

New metrichecking research	2
From lambing to weaning	3
Calf Scours	4



Mairead O'Connell



A little bit of culture

New faces at Pahiatua

Rachael Fouhy

Spring has arrived and with it are two new locums for our Pahiatua clinic.

Mairead O'Connell is joining us from Ireland. She has spent two years in mixed practice and is coming to New Zealand as part of her OE. Mairead grew up on a dairy farm and will no doubt enjoy comparing the difference in farming systems.

Nicole Godden joined our companion animal team at the end of June. Nicole is originally from Australia and is spending six months with us while her partner is working at Palmerston North Hospital.

They look forward to seeing you on farm and in the clinic.

Coming soon to a farm near you

Craig Dickson

Mastitis remains a major - if not **the major** - animal health concern for many dairy farms.

You will have had discussions with your veterinarian about this issue on your farm. How do we minimise environmental contamination around calving? What is the role of plant and rubberware? How often do these need to be replaced/serviced? Are milking times appropriate such that cows are not getting over or under milked? The list goes on but you get the idea.

Part of this conversation would have touched on which bacteria are the culprits on your farm (some will have even cultured milk samples to better understand this) and what products are the most appropriate to maximise the chances of cure. Often however these decisions are made on reasonably limited data so we have decided to do something about that.

In conjunction with a number of other veterinary clinics across New Zealand we are undertaking a mastitis trial. The trial is aimed at identifying which bugs are the culprits and what treatment regime is most effective at curing these infections. The aim is to culture around four hundred clinical mastitis cases. This will give us some really useful data to better understand mastitis not only on these farms but also across the region.

One of the trials intentions is to modify treatment (i.e. the antibiotic used) based on the bug responsible for that specific mastitis case. All of you will have heard about the growing concerns in and around antibiotic resistance.

Information that allows us to give better and more judicious advice on which antibiotic goes into which cow is going to achieve better outcomes on farm and better meet our responsibilities of ensuring antibiotics are being used in the most appropriate manner. We will let you know what we find.



Looking ahead

Potential animal health issues, tasks to consider and reminders for **August** include...

DAIRY

- **Calving** will be well underway on most farms and hopefully your transition plan has minimised the occurrence of any "down" cows. This season we are facing a shortage in supply of magnesium oxide. Have a talk

to your veterinarian about alternative forms of magnesium supplementation.

- **The optimal time** for detecting and treating cows with endometritis is between eight and 21 days post-calving. See our metrichecking article **pg 2**.
- **Hygienic calf management** is essential throughout the entire season. Picking up calves twice daily in clean trailers and spraying their navels with iodine is good practice. All calves should be receiving 10% of their body weight of first milking colostrum within six-12 hours of birth.

Rain Scald

Paula Radich

With the rain also comes Dermatophilosis, a bacterial infection in the skin.

Dermatophilus congolensis, the bacteria which causes rain scald in horses lies dormant until the skin is compromised in some way, such as prolonged wetting. Dermatophilosis presents as scabs on the skin, often over the back but also on the face. Lesions begin as weepy sores, which become crusty, and in severe cases can become swollen and contain yellow-green pus.

Diagnosis is based on clinical findings but scabs can be examined under a microscope, or the area swabbed and cultured to rule out other bacterial causes.

Treatment is centered on keeping the affected areas dry, which can be difficult in persistent rain. We advise using a waterproof cover or stabling the horse. Scabs/crusts need to be removed by soaking with iodine or chlorhexidine (Microshield®) twice daily. Topical creams may also be required. Scabs are infectious so dispose of them properly, ensure covers and equipment are washed/ disinfected and not shared between horses.

If you have any questions please call the clinic and speak to one of our equine veterinarians.

New metrichecking research

Ellie Greives

A recent New Zealand (NZ) study on metrichecking sheds light on the benefits of more intensive treatment of dirty cows after calving.

The study included more than 15,000 cows, making it one of the biggest NZ dairy studies ever undertaken.

In the study cows were metrichecked three times at 21 day intervals and all dirty cows calved for more than seven days were metricured. This intensive checking meant more dirty cows were identified and treated well before mating started. These treatments had a big effect on conception.

Any doubt that given time post calving all dirty cows will self-cure has been removed. Once cows are more than 21 days post calving, the accuracy of metrichecking for detecting dirty cows decreases dramatically.

Is there an economic benefit for the additional checks and treatment? Yes, there is.

Overall results of the study showed a 2.4% increase in the six week in calf rate and a 2% reduction in empty rate when compared to checking cows once before planned start of mating. If you currently don't metricheck or treat dirty cows, the benefits would be even higher.

We are aware that there is extra cost with this approach - with more treatments, farm visits and metrichecking - but the returns are 3.5:1 on a milk payout of \$5.50. Compared to metrichecking once, the additional cost including treatments will be around \$7.50 per cow in your herd with a return of \$26-\$33 (at \$5.50 per kilo of MS).

We are so convinced of the benefits of this approach that we will charge a flat fee of \$3 per cow in the herd at the start of mating this season. For this \$3 we will visit your farm three times, starting around 21 days after planned start of calving and metricheck all calved cows at each of the three visits. We will charge treatment costs plus mileage at the time of each visit but the \$3 metricheck fee per cow will not be charged until around the planned start of mating.

The results of this study speak for themselves. Please talk to your vet or give us a call or so we can schedule your visit dates.

