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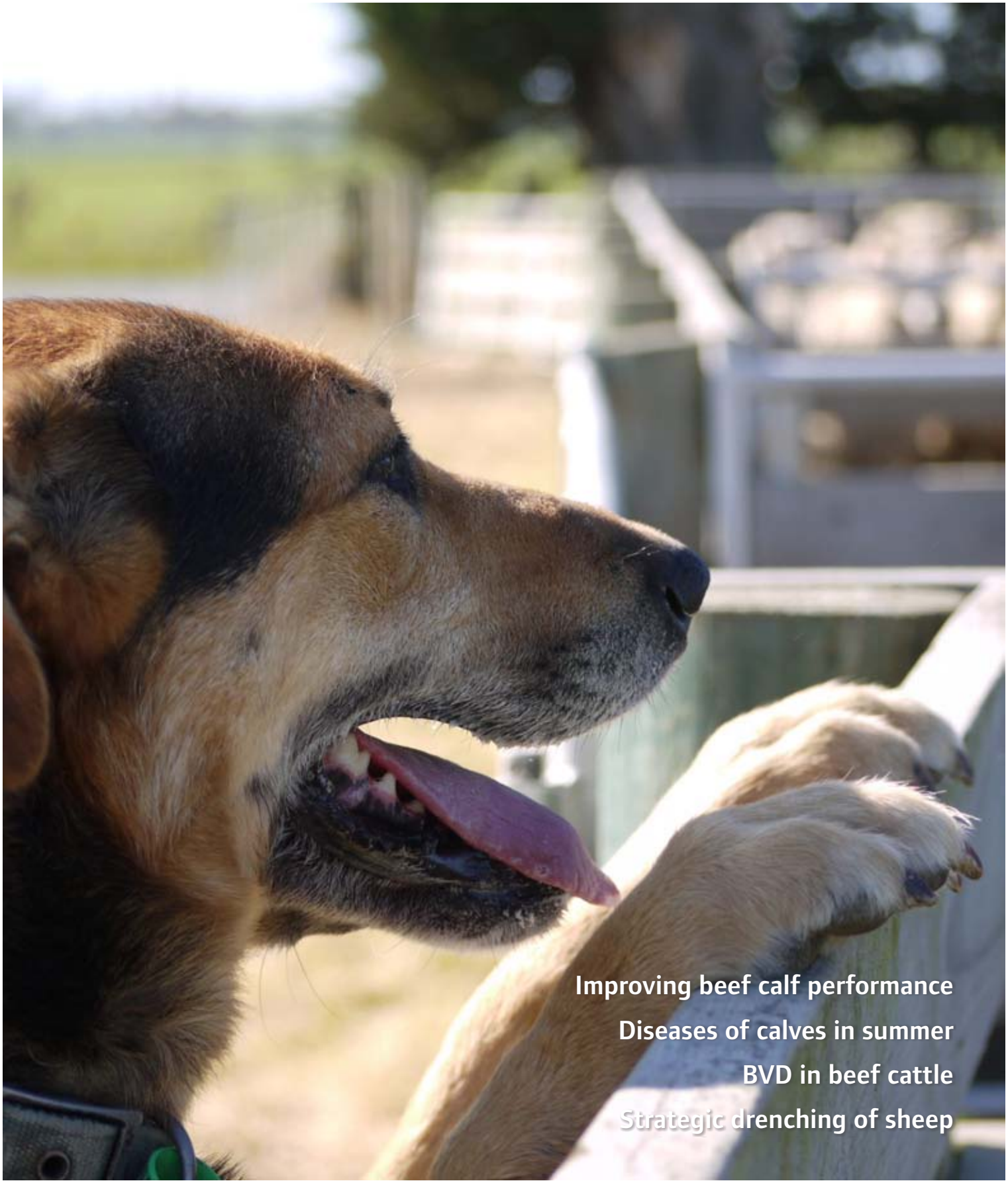
Vetlife
Animal Health Partners



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Welcome to our first newsletter edition for 2013

While the new calendar year does not really match our farming cycle year, as vets we do get enthusiastic and energetic again in January.

So please find again another really useful and relevant reference document with a lot of key information, tips and tricks that will be of powerful use on the farm.

