VETS ON ALABAMA DAIRY NEWS

June 2016

In This Issue:

Rotavirus Vaccination

As last year we will be offering both Scourguard® and Rotavec® vaccines as Rotavirus and coronavirus prevention in calves this spring:

Rotavac® is a single shot 3 weeks before PSC.
Scourguard® requires 2 injections, the second one 2 weeks before PSC, but if cows have been vaccinated previously only one shot is needed. We are happy to discuss these options with you.

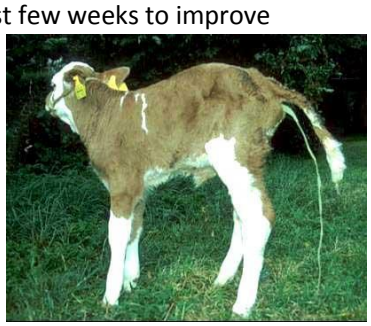
Excellent colostrum management leads to more milk. *Good* colostrum management prevents calf diseases, and recent studies have found it also influences growth rates up until weaning and significantly increases milk production in the first few lactations.

A study in calves in America found that 22% of the variation in milk production in first lactation heifers was due to differences in Average Daily Gain (ADG) pre-weaning. Calves which met their ADG requirements before weaning produced 682 kgs of extra liquid milk compared to calves that did not grow as efficiently. In NZ terms this would be equivalent to 58kg of milk solids at 8.5% MS/L. One of the main influences on ADG was found to be sufficient, quality, timely colostrum feeding. The recommended ADG to achieve this depends on the birth weight of the calf. The minimum goal should be to double their birth weight by 56 days. e.g. for a 40kg calf at birth, they need to gain 40kg by 8 weeks, or just over 0.7kg/day. One of the big influences on their ability to achieve this will be the presence of disease.

The most common cause of illness in young calves is diarrhoea with rotavirus and cryptosporidium the most common causes of calf scours in NZ. Other major causes include salmonella, *E.coli*, and coccidia. Rotavirus, *E.coli*, and coronavirus can be prevented by vaccination of cows and heifers prior to calving, followed by good colostrum management.

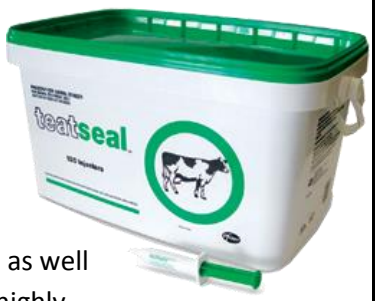
What does good colostrum management look like?

1. Timeliness: To get the best quality colostrum, cows should be milked within 6 hours of calving. To get the best transfer of antibodies, the calf must be fed in the first 6 hours of life.
2. Quality: Colostrum quality can vary between cows or heifers for a variety of reasons. The best way to determine colostrum quality is to test the colostrum using a Brix refractometer. This handy, quick (10sec) test will tell you which colostrum is appropriate to feed your new calves, and which should go to older calves. Vaccination prior to calving will increase antibodies available to the calves. Continue feeding colostrum for the first few weeks to improve nutrition and help prevent disease via local action of antibodies in the gut.
3. Quantity: Each calf needs to receive 10% of its body weight in colostrum in the first 12 hours, divided into two feeds. eg: a 40kg calf will need 4L split into 2 feeds.
4. Hygiene: Newborn calves have very little ability to fight off disease, so ensuring that colostrum collection and feeding gear is as clean as possible will improve outcomes.



It is recommended that you weigh your calves regularly to ensure they are meeting targets. A little extra effort in rearing your calves to weaning can pay big dividends in the long term.

Teat Sealing Heifers



Its heifer teat seal time again! Many of you have teat sealed your heifers before-in fact I don't think I have ever known anyone who has teat sealed their heifers and not done it again the following year. We should have discussed options for this at your dry cow consult but basically teat sealing PREVENTS new environmental infections being picked up between now and calving. We know it is these infections that account for most of the mastitis cases in the first week after calving. Many people are now using teat seal on cows as well that have had 3 'clean ' herd test results in the last year. Teat seal is now one of the most highly researched products we use and delivers one of the best returns on investment. But as you know the job MUST be done in a careful and hygienic manner and we are keen to come and help you administer the product.

