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Last year's winner Bruce Hockly

Don't miss the boat!

Another short reminder about the upcoming Totally Vets Group (TVG) Fishing Competition...

Save the date for the TVG Fishing Competition, to be held on **Saturday 1 April 2017**. Boat launch is again from Whanganui boat ramp at sunrise (weather permitting) with weigh-in at 3pm. Start working on those stories of the big one that got away and be sure to mark it on your calendar.

Last year's competition saw a record number of entries and we are hoping for the same again. We have a number of generous sponsors and are looking forward to putting up some really good prizes.

Pick up your entry form from any of our clinics or email Carla, Carla.Sheridan@tvig.co.nz for more details.

Looking forward to seeing you all there!

Life of a locum

Cormac Chalmers

Some 11 months ago I hopped on a plane heading off for a great world adventure. After travelling the United Kingdom (UK), by doing short term placements at various clinics throughout England and Scotland, my eyes have been opened a bit wider!

Farms vary greatly from region to region. I mostly came across 150 to 300 cow dairy farms in the south which turned into predominantly beef herds the further north I went into Scotland, where farms ranged from 50 cow herds down to the six cow crofts on the Isle of Skye.

The first thing I noticed driving through the English country side is that there is all this farm land, but no animals! Animals can be housed for six to nine months of the year when the weather is cold and wet and the grass stops growing. As a result they're not limited to a seasonal calving pattern. Year round calving leads to a more varied work day; a typical routine visit for a dairy vet

might involve 40 cows who are all at various stages of their reproductive cycle. So the visit can consist of pregnancy testing, non-cycler treatment, endometritis treatment, surgery, and maybe a poor performer who has gone off her feed.

Scottish animal husbandry is more traditional like our own farming systems. I was in Scotland for the summer where it would stay light until 11pm and the sun would be up again at 3am which often lead to long work days. It was here that I saw the greatest variation in facilities, ranging from top of the line mechanical crushes to just a stake in the ground as restraint for a cow I needed to perform a caesarean on, which I now have an unfortunate scar and a chipped tooth as a result of! Regardless of facilities the locals were very hospitable and very generous. I was never short of good company and constantly over fed, always being asked in for soup and scones.

My two month summer (if you can call it that?!) stop back here in New Zealand is ticking by quickly and in a few short weeks I'll be back on a plane to the UK where I will look for more work to see me through until the next European excursion!



Looking ahead

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

Dairy

- **Clinical mastitis** - monitor cows and be aware of rising bulk milk somatic cell count (BMSCC) particularly if feed is tightening and milk volume is decreasing. Book in your Milk Quality Consult ahead of time so

you're ready come dry-off time - **article P6/7.**

- **Facial eczema** - preventative zinc treatment should be in place. Spore counts on monitor farms have fluctuated and hot-spots are occurring.
- **Autumn calving** - prepare calving equipment in case of need. Plan calf disbudding and 7in1 vaccination.

Sheep and Beef

- Barbers pole - continue to monitor for signs of disease (pale gums, depressed, exercise

intolerant, increased breathing) and drench appropriately - **article P7.**

- **Mating begins** - ensure all ram palpations/testing have been completed and reproductive vaccinations done. Monitor plane of nutrition and ensure adequate ram ratios.
- **Fly/Lice** - remain vigilant for signs of flystrike (restless, rubbing, twitching tail, "wet" patches on wool) and fly/lice control at shearing if not done already.
- **Facial eczema** - as per under dairy.

Ha Ha

"Don't Squat With Yer Spurs On... A Cowboy's Guide to Life"

- Never kick a fresh turd on a hot day.
- "If you find yourself in a hole the first thing to do is stop digging".
- Good judgement comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.
- Always drink upstream from the herd.
- Lettin' the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier 'n puttin' it back!
- The quickest way to double your money is to fold it over and put it back in your pocket.
- A smart ass just don't fit in a saddle.
- Never miss a good chance to shut up.

Leptospirosis

Sarah Hart

In New Zealand Leptospirosis is a significant zoonotic disease risk (humans can contract it from animals) and as such its management is a very important aspect of health and safety when working with livestock.

Leptospirosis a contagious bacteria that localises in the kidneys and is spread in the urine of a variety of animals including rats, pigs, sheep, cattle and deer. It survives in wet environments, particularly pools of stagnant water, which can harbour leptospirosis organisms for long periods of time. Consequently the likelihood of infection increases during periods of high rainfall or flooding.