My contribution this month is really some homework reminders, things that are relevant to this time of the year and things that we have mentioned over the last 12 months (no doubt at best buried in the recesses of your minds!).

Sudden deaths of healthy lambs and cattle: the role of Covexin 10
Many parts of the practice have had a season where there is still fantastic quality feed around.

This is a recipe for clostridial deaths in lambs and calves. Remember that the Covexin 10 vaccine has 10 strains of clostridials in it which gives wider protection against the "non-five in one vaccine" clostridial strains.

Seriously consider using this vaccine, do not accept sudden clostridial deaths as a part of the process of feeding young stock well. As well, sudden deaths of otherwise healthy cattle should always be suspected to be clostridial - do not put up with those either. *(See this current issue of the Vetlife Rural Newsletter and that from November 2012 with added detail around this subject.)*

Johne's disease (JD)
Left unmanaged, susceptible herds or flocks with JD will slowly max out with infected adults and annual reinfection of the newborn.

Uncontrolled deer and cattle herds have been shown to have as many as 35-50% of breeding dams infected. At this level, the obvious and the sub-clinical costs really affect productivity and welfare.

Remember the key management tools for cattle and deer are to:

1. Know your herd's JD status.
2. Test for positives.
3. Cull.

The whole process can seem to be too much, but remember, all we need to do is to annually ensure that "replacement females are cleaner than their mothers" and we make progress.

Recently, Vetlife sent a number of vets to a specific JD management conference in Hanmer, hosted by the JML Group (Johne's Management Ltd). Vetlife has a number of key vets who can assist in JD management and control programmes, ask your local clinic either for direct help or an internal Vetlife referral. The management of JD in sheep herds is different and not quite as simple, but progress can still be made.

JD is a real cost and wastage can be minimised with a good and simple programme.

Use of EID and production data
I stuck my neck out around EID and the value that it represents to farming productivity. I am still "alive" having survived that comment and have regained courage to raise the point again.

Vetlife has a number of farming entities proving daily how valuable this tool is. If you have not got EID operating in some fashion on your farm and linked to productivity data of any kind, then the chances are that you are missing out.

A South Canterbury client who as part of the Beef and Lamb Demonstration Farm Concept has EID in some sheep flocks, and the management options that this technology is providing are real.

A long standing corporate dairy client has proven the value in their heifer replacement management and so the list of clients goes on.

Vetlife are starting to investigate the use of EID panel readers in dairy sheds for those without a built in system and with the trusty help of Alvin and David Reid (Winchester) we will get there.

Recommendation - have a play with technology if you have not started yet - you will get hooked by the prize!

SmartShot B_{12}
Now is the time that replacement hoggets are being selected. With a good growthy season ahead of us (fingers crossed), give the long acting B_{12} depot injection a go; you will be pleased to forget about the need of repeat injections of the short-acting product.

Also remember the sunflower competition that we are running, there are great prizes for a family and a school as part of the SmartShot B_{12} competition.

So in conclusion, we would wish all our clients a successful 2013 and that the weather gods will look favourably on the balance of the summer and autumn.


Practice Principal
Adrian Campbell (Vet)

Best regards Adrian Campbell on behalf of all of the Vetlife colleagues.

Improving beef calf performance

The majority of beef calves benefit from a worm treatment at weaning time. Depending on the situation, beef calves may have been negatively affected by a significant worm challenge well before this time. There could be benefits in a worm treatment in the late summer period around six weeks prior to weaning.

An egg count from 8 to 10 calf faecal samples is a useful decision-making tool.

Whether pre-weaning or at weaning, the product used must be a levamisole-containing combination to ensure efficacy against Cooperia worms. The triple oral-drench Matrix C and the double combination products Eclipse Pour-on or Eclipse-E injection are good options. These products also double as excellent quarantine treatments for bought-in calves.

Rapidly growing calves are susceptible to clostridial diseases, characterised by sudden death and rapid carcass decomposition. Tetanus is another clostridial disease that anecdotally seems to be on the increase.

Typically tetanus occurs in steer calves about 10 days after castration, usually but not always with rubber rings. The dying tissue around the ring site provides the perfect environment for the tetanus bacteria to multiply and release the neurotoxin that causes the characteristic muscle rigidity.