In heifers using teat seal has been shown to reduce mastitis by 84%.

Lessons from the 2016 Facial Eczema Season

It was a pretty interesting year with regards to FE in the district. Nationally there was huge challenge and disease in the usual areas in the North Island. The trouble with the top of the south is that the disease occurs much less predictably so control/prevention policies are less well practised.

In 2015 we had a large spike in challenge leading to widespread disease in the district in April-ie quite late in the season. This year in 2016 we had our FE monitoring scheme up and running where 3 farms were tested fortnightly from late January. Apart from a brief spike in Mid March counts remained quite low all season. However long term, exposure to low levels of toxin will eventually produce disease if zinc is not being used. This happened in April this year where some herds saw problems. Sheep in the district were severely affected-particularly in the sounds. The advice all season was to use a low level of zinc.

As with many diseases the clinical cases are only the 'tip of the iceberg' and if there are a few clinicals it probably reflects an underlying subclinical problem affecting production.

So it is important to get a zinc dosing system operating on your farm for next year. We hear that that cows won't drink if zinc is put into water but starting at a low level may help along with using taste appetizers. Young stock and Jersey cows can be protected with a bolus. Something to think about for next year.

Nitrate Poisoning

You should all have had an alert e mail with regard to Nitrate risk this Autumn. It is good practice to check crops and new grass paddocks before feeding. Refer to the email or contact us to discuss prevention and risk management of this problem.

Fodder Beet

Just a reminder to those using fodder beet this winter:

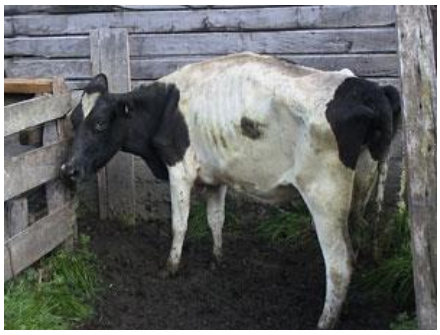
The acidosis risk with this feed is well documented and management of the transitional period going on to this crop is VITAL. Cows affected by fodder beet induced acidosis will often die and this can happen immediately or even 2-3 days later.

There is a good Dairy NZ information sheet on feeding fodder beet:

http://www.dairynz.co.nz/media/253800/1-73_Fodder-beet_feeding_to_dairy_cows.pdf

Johnes Disease

Johnes disease in dairy cattle in New Zealand is a growing problem. The disease is a difficult one to control as it is picked up as calves and disease is not seen until adulthood. Screening cows is difficult because of the possibility of false negatives. Affected animals become very thin and have a chronic scour and if they test positive they must be culled as there is no cure.



If you are seeing cases like this or know you have a problem with Johnes disease there is now a screening test that LIC can do at a herd test. Results are reported through us (the vets) and we can develop a risk management strategy for your farm and identify animals for culling or blood testing following the herd test.

Speak to one of the vets or leave a message at the clinic if you are interested in this service next year.

Theileria

Thanks to the Graham Vet Club for sponsoring a monitoring programme for Theileria infection in the district. Since our first outbreak in 2014 we have had some more isolated cases and some evidence of exposure. However we're not sure how far the disease has spread. Nick Hansby has undertaken to coordinate a sampling programme across 11 farms in specific areas. The aim of the study is to establish how the disease is behaving in Marlborough and so that are in a better position to quantify risk regarding animal movements.

Watch this space for results.

Spring - Just Around the Corner

It is very important to ensure you have a good calving kit set up and in place before the first calf is on the ground. There are now very clear guidelines in the new Animal Welfare code – please ensure you are aware of these.