In cattle the signs of infection can include lethargy, abortion, fever, haemolytic anaemia (red urine), jaundice, mastitis, diarrhoea and anorexia. Death can be the outcome, especially in calves which are highly susceptible to infection. Once an animal becomes infected with leptospirosis, it is capable of shedding large numbers of bacteria into the environment.

Vaccination of animals is the best means of controlling infection and is especially important in preventing human disease. Humans contract leptospirosis most commonly through urine splashes to the face but also with contact of urine to any abrasions or cuts. Symptoms initially resemble the flu however, if untreated, can develop into severe nausea, vomiting, headaches and in some cases liver and kidney failure.

The most common vaccination protocol is giving two injections four to six weeks apart, followed up by yearly boosters. Cattle that are vaccinated in the last four to six weeks of pregnancy transmit some protection to their calves through the colostrum. However it is recommended that calves are vaccinated as soon as possible to provide the best protection, generally at around four to eight weeks old as it can be done at the same time as disbudding. Annual boosters are required in all age groups, and often this is administered prior to the autumn rainfall which is the greatest risk period for contracting leptospirosis.

Other means of preventing Leptospirosis includes fencing of waterways, minimising presence of rodents, good hygiene practices (including NOT eating or smoking in the dairy shed) and avoiding contact between cattle and pigs/deer.

If you would like to know more please don't hesitate to make contact and discuss it with your vet.

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Deer

- **Leptospirosis** - depending on birth date, now is a good time to give fawns their first leptos shot - **article P2**, along with Yersiniavax® for Yersiniosis.

Equine

- **Weanling management** - consider need for branding, identification/registration and vaccinating, and ensure excellent nutrition over this potentially stressful period.
- **Parasite control** - now is a good time to ensure elimination of tapeworms and cyathostomes with a good drench - **article P6**.
- **Dental care** - the next couple of months are a good time to get your horses' teeth checked. Firstly, with low grazing residuals due to the dry conditions horses are forced to graze down low. Secondly, and particularly for elderly horses, having teeth in good order before winter helps maintenance of body condition through the winter months.



Farming for Hospice

Gaye Stein

"The Farming for Hospice programme is an amazing testimony to the generosity of the region's farmers and to the volunteers who coordinate it" Roger Clausen, Arohanui Hospice Trustee.

Within its service area (bounded by Waiouru in the north, Ratana in the west to Akitio in the east and to the south of Otaki) Arohanui Hospice is a name that most people have, in one form or another, had contact with. Read on to find out how you may be able to help support this incredible organisation through your land...

About Arohanui Hospice

Since 1991 Arohanui Hospice in Palmerston North has been providing specialist palliative care, compassion and support, free of charge either as an inpatient or at home, for patients who have a life-limiting illness (most commonly, but not always, cancer). Care provided by Arohanui Hospice enables patients to achieve the best possible quality of life, and provides support to their families.

Why the need to fundraise?

Arohanui Hospice is only partly funded by MidCentral District Health Board so

fundraising plays a critical part in ensuring the ability to continue to provide a range of specialist palliative care services. They therefore look to the community to help.

What is Farming for Hospice?

The Farming for Hospice programme aims to raise at least 10% of the hospice's annual fundraising budget and, since its inception in 1994, local farmers and supporters have raised and fattened thousands of cattle to raise money for Arohanui Hospice.

So, how does the programme work?

• Grazing beef cattle

An Arohanui Hospice representative buys beef cattle, which are delivered to a farmer who has agreed to graze the cattle. When the cattle have reached slaughter weight, arrangements are made to have the cattle killed, and Arohanui Hospice receives the proceeds.

• Cull cows

While the emphasis has been on beef, support from dairy farmers is increasing. As dairy farmers cull cows and send them to the works, they can also donate the proceeds.

• Sheep, lamb, deer, pigs, slinks, crops

Arohanui Hospice invites farmers and lifestyle block holders to contribute to Farming for Hospice by donating a share of proceeds when they send animals to the works, or sell produce.

Where does the money go?

Proceeds all go towards providing the

services they offer - support of the patient in the community, inpatient care, carer support, 24-hour advice, a pharmacist, outpatient clinics, day procedures, an activities-based day programme, social work services, family support, pastoral support and bereavement support.

How do I get involved?

Maybe you have enough grazing for one or more steers, are culling dairy cows soon, or you'd simply like to make a donation to Farming for Hospice...

Please do make contact! Call Derek Tuck on 06 323 3970; Ross Gibson on 06 358 8846 or 021 667 655; or Robyn Naylor on 06 350 2240; or alternatively you could email farming@arohanuihospice.org.nz to discuss your options.

Totally Vets Group supports the Arohanui Hospice by providing free care to Farming for Hospice animals.