Covexin 10 vaccine provides full-spectrum clostridial cover, although you should discuss tetanus cover following calf marking with your Vetlife vet. Calves that received their first clostridial vaccine at marking will still be vulnerable to tetanus until 14 days post-vaccination.

The timing of weaning can influence calf performance and be a useful tool in pasture management. As with weaning of ewes and lambs, there is a point where declining pasture quality and quantity, and competition with cows means that calves may be better off weaned early if high quality feed is available.

Reared dairy farm-sourced calves that are weaned at 90-100 kg onto quality pasture will perform well. Early weaning of beef calves over 100 kg could be considered to allocate quality pasture to a class of stock that needs it most during times of feed shortage. A prolonged dry period during summer could create such conditions.

Pregnancy testing of beef cows traditionally coincides with weaning. Earlier pregnancy testing, irrespective of whether weaning has occurred, can provide some useful benefits. Early pregnancy testing allows the better identification of later calving cows (third cycle).

Culling of these cows (if in calf rates allow) ensures that calving is kept compact and consequently calves are older and more even.

Early slaughtering of these cows may also capture a premium not present once the main season cow kill is underway.

The slaughter of empty and cull cows at the freezing works is an excellent opportunity to collect liver samples for copper and selenium testing. As a typically low input class of stock that live on the farm for a number of years, they often truly reflect the trace element status of a property.

Pregnancy testing is also an opportunity to collect blood from cows, to assess the exposure to potential performance-limiting diseases such as BVD and leptospirosis.

Copper and selenium are seldom at production-limiting levels in calves from cows with adequate levels of these trace elements. However, we know from blood and liver testing that un-supplemented cows on many properties have low to marginal copper and selenium levels. As calves' reliance on milk declines and pasture increases there may be benefits in supplementing prior to weaning.

Multimin injection provides a short term "top-up" of copper and selenium to young calves. Copper bullets and long-acting selenium injections are options particularly at weaning or afterwards. These are particularly important where calves are going to be wintered on crops.

Hayden Barker
Vetlife Pleasant Point

Diseases of calves in summer

Every summer we see a variety of calf diseases; they can have obvious signs or present in more subtle ways. Any abnormal behaviour or signs in your calf herd should be taken seriously. The diseases discussed below are the more common ones we see.

Even with the dry summer, calves are still at risk of contracting intestinal worm burdens and lung worm infections, especially if this season's calves are being placed onto the same pasture as those calves from last season. These worm burdens could be having a significant impact on growth rates. Keep a look out for calves that may be growing poorly and scouring, as an intestinal worm burden could be the cause and treatment with an effective wormer could help improve growth rates. It is important to listen for any signs of coughing as this can be an early sign of lungworm infection.

Yersiniosis is caused by a bacteria and is seen most commonly in young stock between 6 to 12 months of age. It can occur as a single calf problem or more commonly as an outbreak. Signs to look for in your calves are chronic diarrhoea which may contain blood or mucus and is usually a light green/brown colour; however animals do not have a high temperature. Yersinia also causes depression with poor and sometimes stunted growth and wasting.

BVD can also be responsible for poor growth and poor health in your calves. Testing of calves for BVD is available so that persistently infected animals can be removed early.

The hot, dry conditions predispose calves to pink eye at this time of year. Initially animals appear to have a very red and watery eye which contains an ulcer. Without treatment this ulcer becomes progressively worse and may even cause rupture of the eye. This condition is very painful; it reduces grazing time and therefore has an economic impact of reduced weight gain and even weight loss. If this disease is on your farm, contact your Vetlife veterinarian for advice on treatment.

In mid-summer a common disease that can occur in calves is PEM (polioencephalomalacia), this disease is caused by secondary thiamine deficiency. Outbreaks can be seen at this time due to animals going from poor stalky pasture onto lush feed; but usually we see sporadic cases. Affected calves develop aimless wandering, clamping of the jaw, frothy salivation and head pressing. As the disease progresses animals become recumbent, begin to have seizures and ultimately die. If any of your calves are exhibiting these signs please contact your Vetlife veterinarian straight away.

There are also less common diseases that could affect your calves. Nutrition and trace element issues are the most common causes of poor growth. If you have any concerns please ring your Vetlife veterinarian. The growth rates of your calves should be monitored by weighing them regularly. Every year we have clients who have been caught out and end up with heifers that are below target weights. Vetlife has a calf weighing service that can help avoid this outcome.