Your calving kit should contain the following:

- Chains or leg rope x 2
- Head rope x 1
  NB. The head rope should be twice as long as the leg rope.
- Calving jack or pulley
- Lubrication
- Clean bucket + Disinfectant
- Mobile phone with vet clinic number for when you need help – ph: **(03) 578 6965**

The importance of keeping gear clean, before, during and after use cannot be stressed enough. Please make sure you make good use of your bucket and disinfectant – this part is often over looked.

METABOLIC KIT

IV - Intravenous or into the vein

SC - Sub Cut or under the skin

Below is a guide to which bags of metabolic you should have on hand:

- ✓ **Calcium borogluconate 375 (CBG 375)**: Can be given IV or SC
- ✓ **Calcium (Ca) / Magnesium (Mg) combinations:** Products containing 4-5% Mg + dextrose should be administered IV as the dextrose is slow in being absorbed from a SC injection site.
  Products containing 8% Mg should be administered SC, as the higher concentration of Mg increases the chance of cardiac arrest when administered IV.
- ✓ **Magnesium Sulphate**: SC administration only as high risk of cardiac arrest
- ✓ **Dextrose:** Administer IV as there will be slow absorption from a SC injection site. SC also has a high risk of abscesses forming.

Milk fever is the most likely cause of metabolic issues within 48 hours of calving and should respond well to CBG administration.

If longer than 48 hours, a combination is the best option. With cows that are down and have not calved, they are likely to be experiencing more serious complications and should therefore be seen by a veterinarian.

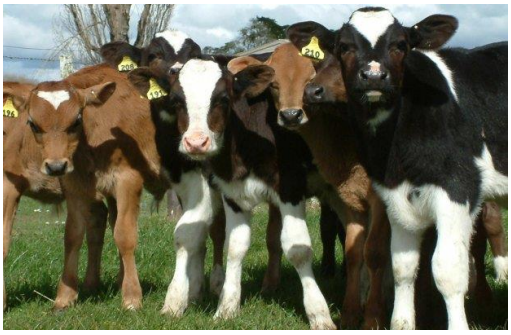
TRAINING

A pre calving meeting is a good idea if you employ staff to discuss the on farm practices during calving. This is a good option whether your staff have been with you for a number of seasons or if you have new staff. If you want some veterinary input into these meetings, please let us know as we are only too happy to assist.

Spring Consults

We will be ringing to arrange your spring consult soon. As you know this consult, as with the dry cow consult, is an obligation we both have to complete. We cannot supply you with RVM products if we do not do this consult and you are asked for a copy of the consult at the shed audit-there is no way round it!

However we would like to make the process as of much value to you as possible and many use the opportunity to make an animal health plan for the year and decide which veterinary services they will be needing next season. This also allows us to plan accordingly. In addition we can make sure you are happy with the products you are using and change any if appropriate. This sort of consult will become even more important in the future as we enter the era of controlling the growing global problem of antimicrobial resistance. As well as being a real issue that is causing havoc in the medical profession due to resistant infections in humans,the dairy industry needs to demonstrate that it is doing all it can to use antimicrobials responsibly.



Grazing Away

There are a number of farmers who have their herd or perhaps the heifers away being grazed during the winter with graziers that are not associated with the home farm.

There are a number of animal health issues that you need to be aware of such as BVD, Theileria and parasite control etc. However in combination with your herds animal health needs you need to ensure you are happy with the set up that your herd is being sent to over the winter months.

This is a gentle reminder to check personally where your herd is grazing and that you are happy with it. It may mean that you pay a visit to the property not only before your herd arrives, but during the time they are there.

You should outline to the grazier your expectations and check some basics that are easily overlooked such as, if they are to be grazed on crops that the nitrate risks are being monitored or that there is ample available water and that roughage or adequate other feed is provided.

Below is an example of a couple of water troughs that due to large rocks being placed around them are clearly not suitable to ensure good access to the water source and are likely to result in lameness issues.

Don’t get caught out – your production for next season could be affected!