A day in the life...

Ryan Carr and Scott Fraser

As something a little different this month we decided to do an interview with one of our more unique clients and gain some insight into a day in the life of a dairy goat... Enter Scott Fraser!

Scott is half of the partnership "Just Kidding", an Opiki based dairy goat milking operation. We asked him a few questions about his reasonably different brand of farming.

Firstly, a brief run-down from Scott on the set up:

- They started by buying 750 kids from goat farms in the Waikato, rearing them from weaning down here in Manawatu. They put them to bucks so were milking for the first time in 2015.
- They are currently milking 690 does through a 24-a-side, parallel, herring bone shed.
- All the goats are housed year-round in two large barns with access to outside areas.
- All feed is cut (in the paddock) and carry (taken to the goats). It is not seen as feasible to let goats graze pasture because they are extremely sensitive to parasites.

- The farm is totally self-sufficient in that all feed given to the goats is grown on farm. Feed is loaded onto big conveyer belts that run down the middle of the housing barns. They are fed twice daily at 5am and 2pm with a mixture of pasture baleage, lucerne baleage, cut and carry high sugar grass, plantain, red and white clover and lucerne. They are also fed one kilogram per goat per day through the in-shed feeding system.

Next question for Scott was "What made you get into milking goats?". His answer... *"We were spud and onion farmers but we got to the point where we were sick of being so at the mercy of the weather. We wanted to diversify so we started investigating other options, wanting to get into a more controlled form of farming. If you told me three years ago that I would be a milker I would have told you that you had rocks in your head, but we went and visited a dairy goat farm and the goats really won us over, they just have the coolest characters! As well as that you don't have any issues with effluent and I don't even know where my rain jacket is, because everything we do we do it under cover. I have huge respect for my mates who are dairy farmers but I couldn't do it myself".*

Scott cites that the challenges so far have been more in relation to the animals with two legs than those with four legs, which is no change from crop farming. Animal health is the other big challenge but it is the one that Scott enjoys the most. He says that *"with goats anything from a droopy ear to a snotty nose can end up resulting in deaths"*

but says he has really enjoyed learning from other goat farmers and the vets about how to look after and treat the goats. *"Goats are good at hiding illness but you get to know what to look for, get to see patterns in the herd that alert you that something is wrong".*

Milk is collected three time a week by Dairy Fresh (contract company) and transported to Innovation Waikato (neighbouring AgResearch and Plant and Food, and a short distance from the University of Waikato) where it is processed and dried. Some milk is also supplied to Cartwheel Creamery in Pohangina where it is made into cheese sold at the Feilding Farmer's Market as well as other retail locations in the area.

The last question for Scott was a promotional one, "Why should people buy goat's milk or its products?". His answer was clear, *"well you have to taste it to know! Everybody that comes to visit the farm, I offer them a taste of milk and show them around. Fifty percent of people will turn their nose up but every time someone does try it their eyes open wide (in a good way!). It's really tasty, a lot like blue top pasteurized cow's milk. I would love to see it in the supermarket, it is frustrating that it isn't on the shelves so people don't know how good it tastes or how good it is for you - something that most the rest of the world already knows!"*

A big thank you to Scott for his time and sharing of his knowledge and experience. We hope you enjoyed learning a little more about just one of our many fantastic clients!

Trace element testing in cattle and sheep

Hamish Pike

There are many complex interactions and influencing factors effecting both the uptake and utilisation of trace elements at the soil, plant and animal level.

All these factors, along with the farm's history and fertiliser use, should be considered before administering copper, selenium or vitamin B12 products to animals. After all, treatment without being aware of the farm's mineral status is not only wasteful, but also potentially harmful to your livestock. Both blood and tissue (liver) sampling can be used in conjunction with soil and/or plant analyses to develop a trace element supplementation programme if required.

COPPER

It is best to obtain livers from cattle for the analysis of copper status in the autumn time. This allows us to make decisions around whether to supplement cattle before the winter and spring when the availability of copper from the soil and pasture decreases. The animals' requirements for copper are highest at this time of the year, particularly in young, or heavily pregnant animals. Blood serum samples are only useful for the diagnosis of copper deficiency when liver reserves are depleted and animals are showing clinical signs. Soil analysis, because of the complexity of interactions and influencing factors, is not considered useful for the diagnosis of copper deficiency.

SELENIUM

There is generally a good relationship between the level of selenium in the soil, plant and animal. Therefore, if the selenium in the soil is known to be low, then the likelihood of having selenium deficiency in your livestock will be high. In saying this, soil

and plant analysis will not tell us the amount of selenium being absorbed through the animal's gut, and therefore animal tissue sampling or bloods are best in order to make predictions as to whether supplementation is required. These can be taken from cattle (or ewes) at the same time as for copper, in the autumn time.