Olivia Sutton
Vetlife Dunsandel

Mating 2012-13: how well has it gone?

We are in the thick of pregnancy testing and people are always interested to know how well their results stack up against their neighbours. Although it is too soon for all the scanning results to have come in, we can look back to the start of the season at calving, submission and non-return rates to get an idea of how things will shape up.

Using MINDA and with the help of LIC we have access to the results of a great many farms and this means that the data below is very typical for Canterbury. The following results are from the current calving and mating season (2012/13) and are for 41 farms covering a total of 26,000 cows. Each graph shows the range of results achieved and the red drop line shows the target level of performance as recommended by LIC and DairyNZ.

The two big parts of getting cows in calf on time is getting them served and then getting them to hold. *Figure 1* shows the range in submission rates (percentage of cows that are served in the first three weeks of mating).

Fewer than 10% of these herds are hitting the target of 90% of the herd served in the first three weeks. The very low results might be due to using alternative AB companies (whose results may not be recorded via LIC) or from early use of natural service. However, around 85% of these herds are achieving a submission rate below target.

Non-return rate (NRR) gives an indication of pregnancy rate. It measures the percentage of cows that do NOT return after a service; either they are pregnant or they have not conceived but have not re-cycled or been detected. On some farms, the number of cows that do not hold and do not return (quiet or missed) is high and so the gap between NRR and pregnancy rate is large. Typically, the gap will be 5-10%; that is NRR will be 5-10% higher than the real pregnancy rate.

Figure 2 shows the NRR for the same 41 farms.

NRR values that are too low indicate a low conception rate; too many cows are not holding, lots of cows are returning. Most of our herds are in this group. In herds where the NRR is too high we know that the true conception rate will be at best between 55% and 60%. A NRR higher than this means that more cows are failing to conceive but are not returning, the gap is large.

So we have a lot of herds that do not get a 90% submission rate in the first three weeks and we have a lot of herds with a low conception rate. We also have a smaller number of herds where cows fail to conceive but do not re-cycle.

All this points towards a fairly dismal in calf rate this year for many farms. However, some farms are achieving the target levels of performance. What do these farms do differently?

Two factors stand out so far in the data we have collected. If a farm:

- Achieved the target six week calving rate of 87% of the herd or better they are ten times more likely to achieve a six week in calf rate of 70% or more.

- Achieved the target submission rate in the first three weeks of 90% of the herd served or better they are five times more likely to achieve a six week in calf rate of 70% or more.

Clearly a lot of factors contribute to a herd's reproductive success. Calving pattern will influence submission rate and conception rate. The effects of calving pattern and submission rate in the above analysis allow for this but there are many other factors such as body score at calving, body score loss after calving, heat detection etc.

Next month, more results will have been collected and we will be able to give you some more indicators of the key differences between top local farms and the rest.

Andrew Bates
Vetlife Temuka
Thanks to LIC for access to herd data.

Figure 1

Histogram of 3 week submission rate and target
41 Temuka herds 2012-13

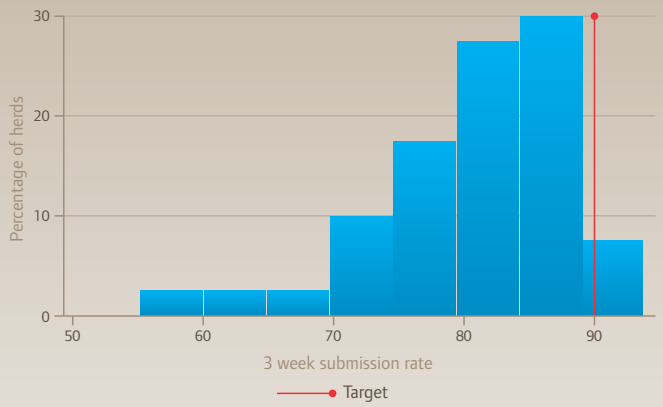
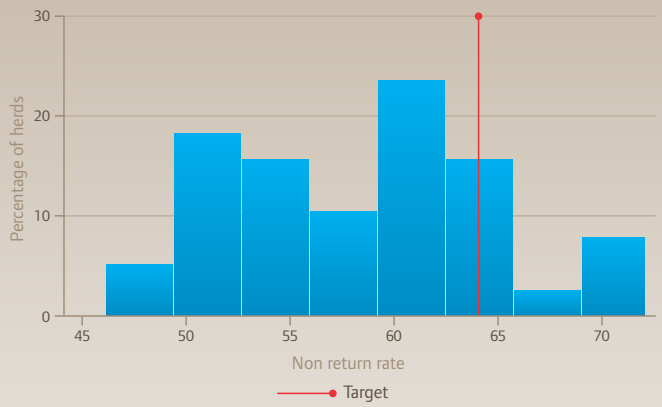


