

Pregnancy Testing

Scanning is upon us once again and by the time this article goes to print some of you would already have had your 6 week scan done and be patting yourself on the back for your 90+% 6 week in calf rate! This article is just a quick review on the ins and outs of scanning time so everyone is up to scratch on 'D' day so the process can run as smooth as possible and both parties can get what they want from the day.

When to Scan?

Timing of the scan is important depending on what information you want in the way of calving dates, Fertility Focus Reports, in calf/ late/empty or just pregnant/empty.

If a Fertility Focus Report is wanted or all calving dates known then we recommend scanning around 12 weeks after start of mating and then scan the rechecks 7 weeks after bull goes out. This is because when a foetus is over 13 weeks old it is very hard to age accurately and once it goes over the brim of the pelvis it is impossible to age, so we can provide educated guesses on these older pregnancies but that is all they will be. If you want just yes/no and/or late calvers for inductions then usually just one scanning about 6 weeks after the bull is out will do.

Scanning Accuracy

Last season we scanned over 72,000 cows and I would hate to think what the lifetime numbers of some of our wiser vets would be! As in any job, with fatigue, difficult working conditions, uncooperative cows and time constraints comes mistakes. Even if we were 99.9% accurate that still means that nearly 75 cows could have been misdiagnosed last season. Not only could it be operator error but mistakes made due to poor ear tags, mistakes when reading and recording numbers and double ups with ear tag numbers can cause the wrong cow to be called empty or pregnant. The chance of the proper diagnosis being reached can be greatly increased by providing us with as much information as possible including definite bull in and out dates and mating dates if possible as well as clear, readable ear tags and making sure all numbers are recorded correctly.

When it comes to dating pregnancies mistakes can be made but there is also some individual cow variation on how long her actual gestation will be and how big her foetus will be at a certain age. We take a cow's gestation length to be 282 days long but that is in fact an average and majority of cows will be longer or shorter than this date. Most cows will calve within 10 days either side of their calving date but there are still about 5% of cows that will be outside of this and even over 2 weeks earlier or later than the date given. It is just something to think about next time a cow is late and you go to blame the scanner.

Rectal Perforation

This is another unfortunate risk of scanning cows and occurs when a cow decides to strain at the wrong time and then we cause damage to the lining of the rectum; we try our best to avoid this but it can and does happen (fortunately very rarely).

Many dairy practices now get their clients to sign a waiver accepting that occasional mistakes are made in diagnosis and injury to the cow is an occasional and unavoidable outcome and they will not be held liable if they do. I would like to think that with another scanning season just around the corner we won't have to ask the same of you.



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*A wife asks her husband: "What do you like most in me, my pretty face or my sexy body?"
He looks at her from head to toe and replies:
"I like your sense of humour!"*



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FEBRUARY 2014

America's Cup Scapegoat Retraction & Apology

It seems my "sources" were about as reliable as an English top order batsman when I was given the inside oil on the local America's cup scapegoat in our last newsletter. Noel Boddie was not the cause of our America's Cup capitulation after all. He did visit the America's Cup village on his way home but by then it was all over & he was looking at an empty wharf. So my apologies to Mr Boddie; he is indeed a fine human being & very much loved and admired by everyone associated with Eltham Vet Services. Any extra charges added to his vet bills as a result of false information have now been removed and he is welcome back to the clinic any time he is in town. We love you Noel. Sorry. P.S. I do know who the scapegoat is (Noel told me) but for legal reasons I'm going to give that one a miss.

The Reason for our Apology

We received the following e-mail & letter from our beloved former director Noel Boddie the other day. It just had to go in this newsletter alongside our humble apology "Hi Al

This is the abridged version. I have cut out all comment about the extreme pressure I have been under since your publication came off the press and people began looking at me in that peculiar way and avoiding me whenever possible. Also I have not put in about the discussions I have had with my high powered legal litigation experts who are putting the finishing touches to our claim we may file in the near future if an appropriate apology and retraction is not forthcoming! (Building looks as if it is coming on well. When is the opening?). Cheers
Noel
Dear Editor

THE hicCUP!!

To find myself blamed for the unfortunate result in San Francisco is one thing but to be wrongly blamed is quite another!! Al, while I have great respect for your wisdom and knowledge in many areas esp. sport of all kinds, politics, and even at times, things of a veterinary nature, your information / accusation on the matter at hand is completely off track. I was not there. If by being there is enough to condemn one to purgatory (and a hefty increase of one's vet fees), I suggest you target a certain sheep farming couple from "over the hill", who I understand were there. While it would be improper of me to name the culprits I would at the very least, expect an admission by them printed in your next publication! I will leave that to you.

Whoever or whatever was to blame for our loss, we all shared in the doom and gloom, - but life goes on and we all need to pull together to find a way to win that damn cup back! My suggestion is that if Mr Moneybags can employ all those smart NZ sailmakers to help him, then maybe we should get "Dirty Denny" on our team! Noel (Blameless)"

Calf vaccinations due now!!

Give Nicola a call to book Lepto & BVD vaccinations.

Herd can be vaccinated at scanning;
heifers out grazing or upon return.

