

Would your cows (and you) benefit from ionophores this spring?

July is much too early to make predictions for the season in Taranaki. However things are looking good. Strong winter grass growth means cow condition is better than usual and many farmers have good grass cover. High PW cows with good fat reserves are going to milk well, whether they are fully fed or not. Fully feeding cows is a challenge in a wet, overcast Taranaki spring. Low dry matter grass and high levels of wastage combine to reduce cows' energy intakes. High PW cows will continue to milk, but it will be off their backs. Using fat for milk production makes by products called ketones. High levels of ketones depress appetite and that further reduces energy intake. We call this disease ketosis.

Holdover cows are most at risk of ketosis. They are good producers – or you wouldn't be holding them over – and they are always fat. Many of you will be familiar with a holdover that starts milking with a hiss and a roar but about a month later her production plummets, she gets sad, goes off her food and quickly loses a lot of weight. She slowly recovers, but never to her previous level of production. Bulling and conception are delayed too. Ketosis prevention is easy, a Rumensin bloat bullet about 2 weeks before calving reduces the incidence of ketosis in holdovers by over 90%.

What if your whole herd is a bit too fat? How do you capture those energy reserves as milk without risking cases of ketosis in your best cows? ('Wednesday team' cows don't milk well enough to get ketosis, they just stay fat and happy). Ionophores like Bovatec and Rumensin can be added to meal at the mill. Accurate dosing is important so I don't advise mixing by hand. If you have an in-shed feeding system, speak to your feed rep about feeding an ionophore until the end of AB.

If you don't feed in the shed, you can add RumenoX to the water supply. This won't be as consistent as in shed feeding but much better than nothing, particularly as you can't just feed more in the shed in bad weather. RumenoX works out at 8c/cow/day.



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Sex after death?

A couple made a deal that whoever died first would come back and inform the other if there is sex after death. Their biggest fear was that there was no after life at all.

After a long life together, Frank was the first to die. True to his word, he made the first contact: "Jane, Jane, can you hear me?"

"Is that you, Frank?"

"Yes, I've come back like we agreed."

"That's wonderful! What's it like?"

"Well, I get up in the morning, I have sex. I have breakfast and then it's off to the golf course. I have sex again, bathe in the warm sun and then have sex a couple of more times.

Then I have lunch (and Jane, you'd be proud — lots of greens).

Another romp around the golf course, then pretty much have sex the rest of the afternoon.

After supper, it's back to the golf course again.

Then it's more sex until late at night. I catch some much-needed sleep and then the next day it starts all over again."

"Oh, Frank! Are you in Heaven?"

"No — I'm a rabbit on a golf course in Scotland."

The Humble Ham Sandwich

A priest and a rabbi were sitting next to each other on an airplane. After a while, the priest turned to the rabbi and asked: "Is it still a requirement of your faith that you not eat pork?"

The rabbi responded: "Yes, that is still one of our beliefs."

The priest then asked: "Have you ever eaten pork?"

To which the rabbi replied: "Yes, on one occasion I did succumb to temptation and tasted a ham sandwich."

The priest nodded in understanding and went on with his reading.

A while later, the rabbi spoke up and asked the priest: "Father, is it still a requirement of your church that you remain celibate?"

The priest replied: "Yes, that is still very much a part of our faith."

The rabbi then asked him: "Father, have you ever fallen to the temptations of the flesh?"

The priest replied: "Yes, rabbi, on one occasion I was weak and broke with my faith."

The rabbi nodded understandingly and remained silently thinking for about five minutes.

Finally, the rabbi said: "Beats a ham sandwich, doesn't it?"



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JULY 2020

Anyone else looking forward to the North vs. South match at the end of August? It's the nearest thing we'll get to a test match this year, so I hope I'm not on call that night. However, I think we can all agree that if your last name is Barrett, you should be playing for the North, surely. Anyway it's something to look forward to this spring and will give us something to talk about over a calving or downer cow. That and an impending general election

I hope you're all ready for the spring onslaught and have everything prepared for a sudden rush of calves and cows to milk (and later on lambs and ewes to check if you're out east).

We have everyone on board and ready to go. Even Leon, who became a new father recently (big congrats to Leon and Jenna, and a big hello to little Harriet), will be back from paternity leave and raring to go.

I'm going to nag you now with the usual request for hot water, soap and a fresh towel at the shed for us, especially for those nasty rotten calvings



that inevitably occur early in the season when you may not have turned the water heater on yet. Please remember we have to get back in the car and go to another call after these visits and really need to be able to clean ourselves and our gear before turning up at another farm smelling of dead calf with dirty gear. Please go to the house and fill a couple of buckets and bring them to the shed if you don't have hot water available there. Your consideration will be greatly appreciated.