Figure 2

Histogram of non return rate and target
41 Temuka herds 2012-13



BVD in beef cattle

Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) is not a new or emerging disease and in fact so much has been said about it that farmers often become sick of hearing about it. However, thanks to the BVD Steering Committee, a much clearer picture has emerged of the role BVD plays in cattle production. In beef cows it may cause reproductive wastage, weight loss and probably reduced milk yield which in turn will affect calf growth rates. It may cause immune suppression leading to other diseases, and exposure during mating and pregnancy can have major effects on productivity. It may be the cause of infertility, embryo loss, abortions, deformed calves and the birth of dead calves.

Of most concern are pregnant cows coming into contact with the virus within the first four months of pregnancy. At this stage the forming foetus does not recognise the virus as foreign and assimilates the virus in its own tissue and is born as a persistently infected (PI) animal which continually sheds the virus throughout its life. PI animals are a major source of reinfection in beef herds due to the time calves spend suckling on their dams compared to calves on dairy farms. These calves are "virus factories" and their identification and control is a cornerstone of BVD control in cattle. It is important to note that PIs are always born and cannot be created after birth.

Cattle coming into contact with the BVD virus can become what is called transiently infected (TI). Such cattle are infected for about two weeks followed by a strong immune response (antibody) which will cause them to be immune for a period of time. Poor growth rates in young growing cattle may in some cases be related to a TI infection being spread through a mob by a single PI. Of course TI infections in cows during their first four months of pregnancy lead to more PIs.

Research collected by the BVD Steering Committee would suggest that BVD could cost an average beef herd as much as $9,000.00 per 100 cows per year. Individually the effects may be too small to notice but collectively can add up to a significant cost to the farm.

As every beef farm is unique, no universal BVD control programme fits all farms. Generally though, setting up a BVD control programme on an individual farm is considered a 4-step process.

1. **Assess** BVD biosecurity status of the beef herd.

   That is understanding how to limit the introduction into and spread within the beef herd.

2. **Define** BVD status of the beef herd.

   This means determining if your herd is currently infected with BVD.

3. **Action** the most appropriate control plan for your farm.

   This plan needs to be formulated with your animal health professional and largely involves minimising the risk of early pregnant cows becoming infected and producing more PIs. This may or may not involve vaccination.

4. **Monitor** BVD status of the beef herd regularly.

   To ensure the plan is working properly and to detect any new viral introductions.

While the information in this article is very much an overview of some of the issues of BVD in beef herds, a very good publication by the BVD Steering Committee called "BVD Control in Beef Cattle" is available from all Vetlife clinics and covers all the material in much greater detail. Alternatively contact your Vetlife vet to discuss any of these points thoroughly.

Ivan Holloway
Vetlife Oamaru

Acknowledgements: BVD Control in Beef Cattle: BVD Steering Committee.

Staying on top of mastitis

About this time of year we start getting inquiries as to what might be the best antibiotic to try on a cow that has had mastitis a few times and is just not clearing up. While the answer to this is varied and depends on many factors best discussed individually, the truth is these repeat offender cows are often best simply culled and your efforts better invested in examining and controlling mastitis on a herd level. The shed routine should be a bit quieter by now with AI but a distant memory and this should leave a bit more time to focus on matters such as mastitis; however it is all too often the case that things start slipping a bit as everything seems a bit more relaxed. Make sure this is not the case:

- Check the cell count each day; have you got spikes occurring or is there a persistent slow upward trend?
- Ensure teatspraying continues. Over time, trends including once a day or zero teatspraying after Christmas have come and gone. In the New Zealand environment teatspray is integral to controlling mastitis. Likewise if you are struggling with your cell count, do not cut the concentration of your teatspray back.
- Look at your herd test data. Many farmers will have two or three sets of herd test results by now. Are there animals in there that are persistently high? Consider running these as a separate mob.
- Milk your mastitis cows twice daily and treat them as directed on the box or by a veterinarian. Leaving pus in the udder for twenty four hours at a stretch will not help the condition clear and the instructions given by the manufacturer are designed to provide the best results possible for their product.
- Ensure your milking hygiene is adequate. Gloves should be worn and rubberware changed at appropriate times (2500 individual milkings per unit).