COBALT (Vitamin B12)

Severe cobalt deficiency (vitamin B12 deficiency) in lambs, particularly in Manawatu, is rare. This is because most areas are adequate to marginal in cobalt. In the marginal areas, we do not generally see a response to vitamin B12 supplementation unless there has been severe erosion (weathering), leaching, and/or repetitive cropping or fertiliser use. Clinical signs (anorexia and poor growth rates) will be most easily noticed in lambs - if not then it is very unlikely that adult sheep or cattle on the property will be deficient.

Weaning time is a convenient time to collect liver or blood samples from lambs for analysis of vitamin B12. However, because there is little change in vitamin B12 or cobalt status from birth to weaning, vitamin B12 deficiency can therefore be diagnosed (via a blood sample) in newborn lambs. The advantage of this is that if lambs are found

to be deficient at a very early age, the benefits of supplementation at docking (as opposed to weaning) are greatly improved. By supplementing lambs deficient in vitamin B12 at docking time, a one to four kilogram live weight advantage at weaning could be expected depending on the severity of the deficiency.

Lambs can be tested for vitamin B12, selenium and copper at weaning using just one sample (blood or tissue), however because sheep have lower requirements for copper (unless they are Finns!), the latter may not be necessary depending on the farm's history.

Liver samples can be either taken from the live animal by your vet (liver biopsy), or at the freezing works at the time of slaughter. Live liver biopsies in cattle are often better because these livers are more likely to come from cattle that are representative of the herd. Liver biopsies or livers collected from lambs at the works are generally equally meaningful.

If you wish to have samples collected at the works, or would like to have some biopsies taken by your vet, please contact your nearest clinic to make the necessary arrangements. Together we can then make informative decisions regarding the treatment options available.





Worming horses

Paula Radich

Parasite control can become a burden on both horses and their owners, so here are a few basic concepts to consider when thinking about drenching your horse(s).

In the past, we have relied on faecal egg counts (FEC) to monitor worm burden in horses. Unfortunately this method is now known to be unreliable in horses - FEC results do not properly reflect worm burden. However they do still give useful information and should be used to:

- Identify horses which are contaminating the pastures (high shedders)
- Identify anthelmintic resistance and assess drench efficacy
- Monitor the types of eggs foals are excreting for accurate treatment

FEC results should be interpreted on an individual basis and discussed with your vet, as a suitable cut-off point for drenching can vary. We know that 20% of the adult horse population will excrete 80% of the total egg output. Therefore, by selecting an appropriate FEC level we can effectively decrease the pasture contamination. Instead of removing all the eggs from the pasture, we want to decrease the level so the parasites still stimulate and improve the horses' immune response to them.

Young stock, including two year olds, are high shedders as they are yet to build an effective immune response to the parasites, so they often require more regular drenching to control parasite contamination. In comparison adult horses should be able to build an immune response to parasites, however sometimes their immune response wanes, or it cannot control a very high parasite burden, in which case drenching will be required. In the spring and autumn ALL ages of horses should be drenched with a product containing the active moxidectin (for example Ultra-mox™) to control cyathostomes which inhibit over winter, hiding from the immune system, and can cause colitis/colic.

Monitoring drench efficacy is also very important and is easy to do. By collecting a fresh faecal sample 10 to 14 days post-drenching and doing a FEC we can identify if resistant parasites are present. Resistance to most drench families has been identified so early warning of resistance emerging on your property is critical.

Other ways to help control parasites include:

- **Picking up faeces** once or twice weekly is an excellent way to reduce the pasture contamination and increase the grazing area by around 50%. This is because most larvae migrate less than 15cm from the faeces and few horses graze close to faeces unless the stocking rate is high.
- Other helpful management practices include **cross grazing** with other livestock species and **decreasing the stocking rate**.
- **Harrowing** only controls worms if the weather is hot and dry for extended periods of time (conditions which are not common in the Manawatu!) so unlikely to be of use.

If you are concerned about the health or parasite burden of your horse please contact your vet to discuss an individualised parasite management plan best suited to your horse(s).

The value of a Milk Quality Consult

Leisa Norris

Every year in autumn, prior to spring calving cows being dried off, we endeavor to conduct a Milk Quality Consult (MQC) with all of our dairy clients.

