



CUD

“Cows Under Discussion” or “Something to Chew On”

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The practice area is as dry as most of us have ever seen it, with many farmers on 16hr or OAD milking. The 80ml of rain over the weekend was a life saver for some. Palm kernel, molasses and the new season's grain harvest are being heavily used, and particularly with the PK, cow body condition is not falling as quickly as might be expected.

Adding to the difficulties, and confirming the old saying that “in a season when the payout is good, the weather will let you down”, 6 week in-calf rates seem to be back a little in the herds we have preg tested so far.

Clinic News: The visit of lameness expert Neil Chesterton to the practice in February was very successful. He held a day time hands-on workshop for a small group of farmers, an evening seminar on understanding and preventing lameness, and spent a day focusing on lameness on one property with particular issues. Jason attended that session, and picked up some valuable tips on investigating lameness at the herd level.

Coming up we have more pregnancy testing (our focus is on accurate, usable information, and safe practice), and then a bit more pregnancy testing, with beef cow pregnancy testing for a bit of light relief! We are working hard to upskill some of our newer vets in this area, so that the service does not become dependent on one or two key players.

Free Beer! Have you entered the draw for the box of Speights by completing our 60 second customer satisfaction survey online (www.cluthavets.co.nz)? So far we've had over 140 replies, with some really useful suggestions. Is there anything you would like to tell us about our service?

Mastitis Matters

Many farmers now need to start drying off cows, to conserve feed. High cell count cows and low producers are obvious candidates (they contribute more than their fair share to BMSCC, and eat too much grass for the amount of milk they produce). Protect light-condition in-calf young cows by milking them once a day or drying them off, rather than empties or “rechecks” (who will be later calvers anyway) that are holding condition and still milking well.

If you plan to use Dry Cow Therapy, you will need to renew your annual prescription. This will be covered as part of your Milk Quality Review - please make an appointment to see a vet about this, before you need these drugs. Drying off is a once-a-year opportunity to really attack mastitis issues!

Reproduction – Inductions

The Induction Code is due for review in 2010. That means this spring and next, we will be allowed to induce cows, providing the conditions of the Code are met. These conditions include not just those related to the selection of cows for induction, but also a demonstrated plan to reduce/minimise the number of inductions used, and data proving your ability to feed the herd adequately in spring.

Fonterra have stated that they will continue to support the Induction Code of Practice through next season, but they have some concerns about farmer compliance with it. As a result, adherence to the Code will be audited on farm next season. They have said they “have become aware of a number of recent situations where farmers have placed excessive pressure on vets to compromise their actions. The purpose of the increased audit activity is to provide a wake-up call to farmers that in fact the Code is being enforced ... we cannot tolerate inductions that are done outside the framework of the Code”.

Young stock- Your Future

One of the questions the judges asked entrants in the Dairy Industry Awards, to determine who would receive the Clutha Vets Animal Husbandry prize, was “when did you last weigh your young stock?”. In a season when you (or the graziers) may be tempted to skimp a little on feeding calves and yearlings, it is vital to maintain target weights. Failure to do so will bite you in a year or two’s time, when they become non-cycling first calvers and induction candidates as second calvers. What is the wastage rate of two year olds in your herd? Remember, Clutha Vets offer a calf weighing service.

Health issue – Hot cows

On hot days, milking cows can drink 70-100 litres of water each, and this needs to be supplied over about 5 hours, i.e. the minimum flow to the trough must be 14 litres/cow/hr. For a 300 cow mob this is 4200 l/hr or 70 l/min. Is your water supply up to it? To check:

- 1) Do the calculation above for your herd, to get litres required per minute.
- 2) Mark the trough water level.
- 3) Hold the ballcock up, and using a bucket, empty out the amount required in a minute.
- 4) Hold the ballcock right down for one minute, and see if the trough refills to the original mark.

Also consider cow access to the trough. A trough under a fence (ie shared between two paddocks) has less than half of the circumference for cows to get around, and heifers may well miss out if older cows are pushing them out of the way.

If you can’t get enough water to every cow in the paddock, every day, animal welfare will be compromised and production will be limited. Some farmers overcome this with water troughs in the exit race, so that all cows can get a good fill each time they are milked.

The main time cows overheat is standing crowded on the concrete in the afternoon sun. You might like to consider keeping cows cool by milking a bit later in the afternoon (more comfortable for you as well) and putting up a simple garden sprinkler over the yard to spray them (makes hosing down easier after milking too!).

Taking the pain out of lameness – Improving your facilities for treating lame cows

Decent working facilities make even the most unpleasant task easier, and allow you to do a better job. Nowhere is this more apparent than when dealing with lame cows. Taking the time (and spending a little money) to get well set up, will pay off rapidly - in safety, time taken to do the job, quality of the job done, and enjoyment of doing it.

Cows are much more comfortable when their back leg is lifted by a loop above the hock that lifts the leg vertically, than when their back foot is pulled out straight back behind them. It is also more comfortable and safer for the person working on the foot to stand with their back to the cow and the cow’s foot on their thigh, than to be crouching down facing the sole of the cow’s hoof. This can be done by mounting a pulley above the cow’s hips, or by running a rope from a winch (mounted further forward) over a round bar welded across the race, 80cm above the back of the cow at the same level.



This Month’s Retail News

The buy-out of the local NZ company Ancare by the global giant Merial should result in very little change for you, other than the drum labels (“Mancare”??). The new company will continue to place high priority on research and development, and prices will remain competitive.

In the mean time, have you seen their promo in your mail box? Just tear off the form and drop it in to the clinic for your chance at the boat, SUV or trip. No purchase required!

Selected Eclipse, Eprinex and Genesis pour-on and injection qualify for a merino countrywear jersey, and the pour-ons also offer you a 1:50 chance at a Sony 40” LCD TV.