These are simple basics that everyone should be doing. If you are struggling with an ongoing cell count or clinical mastitis issue contact your local Vetlife vet for a discussion. There are a number of ways that we can help including visiting during milking to identify problems or simply giving some "off the top of the head" advice for starters after a short discussion and a few questions. Such exercises have provided great results on a number of farms we service.

While we are about halfway through the season and the really tough mastitis period of spring has passed, it is important to remember that most of the cows you are milking now will be with you again next spring. There is plenty of evidence that shows in various ways that experiencing a case of mastitis this season increases an animal's chance of experiencing a bout next season, and similarly increases the likely herd cell count for next season. So it is important not to get too much into cruise mode.

Duncan Crosbie
Vetlife Temuka

A glass half full

As of the 31st January 2013, we will be a touch over 60% of our way through the milking season assuming days of 1st August through to the 31st May; however most farms would have produced around 65% of their milk production for the season and from now on in, we can expect a steady decline in milk production. With appreciably another 120 days left of the milking season, our goal now turns towards ensuring that the decline in milk production is just like the tortoise, slow and steady, and with our attention slowly turning towards those bumpy backbone cows in the herd which have a body condition score of 4 or below.

By now, some of you will have the first results from pregnancy aged scanning to muse over and may be somewhat daunted by the number of cows to calve down in the first two to three weeks of calving. We are at that beautiful stage of the season in which last August can be vaguely remembered and we may be looking at next August with a gut feeling of apprehension as we remember how tight for feed some areas were. Most certainly it was a shocker, but it is over the next few months that we can make real positive changes to ensure cows are well-conditioned (at least BCS 4 at dry off) so that they are ready to face the challenges of spring 2013. Most crops of fodder beet and kale alike have had a gentle growing season to date and, touch wood, we will have high yielding crops across the land.

Ensuring cows are fed well over the next few months will ensure that we can hold steady the decline in milk yield for the continuation of the season as well as safeguard the condition that cows currently have and allow those cows which are under-conditioned to replace some through the late summer and autumn months. Most farms will have their latest round of herd test results handy; discuss these with your Vetlife vet and take the time to go through the results to identify genuine cull cows and remove them to free up feed for your performers. Take the proactive approach to ensure that steps are put in place now so that more drastic decisions such as OAD milking or drying off earlier do not need to be made later! Take the time during milking to actively identify those lighter cows in the herd and consider your options around the creation of a herd of lighter cows (below 4 BCS) which graze separately or perhaps in front of the main herd. Ask myself or a Vetlife colleague to BCS the herd and to discuss body condition scoring and feeding requirements with your staff from now until dry off to ensure your herd are in the best possible shape to face the winter and resulting spring!

Craig Trotter
Centre for Dairy Excellence, Geraldine

½ ewe + ½ ram = 1 lamb!

The genetic contribution for production of a lamb is 50% from ewe and 50% from ram hence it is important that fertility status and health is optimal for both parties. Obviously the health of the ewe flock is a primary focus for a commercial lamb breeding operation. A lot of money and time is spent ensuring optimal nutritional requirements of ewes are met, immune status is adequate through vaccination and parasite burden and disease are minimised.

Often ram nutrition and health is not so closely regulated. There is a risk that rams are put into heavy work over tupping, retired to the "ram paddock" and then put out with the ewes for more of the same the following tupping with minimal intervention in between times. Do not forget drench and clostridial vaccination (5 in 1 or 10 in 1) programmes and trace element supplementation (such as selenium) for your rams. Ensure they also have plenty of quality feed available especially for a couple of months leading up to tupping.

