

# CUD

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



April 2016

## Clinic News

As the dairy season begins to wind down the focus now turns to setting your herd up for next season. The 2015-16 season has been a challenging one and we hope that you can continue to weather the payout trials with some wise business decisions. Animal health is an important factor in getting the most out of your herd and there are a number of decisions to be made in the next few months - what is the best way to put condition on your cows prior to calving; which cows should go onto the cull list; or whether to use teatseal, dry cow therapy or combination therapy. We are more than happy to have a chat to help you make these decisions.

Late summer and early Autumn have, on record, been warmer and drier than usual, and some overnight moisture and the odd rainfall has encouraged some good grass growth late in the season resulting in some people being able to cut some extra winter feed.

Finally, we'd like to extend our Congratulations to Mathew Korteweg & Catherine Tait on being named runners up in the Sharefarmer of the Year at the recent Southland/Otago Dairy Industry Awards.

## Vet Certs for Transport

We are once again at the time of year where we are getting calls to vet cert cattle before they go to the works. To avoid confusion, delays, and possible rejections, here are a few things you need to keep in mind:

- Animal welfare regulations require animals with a vet cert to have **same day slaughter** as a travel requirement. This means that the animals need to be transported to the works in the morning (before 12noon) in order to be processed the same day.
- Even though night shift is currently operating, dairy culls are being processed in the day shift only so the cows still need to be there in the morning.
- You must inform your stock agent when you are booking cows into the works that you have vet cert animals (or potential vet cert animals), that way the truck can be organised for morning pick up of the cattle.
- Vet certifications don't guarantee the animal is fit for consumption, just that it is fit for transport. The meat inspectors and on site vets make the call as to its suitability for human consumption
- The requirement is now (and has been for a few years) that animals must bear weight evenly on all 4 limbs. If you have a cow that is 3-legged lame, it might be more appropriate to organise a different means of culling (eg pet food)
- We are happy to answer calls before booking in a vet to come and vet cert an animal if you are not sure the animal will be fit for transport.
- Vet certificates only last 7 days. It is often better to have the truck booked before giving us a call so that there is a fixed date to work with. We can reissue a vet cert but it does mean re-examining the animal to make sure nothing has changed in its condition.

Hopefully, this makes things a little clearer about vet certification but if you have any queries or animals to book in, please don't hesitate to speak to a vet beforehand.

## Horns in your side

Horny cows at this time of the year are never a good thing and with winter around the corner it's time to think about the practicalities of cattle transport. When thinking through this, keep in mind that your animals are likely to be closely confined, so that odd cow or heifer who still has her horns could cause a very big issue for her neighbours

on the ride to grazing. The other animals worth thinking about are any bulls that you are looking to send to the works. Remember any animal going to the abattoir cannot have horns extending past their ears. Remember that under the Animal Welfare (Painful Husbandry Procedures) Code, pain relief must be used for dehorning cattle over 9 months.

The job is a fairly simple (if physical) procedure which requires a serviceable head bale or heavy sedation. All animals we dehorn will have a local anaesthetic nerve block with the option of anti-inflammatory therapy afterwards to ensure the procedure is as pain-free as possible. There is usually no need for antibiotic therapy that means a with-holding period and most animals recover without complication.

### **Body Condition Scoring**

Body condition scoring of dairy cows ranks their fat and muscle reserves on a scale of 1-9. Cows with a higher BCS compared to those with a lower BCS at calving have been shown to produce more, and are more likely to be cycling at the planned start of mating. The recommended BCS at calving is 5. BCS of 6 or higher at calving can lead to health issues such as ketosis, milk fever and difficulty calving, and the increased gain in production from BCS 5-6 is much less than between BCS 4-5. BCS of less than 5 at calving increases the risk of metabolic disorders, mastitis and uterine infections. It is recommended to calve heifers at BCS 5.5, to allow them a larger energy reserve, resulting in a better in calf rate in the subsequent mating period.

It is important to remember that your cows will be putting most of their energy (approx. 60%) into growing their calf in the last month of pregnancy, and will not put on BCS in this month. Even with exceptional feeding, most cows are only able to put on 0.5 BCS over the dry period. It is more feed efficient to increase BCS during lactation, therefore the gold standard is to dry off at a BCS of 5. This is better for the cow and also reduces the need to put on large amounts of weight during the winter, therefore lowering wintering costs.

Strategies to allow lighter cows in the herd (BCS 4 or less) to meet the BCS target of 5 at calving include once a day milking, or early dry off. This reduces their energy demands of walking and lactation. Getting rid of cull cows early will also allow more feed for the remainder of the herd.

For an independent assessment of your herd, please feel free to call us. We have a number of DairyNZ BCS accredited assessors.

### **Trace Element testing**

As it is approaching the end of the season, one thing to check is the trace element status of your cows, in particular copper and selenium. Copper is stored in the liver, and released into the bloodstream as it is needed. Copper levels become depleted during the winter months, with lowest copper levels usually occurring in September.

Sampling of the liver now ensures the cow has enough reserves to see her through the winter. Blood sampling does not tell us what the liver reserves are, only that she had sufficient blood copper at the time of sampling. We usually recommend taking liver biopsy samples of four mixed age cows, and two heifers who are finishing their first season. Four blood samples are also taken to check serum selenium to ensure that their current supplementation regime is working.

### **Checklist for this month:**

- Herd test for making drying off decisions
- Book your Autumn Consult to take advantage of the extra 3% discount on your Dry Cow
- Book in trace element testing or call us to arrange liver trace element testing on your cull cows going to the works
- Lepto vaccinate heifers and herd, and final vaccination for calves done early
- BCS the herd to aid in drying off and wintering decisions

## **Retail**

The list for this month

- **Merial Ancare Cattle Drenches** – Purchase a 20lt of Matrix C, 2 x 500ml Eclipse E inj. or 5lt of Eclipse Pour-on, and receive a Core vest.
- **Eclipse E Injection** - Or instead of the vest purchase 3 x 500ml and get the 4<sup>th</sup> 500ml FREE.
- **Eclipse E & Eclipse Pour-on** – Purchase the Eclipse E 6lt pack (12 x 500ml), or the Eclipse Pour-on 12.5lt pack and receive a Stihl RE119 Water blaster.
- **Eclipse Pour-on** – Instead of the above purchase the 5.5lt pack and receive another 1lt FREE.
- **Eclipse Pour-on 2.5lt** – Receive a Hi-Viz vest with each pack.
- **Genesis Pour-on 5lt** – Receive a Hi-Viz vest with each pack.
- **Eprinex Pour-on 5lt** – Purchase 3 x 5lt and get the 4<sup>th</sup> one FREE.
- **Dectomax Injection** – Purchase 2 starter packs (4 x 500ml) and receive a Victorinox knife set plus the bonus 2 x 200ml packs as well.