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

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Winter has arrived, and with it the usual range of winter animal ailments – a few outbreaks of acidosis and other metabolic-type issues on crop, cattle with lacerations to lower legs caused by live strand, cows slipping and young stock succumbing to a combination of diet change, parasite burdens, miserable weather and in some cases underlying disease. That makes it sound like a good time to take a winter holiday!

Clinic News

Our Centenary celebrations went very well – thank-you to those who supported the events and enjoyed the hospitality offered at the Golf Day, Open Day and Gala Dinner. If you would like a free copy of the official history “While you’re here...”, they are available from any branch.

The Board is pleased to announce that this year \$100,000 is available for “additional discount”. As usual, this will be distributed back amongst club members on a proportional basis of your annual spend, appearing as a credit on your July statement (posted early August).

The Clutha Vets AGM will be held at the Lawrence Golf Club this year, on the 12th August. This is a great chance to hear about the issues facing your vet club, and have your say about the way of the future. Doug Edmeades will have the guest spot, speaking on rational fertilizer use.

Mastitis Matters

Most clinical mastitis around calving time is caused by bacteria that are free living in the environment, particularly *Strep uberis*. Reducing the infection rate is based on maintaining teat cleanliness and defences. By now calving pads should have been well scraped off, and new sawdust spread.

Pre-calving teatspraying can also play a role – when springers are all crowded round a bale feeder, or lined up along a feed trough, it is quite easy to walk among them with a Cambrian-type sprayer made up with normal-strength teat spray. A recent trial showed a 40% decrease in clinical and subclinical *Strep uberis* mastitis when cows were teat-sprayed three times a week pre-calving. Teat seal also has a role to play, particularly in first calvers. Now is the time to do it, please speak to a vet if you are interested.

Once a springing cow is dripping milk, her teat canal is open, and mastitis-causing bugs can invade. The best way to minimise the risk is to milk her *right out*, running her with the colostrums from then on. Take care if you are feeding lime flour to this mob, as it may increase her risk of milk fever.

Bringing the cows home

Transporting heavily-pregnant cows long distances, by truck, in winter weather, is not altogether benign. The basic standards require that animals must be fit enough to withstand the stresses of transport, and arrive in no worse condition than they leave. Trucking animals that don’t meet these standards may result in welfare and economic costs. If your cows aren’t in peak condition when they are returned to you for calving, it’s your bottom line that will suffer as a result.

“Pre-conditioning” the cows will reduce the chances of things going drastically wrong. Feed the cows well for 5-7 days before transport, including plenty of hay. Transport stress causes a significant drop in blood magnesium levels, so pre-transport supplementation is recommended. Dust feed for a week before moving them, or mag bullet the most at-risk animals (thin, old or very late pregnancy). Ensure adequate water is available right up until they are loaded. And when they get to the other end, remember that taking them off crop and throwing them straight on to calving paddocks or pads is not the best way to manage the transition diet!

The In-Calf Project

Are you disappointed with your 6 week in-calf rate? Practical help is at hand. The In-Calf project is a major, new, long-term, national dairy extension project funded by DairyNZ. It aims to have help a significant proportion of NZ farmers achieve important increases in herd reproductive performance.

The first step is to assess your current performance. This can be done via a “Fertility Focus Report”, which is available from the LIC or Ambreed websites. Using this information, decisions can be made about where to focus your attention for improvements. There are a number of tools provided, so this can be an ongoing process over time. Teresa O’Riordan is your local advisor and will be discussing the InCalf project in greater detail at the winter meeting on 17th July.

Winter Meeting - Johne’s Disease – The iceberg waiting for the Titanic

This year we have secured Professor Frank Griffin, Head of the Disease Research Laboratory at the University of Otago, to address our annual winter dairy farmers’ meeting. Frank is a world leader in Johne’s disease research, and Irishman with more than one story to tell. Frank believes Johne’s disease is perhaps the biggest unrecognised health and production issue facing NZ dairy cows. His presentation is not to be missed. The support acts include Teresa O’Riordan on the InCalf project, and a look at last season’s pregnancy testing data. At the Rosebank Lodge, Balclutha 7.30pm, 17th July. RSVP to the Balclutha Clinic, for catering.

Spring supply night – 24th July

The spring supply night has become a bit of an institution at Clutha Vets. Come in to yarn to a vet and stock up on all those bits and pieces you need for calving, calf rearing, metabolics, drenches etc. BBQ, refreshments and great specials in store. At Clydevale 12.30-3pm; Milton and Balclutha 5-8pm.

Things to do in July

- Make an appointment with a vet to sort out authorisation of your Prescription Animal Remedies (PARs) for the coming season
- Rotavec vaccination for early calvers.
- Selenium pour-on or injection pre-calving where recommended based on drying-off mineral checks.
- Plan your Inductions, and get them underway. For an eight week calving spread, the first injections should be given about three weeks before PSC, to the cows due to calve in weeks 9,10 and 11
- Start magnesium supplementation for Springers three weeks before PSC
- Make sure calf sheds are ready – feeders, bedding, water supply, straw and meal.
- Come to our Spring supply night – great specials in store Clydevale, Milton and Balclutha 24th July.
- Come to our winter dairy farmer meeting – Johne’s Disease. Rosebank Lodge, 7.30pm, 17th July

A man staggered into a hospital A&E department with concussion, multiple bruises, and a five iron wrapped around his neck. Naturally the doctor asked him what had happened.

“Well, it was like this” the man said. “I was having a quiet round of golf with my wife when, on a difficult hole, we both sliced our balls into a paddock of cows. We went to look for them, and while I was rooting around, I noticed that one of the cows had something white at its rear end. I walked over and lifted up the tail, and sure enough, there was a golf ball with my wife’s monogram wedged right in the middle of the cow’s butt. That’s when I made my mistake.”

“What did you do?” asked the doctor.

“Well, I lifted the tail, pointed, and yelled to my wife ‘Hey, honey, this looks like yours!’”

This Month’s Retail News

- Milligan’s Calf Milk Powder: July members’ price (payment 20th August) \$85.60 incl. for 20kg. Milk powder prices will only increase from now on!
- 2.5 & 5 ltr Eclipse and Genesis, 5ltr & 20 ltr Eprinex – receive a pair of Muck Boots.
- Cydectin – buy 15ltr and get 2 ltr free.
- ZinPro Availamins – the original amino acid bound trace elements, with the trial data to show mastitis, production, lameness and reproduction benefits. The technical experts are touring the south, phone Nathan at the Balclutha clinic if you would like an on-farm discussion on what these products can do for your bottom line.

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