Stop changing your e-mail address!

(or tell us it's changed)

We are sending out spore count e-mails again this season. BUT, every year when the first e-mail gets sent I get back up to a dozen e-mails saying that e-mail no longer exists or has been changed. Damn it; stop changing your e-mail address every time a new deal comes out would you!

If you were getting my e-mails last season & now aren't please e-mail me at al@elthamvetservice.co.nz with your new address & I'll make the required change & get you back on the list.

LAMENESS SEMINAR

We will be holding this popular seminar in **May**. More details to follow. Numbers limited so ring the clinic to book your spot.

Drying off not that far away for some

Often around this time of year the season begins to take its toll on some of the herd and as a result your bulk count can start to rise. Unless you have clinical mastitis to deal with, those cows are generally telling you it's time to either go once a day, dry her off and take a holiday until next season or send her to the works if she's a problem cow who up until now has got away with it because there has been more milk in the vat to dilute her contribution.

If you are about to dry cows off early, don't forget to treat them with an appropriate dry cow therapy before you do and, given the length of time between now & the next season, following up with a tube of Teatseal would seem a very wise decision to keep her protected until next season.

Your dry cow consultation forms are included with this newsletter so please put them somewhere safe and fill them out & return to us well before you come in to purchase this season's requirements.

Clinic & Farm Supplies

Railway Street, Eltham
Ph. (06) 764 8196
www.elthamvetservice.co.nz

Trading Depot

Hollard Engineering,
Victoria Street, Kaponga
Ph. (06) 764 6686
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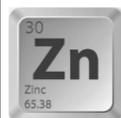
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Facial Eczema Basics

Prevention is the key to minimising production loss as a result of Facial Eczema (FE). Facial eczema is caused by the ingestion of sporidesmin (a toxin) which is found at the base of the grass sward in dead material.

Sporidesmin in the animal leads to liver damage which then prevents the normal removal of a plant pigment, phylloerythrin. When the plant pigment is in superficial blood vessels, it reacts with UV light from the sun and causes skin lesions. While the skin lesions are most visible, don't forget about the underlying liver damage.

Signs that facial eczema may be on your farm:

- Decreased milk production (as much as 50%!)
- Skin changes, restlessness, shade seeking
- Head shaking, weight loss
- Decreased growth rates
- Reduced lifetime production and reproductive performance

How to confirm you have a problem?

- ❖ Skin lesions in conjunction with high spore counts
- ❖ Blood test or post mortem to check for liver damage

Treating facial eczema:

- ❖ Provide shade
- ❖ Remove from pasture with likely high spore counts
- ❖ Provide clean water and safe feed
- ❖ Application of UV light protectant
- ❖ B vitamins
- ❖ Drenching with Manderson's Mix or Eczema Oil seems to aid recovery in affected cows

Animals may need a vet visit for secondary bacterial infections and other supportive treatment.

Risky time periods:

The toxin tends to be present in late summer and autumn, and during periods of warm, light rain.

Temperatures ideal for toxin production are hot days (10-30°C) & soil temperatures greater than 12°C at night.

Prevention is key:

- ❖ Southern facing hills are safer during risky times as they tend to dry out in the wind.
- ❖ Monitor spore counts in your area.
- ❖ Pasture management: lower stocking rates, high pre and post grazing levels (since spores at grass base). Do not top paddocks.
- ❖ In high risk paddocks, cultivars can be changed to lower risk species such as chicory and red clover.
- ❖ Fungicides (Mycotak, Sporex, Benlate or Topsin) can reduce spore counts for 4-6 weeks, but must be applied before the anticipated risk period (which can be extremely variable in Taranaki).
- ❖ Breeding cows for resistance to toxin (more theoretical than practical at this stage; definitely 'doable' in sheep)
- ❖ Zinc prevention should begin at least 2-3 weeks before spore counts become dangerous.

Options for zinc provision include:

- Zinc oxide drench daily for milkers
- Weekly Zinc oxide pasture spray
- Zinc sulphate in drinking water (it is not palatable so introduce gradually at low doses)
- Intra-ruminal slow release Zinc capsules given about 7-10 days before anticipated rise in spore counts and repeated every 4-6 weeks as needed while risk remains high (timing depends on which product you use)

High Somatic Cell Counts

It's around this time of year when we start getting clients coming in to purchase large amounts of mastitis drugs to treat high cell count cows, after having a herd test done and wanting to treat all the cows that tested over, say 1,000,000. When you are faced with a large group of high cell count cows you have a number of options and treating them all is not necessarily the best or most cost effective one. Take some time to consider what the best option is for each of those cows. Do a rapid mastitis test (RMT with paddle) to try and isolate which quarter/quarters are infected. Look through their records taking note of their age, the historic SCC, whether or not they had DCT last season and how many times they have had clinical mastitis in that quarter. Sure, some of them will be worth treating, especially if they are young, haven't been treated regularly for mastitis or been high in previous seasons; even more so if you can isolate the problem to a single quarter. Generally speaking, younger high cell count cows are always worth one attempt at treating during lactation. So by all means give them a go; talk to one of us first for advice on what might be the best treatment.