So what else has been happening? Well, the general election just got a whole lot more interesting and I'm sure that will be a keen topic of conversation during visits. I won't be able to ask you where you travelled overseas for your winter holiday, so I hope you took the chance to see more of our own beautiful country; it's the only country we are likely to be visiting for the next year or two. And that's not necessarily a bad thing; some of us are old enough to remember that ad "don't leave home 'til you've seen the country" and the catch-cry "it's somewhere near Taupo isn't it?" We've packed a lot into the first half of this year. Here's hoping the second half is a bit more "normal". Although I'm not counting on it. Take care guys, best of luck this spring and remember we're here if you need us.

The Importance of Treating Pain & Inflammation

It's not just famous All Blacks selling Voltaren Gel that realise the importance of treating pain & inflammation. Cows that are lame or ill for whatever reason between calving and mating have significantly reduced pregnancy rates. Many studies worldwide show that cows that have mastitis or are lame, even very early in the season, do not get in calf as easily as their unaffected herd mates, and obviously cows with uterine issues such as Metritis are at big risk. These are all painful stressful conditions.

Pain equals more stress. Stress equals increased cortisol and/or adrenaline levels.

As this is a chronic situation, rather than a quick fight or flight response, the outcome is also more long term. Drymatter intake falls as appetite is suppressed – animals are in a deeper and longer lasting negative energy state. This depresses ovarian activity so subsequent conception rate is depressed. Less energy means less physical energy for behavioural signs of heat. Less eaten means poorer immune response, slower recovery and loss of condition. Less condition means less base fat material from which to make the reproductive hormones necessary for successful pregnancy.

Consequently, treating ill cows as soon as possible not only reduces the direct effects of the problem itself but improves chances of a more successful subsequent reproduction. An important part of this treatment is to reduce the pain response – this may well have a bigger part to play in mating results than the disease itself. For lame cows - reduce walking especially on hard surfaces, milk OAD at most, and make feed easy to collect i.e. take extra feed to the cow.

Even when antibiotics are not required or indicated, anti-inflammatory analgesics should always be used - nowadays there are lots of them and some have nil milk withholding. There is no excuse to ignore pain and inflammation in your cows but the beneficial effects of treatment are highly cost effective.

Getting pregnant when you are already in trouble is not a good idea for dairy cows as it puts even more energy demands on them. Pain and/or stress in the pre-mating early lactation period interrupts normal cycling, ovarian activity and hormonal production. The end result on farm may be varied including anoestrus (i.e. no cycling) and cystic ovaries of various degrees depending on the status of the cow when the problem began, how long it is before resolution and how severe it was. One day of pain or inflammation can delay pregnancy by more than one week.

The moral of the story is do not neglect problem cows, treat as early as possible and don't skimp on the TLC. This is important from a welfare point of view but it also has financial implications.

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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 3-4hrs 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 you 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 need 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 not suitable.

Key Point: if it's calving season & you see a cow that looks "not quite right" the most likely reason for her looking like that is that she is trying to calve so get her in and check her out. If you don't know what you're feeling, get us out to take a look.

BOBBY CALF WELFARE

Bobby calf welfare is important and farmers, transport operators and processors all have a role to play. These guidelines will help you meet the welfare needs of animals in your care and to comply with the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and the industry agreed standards detailed in the animal welfare codes. On the farm bobby calves must be given the same degree of care as every other calf on the farm.

- Colostrum – bobby calves must be fed colostrum (2-4 litres/calf) within the first 24 hours of life, preferably within 6 hours. To provide immunity, colostrum should be fed to them twice daily for the first four days of life.
- Handling – handle calves gently and with care at all times.
- Weather protection – bobby calves must be protected from extremes of weather, especially wind, rain, cold and heat. They should be moved to a sheltered, draught-free calf shed as soon as practicable after birth.
- Housing – a lying area that is well drained, covered with comfortable material that is regularly topped up to keep it dry and odour free. Exposed concrete and bare earth are not acceptable. There should be no hazards likely to cause injury to the animals e.g. sharp objects, slippery floors.
- Water – calves must have free access to clean drinking water at all times.
- Age – calves must be a minimum of four days old before being transported off farm.
- Feed – at least half the day's ration of colostrum (or substitute) is given on the day of transport within 2 hrs of pick up.

In addition to being a minimum of four days old before transport, the following signs will indicate if a calf is fit for transport:

1. Healthy – eyes are bright, not dull or sunken. Ears are upright. No visible disease, deformity, injury, blindness or disability.
2. Strong – able to bear weight on all four legs. Able to move freely.
3. Hooves – firm and worn, not rounded or soft.
4. Navel – dry and withered, not pink/red, raw or fleshy.

Help your cows through transition with new Calpro Bolus

At calving, a dairy cow switches from being non-lactating to lactating and must rapidly adapt to the nutritional demands of milk production.