To be a successful breeder, a ram needs functional genitalia, good mobility and the ability to eat well. Examining your rams allows for culling based on age, condition, teeth wear, lameness and results from veterinary testicle palpation. Palpation allows for detection of the following causes of suboptimal fertility:

- Lesions from a previous insult possibly due to trauma or infection (e.g. Brucella ovis).
- Age-related degeneration of testicular function.
- Scrotal abscesses.
- Mange.
- Cryptorchidism

Blood testing is also done for Brucella ovis accreditation purposes or on individual rams with suspicious testicular lesions.

The production of sperm in a ram takes approximately eight weeks. Sperm made today will not be utilised for conception for at least eight weeks so it is important ram health is up to scratch well before the planned start of tupping.

Feel free to contact your Vetlife clinic to book in a ram palpation visit (if you let us know we can vaccinate your farm dogs while we are on farm too).

Also if you have not ordered your Toxovax or Campyvax yet, contact your clinic ASAP.

Katie Bowron
Vetlife Pleasant Point

Strategic drenching of sheep

Want to continue using your low cost, effective drench programme for longer?

Drench resistance, resulting in production losses and increasing costs to control parasites, is a major concern for New Zealand sheep farmers. Drench resistance can be effectively managed by using strategic drenching and an integrated approach to worm management. Strategic drenching is the planned use of drench to manage or delay anthelmintic resistance so routine drenches work effectively for longer. A strategic drench plan could include a quarantine drench, knockout drench or exit drench. A quarantine drench is essential for any stock arriving on your farm to prevent the introduction of resistant parasites - this includes your own stock that have been grazed out or leased. This ideally should be a drench with a new active such as Startect or at least a triple combination. After drenching, animals should be left in the yards or a sacrificial paddock for at least 24 hours so that any viable eggs are not shed onto pasture.

An effective preventative lamb drenching programme is essential to parasite management. By preventing an uncontrolled autumn larval peak of parasites on pasture, all classes of stock will benefit from the reduced larval challenge.

When routine lamb drenches are not fully effective, they allow resistant parasites to accumulate in sheep and contribute to a build-up of a resistant population of parasites. A knockout drench is the substitution of a routine lamb drench with a new active like Startect prior to optimal climatic conditions for larval survival and development on pasture. This will remove parasites that have survived routine drenching and prevent an autumn larval peak of resistant parasites. A knockout lamb drench has been shown to delay the onset of resistance to the routine drench. The ideal timing will generally be late summer/early autumn before autumn conditions favour the hatching of resistant eggs and their larval development.

Exit drenches are used after long-acting drenches or capsules to remove parasites that have survived the long-acting treatment so need to be of a different family or combination.

In all circumstances, combination drenches are recommended over single actives for delaying the onset of resistance as each active protects the other.

Talk to your Vetlife clinic to learn more about how we can help you improve profitability and delay drench resistance on your farm.

Chris McFarlane
Vetlife Dunsandel

Results of perinatal lamb thyroid tests

During the spring of 2012, Vetlife clinics conducted complimentary lamb post-mortems to determine if iodine supplementation was required and if any supplement that was given attained satisfactory levels.

Although a dietary deficiency of iodine has commonly been regarded as a cause of goitre, goitrogens that occur in many animal fodder crops (especially brassica crops) are also important. In adult sheep, iodine is effectively trapped in the thyroid gland which contains 80% of the body's iodine. The lamb's thyroid gland develops independently from that of the ewe and production of adequate levels of thyroid hormones for foetal development and maturation depend on sufficient iodine from the ewe's daily intake being transported across the placenta. Thyroid hormones are essential for the development of foetal brain, lungs, heart and wool follicles and so are very important in perinatal survival especially the ability to cope with adverse conditions.

The ratio of the weight of the lamb's thyroid in grams to the weight of the lamb's body in kilograms gives an indication of the level of iodine intake over pregnancy. Ratios that are greater than 0.4 are more likely to be associated with an enlarged thyroid - goitre. *Figure 1* shows the average ratio from 17 farms across different Vetlife regions using different iodine supplementation systems.

A ratio higher than 0.4 can be associated with iodine deficiency and goitre. In this study, farms that had no iodine supplementation had a higher ratio (more likely to be iodine deficient) than farms that supplemented. There would have been variation in the amount of brassica feeding between these farms and this probably contributed to the range in ratio values seen in the un-supplemented group. Farms that used oral iodine were also very close to goitre levels. This is not surprising, given that oral supplementation is commonly used by farmers who have previously experienced goitre in lambs (i.e. high risk of experiencing it again) and that oral supplementation via drench has a very limited duration of effect. There were too few farms to assess whether these differences were statistically significant or just the result of chance variation.