MQC's are way more than just a prescription exercise for dry cow therapy (DCT) antibiotics. While DCT is an important part of mastitis control, it is only one part. A MQC is a valuable opportunity for you to actually sit down and talk with your vet in a focused way - to identify areas of success and areas for improvement, to set goals around reducing your bulk milk somatic cell count (BMSCC) and, if applicable, make a plan to reduce clinical mastitis in your herd.

Included is discussion on your:

- **BMSCC curve** - what does it tell us about mastitis in your herd?

- **Rate of clinical mastitis** - is it a cause for concern? When do the cases occur? What is the rate of calving mastitis in both your heifers and cows?
- **Herd test data** - what percentage of your herd is sub-clinically infected and what is the new infection rate?
- **Estimated cost of mastitis** - what is mastitis currently costing you and what you stand to gain from improvement?

Making the right call on combinations

Ginny Dodunski

A common sentiment that vets come across on farms is the idea from farmers that they “*will stick with a double combination for now so we have the triple up our sleeve for later*”. This might seem like good logic, but there are some reasons why this is not sound...

The New Zealand science on resistance management indicates that resistance is delayed for the longest period by using a combination of **as many effective actives as possible** while you still have low levels of resistance and in conjunction with the other known resistance-delaying strategies.

The chance of resistant worms having the combination of genes to survive three completely different actives is exponentially lower than the chance of having the genes to survive one or even two actives. If this tiny number of resistant survivors is either not allowed to breed, or to be greatly diluted by unselected worms, the rate of resistance development is massively slowed and

modelling indicates that this approach can be protective for decades.

We haven't had enough decades go by yet to prove this in real life, but our own experience has been that farms where combination drench use was adopted early (back in the mid-90's when they first came out) that have avoided extensive use of long acting products pre-lamb and have only used moxidectin in a targeted way, have maintained good drench testing results.

Double combinations are not “*as many effective actives as possible*” because they only contain two drugs. Furthermore on many (in fact most) farms, at least one of the actives (typically, but not always, white drench) is failing to such an extent that it does not remotely fit the definition of “effective”!

So, at best with a double combination, you might be using one “effective” active and one that is partially effective. This puts unnecessary pressure on the effective drug, when you can protect it better by using a combination of more actives. You can improve your resistance-delaying power by moving to a triple for your routine drench. Even if there is some resistance to each of the individual actives, far fewer worms (often none) will survive than if you stick to a double.

The next question is - What happens when worms start surviving the triple? The key is to put in place strategies that minimise

the chance of those resistant survivors of drench breeding with each other and their population building up! These strategies include:

- **Good feeding and body condition management** of adult stock to minimise the need for drench treatment (especially whole flock drenching and especially long acting pre-lamb treatments).
- Use of the **refugia concept**, that is, deliberately leaving a small percentage of worms free to breed without being screened by a drench first. Where lambs are grazed on permanent pasture over the summer/autumn, sharing that grazing area with un-drenched ewes (as opposed to lambs only) will reduce selection for resistant worms. This strategy, combined with leaving five percent of lambs un-drenched has been shown in AgResearch trials to greatly reduce the rate at which resistance continues to develop, without reducing lamb growth performance.
- **Use of knockout drenching.** Administer a knockout drench to lambs that remain on the farm at the end of a summer/autumn drenching programme to remove any resistant worms that have established in the face of your routine drench. As far as possible the knockout drench needs to be a combination of drench actives unrelated to the ones in the routine drench.

Speak to your vet today about what product will be most suitable for your situation.

You stand to gain, on a number of levels, by improving your milk quality:

- **Increased production** - reducing the BMSCC from 250,000 to 125,000 results in a 1.8% increase in herd production.
- **Reduced animal health costs** - the cost of treating a case of clinical mastitis ranges from \$90 to \$200.
- **No grades** - grades for breaching BMSCC limits can be costly.
- **Reduced losses** - fewer deaths, dried-off quarters, damaged udders and less culling.

- **Less stressed and happier staff** - management of mastitis cases and rising BMSCC adds to workload and stress levels.
- **Milk payment incentives** - Open Country provides milk payment incentives for meeting company BMSCC targets. Fonterra review this option regularly and it may be introduced in the future.
- **Pride in producing a quality product** (and bragging rights to your neighbours!)

The way to get the most out of your MQC is by supplying as much and as accurate information as possible. If you are signed up to Infonet and regularly enter your clinical mastitis events into Minda, then we already have most of the information we need. If not we will ask you, prior to your MQC, to fill in a milk quality review questionnaire.

Together lets work together to identify any milk-quality problems, responsibly select the most appropriate DCT option and get a reduction in your BMSCC in the coming season.

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