This sudden change can lead to a measurable fall in blood calcium, referred to as hypocalcaemia. If the drop in blood calcium is severe, it can lead to increasing paralysis of muscles and the serious clinical condition of milk fever.

But even without visible signs of milk fever, subclinical hypocalcaemia can still have health and productivity consequences.

A new way to help cows make the transition is with Calpro Bolus. It's the only ACVM authorised calcium bolus, and it's supported by a published, peer-reviewed New Zealand study.

Treatment is one bolus given at calving, and a second bolus given 12 hours later. The effect is rapid, with available calcium levels rising within one hour.

As well as providing two big doses of calcium, Calpro Bolus helps the cow's own calcium control mechanism: by lowering urine pH, the cow's natural body reserves of calcium become more readily available.

Call or stop by the clinic to find out more about this effective new treatment.



Ready for your new calves?

I'm not a fan of online questionnaires. Except for the **Dairy NZ Calf Care Toolkit** which is a really useful tool to check that you have everything in place for a successful calf rearing season. It asks just 12 questions, then you click Finish and get a report telling you how your system compares with what other farmers are doing. There is clear simple advice about changes you can make to level up with other farmers.

Go to www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/calves/calf-care-toolkit/

Calf Rearers: Calf Selection is Critical to Success

When selecting calves to be reared it is important to consider various factors, such as breeding – which will influence the potential of the calves and whether they are intended for dairy beef or as milkers.

Following these rules will avoid raising calves that are hindered from the start, as they will always tend to be poor doers and lag behind their age group.

Select strong calves:

- That are five days old and are a minimum of 40kg for friesians.
- That have been fed sufficient colostrum.
- With dry umbilical cords.
- That are bright and alert.
- That are not twins.
- That are not sick or lame.
- From as few sources as possible.

On Arrival:

- On entry into barn allow time for calves to de-stress by letting them rest.
- Feed electrolytes for first 12 hours after delivery.

Pens:

- Allow at least 1.5 - 2m² per calf.
- No more than 10 - 12 calves per pen.
- No more than 100 calves per barn.
- Use more than one barn to control diseases and to separate age groups.

Avoid overfeeding calves prior to transporting.

Spray navel cord with iodine before and after transport.

Spray the barn with an anti-bacterial and anti-viral product twice a week & hospital pens daily.



Calf Scours

So you've got scouring calves. Welcome to the world of calf rearing.

While it's tempting to think that addition of a tablet, powder or injection will sort your problem out there are a few basics that really should be non-negotiable when dealing with calf scours and calf rearing in general:

- Isolate scouring calves from healthy ones
 - * You may have seen articles suggesting taking infected calves out of pens will cause problems with socialisation later on. From our viewpoint, we would rather you isolated infected calves whenever possible not only to make individual care & treatment easier for the poor person who has to nurse them but also to lessen the chance of spread to more calves. In a big pen this becomes even more important. I'm sure they will all get to know each other later on.
- Don't add newborn calves to an infected mob (it happens)
- Treat scouring calves with electrolytes to replace lost fluids & salts
 - If it's nutritional scours, often removal of milk for 1 feed & replacement with electrolytes will be enough
 - If it's an infectious cause you can't withdraw milk for too long because of the lost energy that results. If the calf is really sick withdraw milk & feed electrolytes only then either add electrolytes to subsequent milk feeds (making sure fresh water is always available) or alternate during the day between milk/milk replacer and electrolytes. Ensure minimum of 2 hours between alternate feeds.
 - Try and find out what the cause is. If we can identify the cause then we can use the correct treatment to sort the issue out quickly.
- **Always make fresh water available to all calves.** A dehydrated calf will actively seek water (if it's able to stand) so make sure it's always available.

Bobby Calves and RVMs

Reminder – 7-day rule no longer applies No antimicrobials to bobby calves.

Calves treated directly with antimicrobials must NOT be submitted for slaughter as bobby calves.

If bobby calves are fed milk from a cow treated with an RVM and that milk is still within the withholding period then those calves are no longer suitable to be bobby calves and the 91-day meat withholding applies. i.e. if they drink antibiotic milk they cannot be bobbies.

The "7-day clean milk rule" no longer applies.

Medicated Feeds: Medicated milk replacers/meals, e.g. Coccidiostats, must not be fed to bobby calves.

If a pregnant cow has been treated with any restricted veterinary medicine and calves before the Meat withholding period has elapsed, but outside the Milk withholding period, then the calf must not be submitted for slaughter as a bobby calf until the cow's meat withholding period has elapsed.

If the calf is born within the milk WHP of a treated cow then unless you delivered the calf yourself and kept it away from its mother you should assume that the calf has already drunk from its mother and therefore cannot be bobbied.