What if they are older cows, which have had dry cow therapy before (maybe for a number of years) and remain consistently high? There is an extremely poor chance of being able to cure them now. So don't waste time, money and stress attempting to cure them when we know they probably have a chronic Staph infection and there is very little chance of a cure. She should be culled now so she can no longer infect young vulnerable cows during milking.

We know the best chance of curing high SCC cows is by using long acting DCT. So if you are looking at a number of younger cows that you think will be worth treating and are maybe struggling with condition, drying them off early can serve two purposes.

Dry Cow Therapy is a wonderful product and cleans up a lot of cows and herds each year. However it isn't a miracle product, even if you do the whole herd each year. Some cows are past curing and need to be culled. That's what your treatment and herd testing records are for. And if you've allowed this problem to develop by either not treating cows with DCT in the past, ignoring advice to do the whole herd, or chosen to only treat the worst high cell count cows year after year (including those cows that have been high in previous seasons despite DCT) you have created a situation now where whole herd therapy alone just isn't going to fix the problem. You need to use a co-ordinated program of culling alongside whole herd DCT of cows that remain; possibly for a number of seasons before you begin to see real progress.

Facial Eczema - how effective is my treatment?

Like all vets I hate facial eczema. It is such a cruel and painful disease and, by the time I see the victims, the damage has been done. Animals which survive have their lifetime production reduced by up to 25%. All my treatment can do is speed up a partial recovery because, once an animal has had facial eczema, it is never the same again. Animals showing symptoms of FE are obviously not performing well but less obvious are the devastating effects of subclinical FE.

Pasture conditions this year are looking favourable for the growth of the facial eczema fungus. There is lots of dead matter in the sward for the fungus to feed on. If the weather goes warm and wet in Feb/March we could be in for a bad eczema year. There is no cure for FE so prevention is the only way to go. There are lots of different ways to feed zinc salts. Spraying pasture with fungicides or feeding something other than pasture can also be done. If you would like to discuss your FE prevention plans with one of our vets, we are more than happy to do so.

I know that many of you control facial eczema really well, but if you still get eczema in spite of doing what you think is right; it will pay to look a little deeper into what you are doing.

The traditional way to assess facial eczema risk is by counting the spores in samples of grass from a paddock the cows are about to go into. We recommend that you give your cows a full dose of zinc when spores counts reach 40,000 per gram of pasture. **If spore counts go over 250,000, zinc alone is not enough to protect cows** and you need to be giving them feed other than grass or spraying pasture with fungicides as well. We charge \$15 for pasture spore counts and results are available the same day.

Another way to assess facial eczema risk is by counting the spores in a dung sample. This is more accurate because it measures how many spores the cows are actually eating and not just how many spores are in the paddock. We recommend you give your cows a full dose of zinc when faecal spore counts reach 75,000 – 100,000 per gram of wet dung. A well mixed sample from as many cows as possible will give the best result. We send this sample away so turnaround time is about 5 days and the charge is \$53.

How accurate is your zinc dosing? The concentration of zinc in the trough water measures how much zinc you are offering the cows. Trough water should contain between 60 and 230mg zinc per litre, depending on the degree of protection required. The concentration of zinc in the dung is more accurate because it measures how much zinc the cows are actually drinking and not just how much you are offering them. Again, a well mixed sample from as many cows as possible will give the best result. Faecal zinc should be above 200mg per kg of wet dung. We send this sample away too so turnaround time is about 5 days. Zinc in water costs \$26 per sample and zinc in dung is \$36.50.

High levels of dietary copper may increase the damage done by facial eczema spores. So it is NOT a good idea to supplement copper during the FE season. We know that feeding high levels of zinc can deplete cows' copper reserves but the FE season is the time of year when the cows' copper needs are lowest. So it is better to measure liver copper levels in some cull cows at the end of the season and then give the herd whatever copper they need.

Polly

Treating Young Stock

Before doing what you've always done with your replacements, take a moment to make sure it is still correct for your property. Here are some basic rules that all farmers should go by:

- Use combination drenches
 - * We used to say rotate drenches, but now we say use combinations as research has shown this is best for production and preventing resistance. You should always use combination products (double or triple) in all cattle under 15 months of age.
- Give the drench properly
 - * Dose accurately for weight, take your time and do it right. Pour-on, injectable and oral drenches can all be given poorly, so make sure you do it correctly. All three application methods work well when done properly.
- Take care of yourself
 - * Choose a drenching method that works best for you and doesn't unnecessarily put you at risk of injury
- Take care with young calves
 - * Don't mix drench in with the milk as deaths can occur
 - * Avoid abamectin containing products in calves under 120kg

There has been a lot of research published in recent years that has changed the advice given around drenching as more is learnt about resistance. Unfortunately that can make it confusing for the farmer who was told one thing, only to now be told another. If you are in any doubt, talk to your vet to discuss your particular requirements.

A boss was complaining in a staff meeting the other day that he wasn't getting any respect. Later that morning he went to a local sign shop and bought a small sign that read, "I'm the Boss." He then taped it to his office door. Later that day when he returned from lunch, he found that someone had taped a note to the sign that said, "Your wife called, she wants her sign back!"