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SHEEP and BEEF

- **Close observation of ewe health**, especially those carrying multiples, is recommended. Increasing feed levels in the weeks coming into lambing are key to improved lambing performance. Restricting feed does not prevent bearings and is more likely to precipitate metabolic problems such as milk fever and can compromise lamb survival.

- Administer **clostridial vaccines** two weeks prior to lambing to ensure antibodies are in high concentrations in the colostrum. If you vaccinate too early with 5-in-1 vaccine, the peak of antibodies will have come and gone before the udder is actually producing colostrum. If you have scanned out your lates, consider vaccinating them later.
- Young cattle and light cows will benefit from a **spring drench** with a product

containing a “mectin” active ingredient to safeguard against type II inhibited ostertagia.

DEER

- Deer farmers will be well aware that the standards for **harvesting velvet** are being lifted this year. If you haven't attended a local shed meeting on this, get in touch with your vet to discuss how you can modify your velveting set-up to remain compliant.

From lambing to weaning

Rachael Fouhy

The positive effects of strong pasture growth during a kind Autumn have flowed through to some fantastic scanning results across the district.

So how do we maximise the number of lambs scanned into lambs out the gate?

ENSURING OUR EWES ARE IN GREAT CONDITION

By now we can no longer influence this (bar farmers who are later lambing), but avoiding underfeeding in the last 35 days will have a significant impact on lamb survival at birth and ewe milking ability.

MAXIMISING OUR VACCINATION TIMING

Correct vaccination timing will maximise the antibodies that lambs receive in the ewes colostrum. For standard 5-in-1 aim for two weeks before lambing, if the weather is playing havoc try Nilvax® which has a much longer vaccination window.



INCLUDE SOME EXTRA GOODIES

Low selenium levels will affect sheep performance and therefore lamb growth rates. If you are unaware of your farm's status, this can be easily assessed by three to five blood samples.

MAXIMISING LACTATION

- Ewes reach peak lactation two to three weeks after lambing and 40-50% of the total milk supply is produced in the first four weeks.
- Ewes need to be fed well in early lactation and lambs need access to high quality pasture in the second half of lactation. The biggest variation in lamb growth rates between farms occurs in the second half of lactation.
- Feeding ewes to get high milk production starts before lambing with ensuring ewes don't lose much condition and being above condition score 2.5 at lambing.

- Lambs start to change to a ruminant between three and five weeks of age and 80% of what lambs eat between docking and weaning will be grass.
- Lambs with their mothers grazing covers of less than 1200kgDM/ha (4cm) will be working too hard to harvest the grass they need and will be forced to eat higher numbers of worm larvae compared with lambs on longer feed. Conversely if the grass is growing faster than it can be eaten and is trying to become reproductive this can be very damaging to lamb growth rates due to the decrease in quality.

SMART WEANING DECISIONS

Weaning lambs earlier onto high quality pasture is a better option than leaving them on mum when they have to compete with her for feed. Aim for weaning around 80-100 days.

If you have any questions or need any advice please don't hesitate to contact one of our veterinarians.



Calf scours

Ellie Grieves

Calf scours can be extremely stressful and frustrating at a point in the season when you are time-poor.

The best treatment for calf scours is PREVENTION, and the best prevention is gold colostrum. Calves do not receive any antibodies from their mothers while in the womb, they ONLY absorb them from colostrum in the first 12 hours of life so colostrum feeding and quality is critically important. Gold colostrum comes from the cows very first milking, however over 50% of gold colostrum has inadequate antibodies, with heifers known to have poorer quality than cows. Measuring gold colostrum with a brix refractometer will help you decide which is the best colostrum to give your calves.

Preventing spread and maintaining hygiene is important to control scours in pens and sheds if it does occur. First line treatment involves

electrolytes and supportive therapy but not all electrolytes are created equal. Most have inadequate levels of glucose to support normal metabolism and insufficient electrolyte levels to replenish those lost to scours. Diarrest™ is a great choice in severe cases where calves have lost their suck reflex are standing but are dull/ depressed (recumbent calves are likely to need IV fluids). Revive is another good option for calves who have a weak suck reflex and can stand. Most other products then fall into the next category where calves are bright, drinking well but have mild scours.

Continuing to feed milk to scouring calves is vital to assist in recovery and doesn't lead to exacerbation of scours. Alternate two milk feeds and up to four 2L electrolyte feeds throughout the day when treating calves. Gold colostrum can be given instead of milk feeds or ice cubes of gold colostrum can be added to milk to provide the gut with local protection to aid recovery.

Please contact us if you find you are wanting to know anything further about calf scours and treatments.

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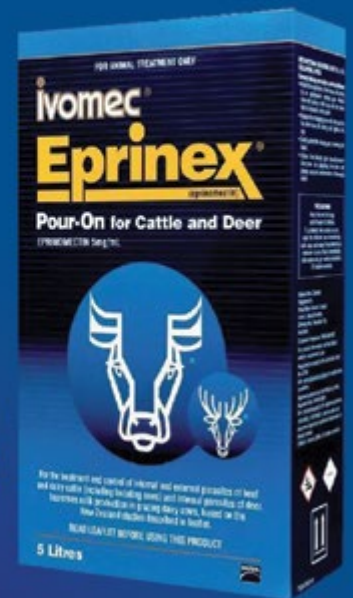
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