get the best advice possible, but it costs us a lot of valuable vet time during a busy time of year to provide this information to hundreds of clients with test results.

The cost of that reporting is covered when BVD bulk tank testing is booked through us, but when you book direct with the LIC rep, our costs aren't covered so we will be charging you for a written report this year.

If you've booked testing with your LIC rep but don't want us to charge you \$45 to interpret your results and provide the initial advice, please let us know and you won't receive a report. You will get the result direct from LIC with their interpretation. If that report indicates that you may have a problem we recommend you ring us to book a consultation to discuss what we should do next.

If you have booked BVD testing through us (including faxing off the forms we sent with the last newsletter) you will receive a written report free of charge. Where the results indicate a major problem with BVD, we'll most likely ring and suggest more intensive follow-up instead so you can get the best outcome.

### BVD calf testing

What are you doing to protect your herd from BVD? The best estimate we have at the moment is that the average infected herd lost \$81,000 last year due to just some of the effects of BVD! One of the most important tools you can use to keep BVD out of your herd, or speed clearance of infection if you're already infected, is to test replacement calves each year before they leave the calf shed. This is a great backstop to catch any breakdown in biosecurity before a minor slip up turns into a total disaster. LIC plan to include the BVD status in their MINDA database so you will have a lifetime BVD status attached to your animals. In future this is likely to start affecting the value of animals but we are not certain yet that will be active for this season. With this in mind, we have decided to make it easy for you to test your calves. Starting this season we'll be offering the option of blood sampling your calves while they are sedated for calf dehorning. If you don't use us for dehorning we can come out and blood sample your calves at some other time without sedation.

Another option is for you to get ear notching kits from LIC (same as for DNA testing) and do it yourself. Our price for blood testing is the same as the ear notching price (\$14 + GST including collection costs). There will also be a callout fee if we come just to blood sample the calves (this is already covered if we're disbudding).



Calf screening is likely to be an important part of most herds' BVD control program as awareness of BVD increases over the next few years. Contact with a PI (an animal persistently infected with BVD) increases the amount and severity of other diseases. Recent research shows that it also reduces growth rates in the in-contact calves by an average of 20%. In future BVD free status may become a requirement for access to high quality calf and heifer grazing because farmers with BVD safe stock won't want to risk exposure to someone else's dirty PI. No good grazer will want that on their head once word gets out and enough herds are testing to make BVD free grazing blocks an option. BVD free grazing is in everyone's best interest.

Other important control measures for BVD are be sure that :

- all bulls are tested *and* vaccinated
- any bought cows are tested for BVD before you let them near your herd
- there is no over-the-fence contact with neighbours' stock by using outriggers, temporary hotwires, double fencing or co-ordinating with the neighbour to avoid grazing opposite each other at the same time (it's a win-win if you can encourage them to control BVD on their property too).

We'd love to sit down with you and design a BVD control plan specifically for your farm so give us a call if you're interested. Even if you decide not to do that you should probably be testing your calves anyway.

If you are one of the herds that has already decided to make calf testing part of your BVD strategy, don't forget to do it on time this season, even better, book us to do it for you at a convenient time.

### Prepare Cows for Lactation 2-3 weeks before Calving

Around calving, the cow undergoes a dramatic transition from dry and heavily pregnant to fully lactating. This is a very stressful period for the cow and she is vulnerable to many problems & disorders that can affect her health & productivity. In the last month before calving a mature cow requires 20% of her mature cow liveweight in metabolisable energy (MJME) daily to meet her energy requirements. This means a 400kg Jersey needs 80 MJME/day and a 500kg Friesian needs 100 MJME/day. This is some 10% higher than was traditionally recommended and is an important consideration to prevent condition score loss before calving.

Feeding during the last 2-3 weeks before calving not only determines what happens to body condition at this time, but also provides an opportunity to prepare the cow for the coming lactation. Strategic feeding can reduce diseases and disorders around calving and reduce the potential for condition score loss following calving. The principles of feeding at this time include:

- \* Satisfy the cow's daily requirements for energy, protein, vitamins & minerals.
- \* If a cow is to be fed more than 3-4 kg/day of concentrate after calving, it will be necessary to adapt her rumen to reduce the risk of rumen upsets. Feed 2-3 kg/cow/day of a similar diet to dry cows in the last 2-3 weeks before they calve.
- \* Manage the mineral levels of a cow's diet in this period before calving as this allows her to better cope with the huge metabolic demands placed on her around calving. This reduces her risk of suffering disorders such as milk fever, ketosis and retained foetal membranes.
- \* Feed a diet low in sodium and potassium
- \* Feed a diet with low levels of calcium, and
- \* Supplement with magnesium

Pastures can be naturally high in potassium but this can be overcome by magnesium supplementation before and after calving, and with calcium supplementation after calving to colostrum cows. Avoid all potash-type fertilisers at least 2 months prior to your planned calving start date.

If the body condition score of cows is not between 5.0 and 5.5 one month before calving, it's too late. Make plans to have calving cows in better condition next year.

### Would you like fewer non cyclers?

**Metrichecking** cows between calving and mating is a routine practice for many dairy farmers these days. It is a good way to pick up cows with subclinical uterine infections (endometritis) which are not discharging much pus and would not otherwise be detected. A gadget called a metrichecker is inserted into the vagina and some fluid is scooped out. If the fluid has pus in it antibiotics are infused into the uterus to clear up the infection.



Recently I went to a talk about risk factors for uterine infections. All the usual suspects were quoted: retained membranes, assisted calvings, a dead calf, twins, milk fever etc. But one of the biggest risk factors is actually low body condition. I've known for years that most of the dirty cows I am called to are skinny but I thought they were skinny because they were dirty. It turns out to be more likely that they were dirty because they were skinny before they calved. **Skinny cows are more likely to suffer uterine infections after calving** than cows which calve at or near BCS 5.



Something else which may be obvious to you, but wasn't to me, is that **detecting and curing uterine infections sooner rather than later after calving reduces the number of non cyclers** at planned start of mating (PSM). When cows were metrichecked and treated in three batches at about 5, 8 and 11 weeks after planned start of calving there were fewer non cyclers than if cows were metrichecked all together about 10 weeks after PSC when most of the herd had calved. This is because the changes leading up to a cow's first heat begin more than a month before the actual heat and uterine infection slows down these changes. Early treatment of a dirty cow allows these changes to progress so she has more chance of cycling before PSM. Late treatment makes no difference to her chance of being a non cycler. There's another drawback to late metrichecking. If you delay metrichecking until 10 weeks after PSC many of the dirty cows will have cleaned up by themselves and you will have fewer to treat. But some of the cows which look clean at metrichecking will still have inflammation in their uterus and that inflammation makes them less likely to conceive. Checking them earlier, when they were still obviously dirty on metrichecking, means they get treated and have a better chance of conceiving earlier.

Metrichecking cows late is a false economy! You will save some money on dirty cow treatments but you will lose more on noncycler treatments and lower conception rates. So, if you are treating more non cyclers than you think you should be, consider metrichecking your herd in batches this year.

*In an interview, General Norman Schwarzkopf was asked if he didn't think there was room for forgiveness toward the people who have harboured and abetted the terrorists who perpetrated the 9/11 attacks on America. His answer was a classic; Schwarzkopf said, "I believe that forgiving them is God's function. Our job is simply to arrange the meeting."*