Figure 2 shows individual farm results. It shows graphically that Flexidine gives a consistently good iodine level as reflected in the thyroid weights (lower bars are better than higher bars). Depending on historic natural levels and level of brassica feeding, the number of orals given varied from one to three doses pre-tup and during pregnancy. These factors also were reflected in the wide variation between farms that gave no iodine supplementation at all. At present, measuring thyroid weights of perinatal lambs is the most accurate method of assessing iodine status of your flock.

Flexidine and oral iodine were both associated with ratios below the target of 0.4 and so normal thyroid size. The number of farms was too small and the number of other factors influencing the result (differences in amount of brassica fed, region, breed, twins vs singles, age of ewes, etc.), too great for a general conclusion to be drawn. However, ewes that received iodine orally had more variable thyroid gland ratios than ewes that were given Flexidine.

Chris McFarlane and Colin Cromie
Vetlife Dunsandel and Ashburton

Figure 1

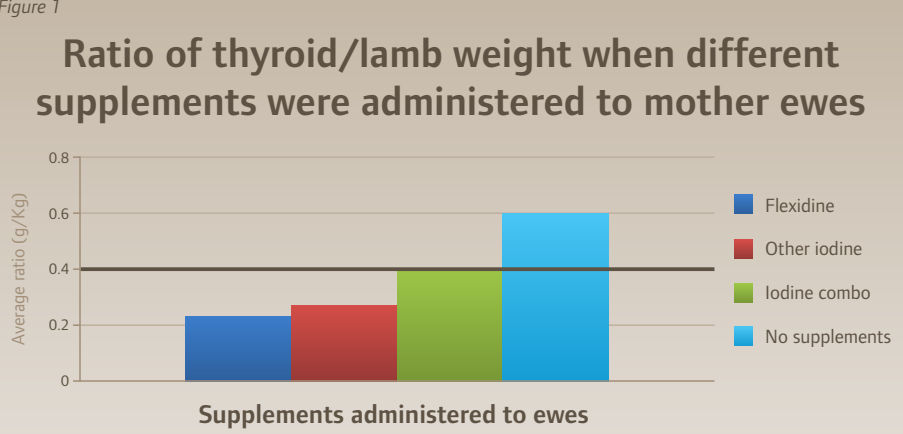
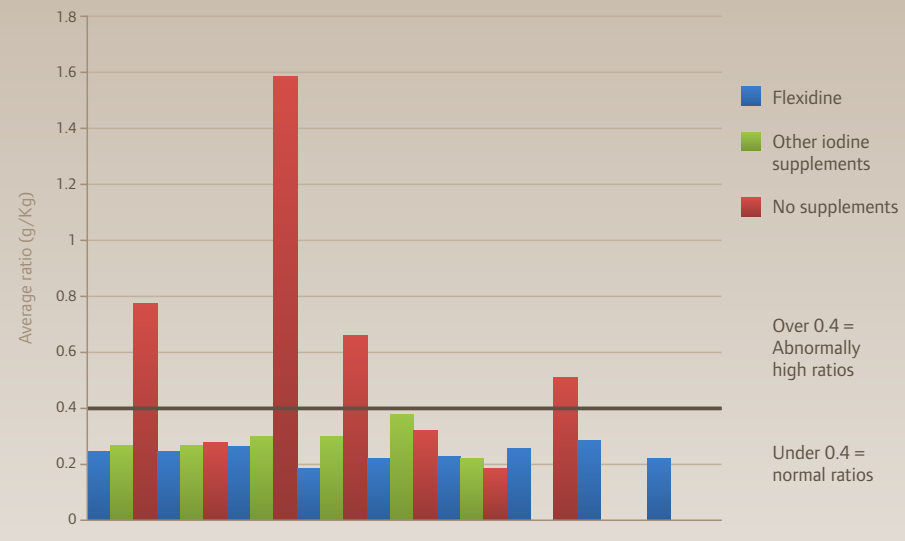


Figure 2



BVD update

Thank you to all who attended the BVD meetings in Ashburton and Temuka over December 2012. Unfortunately the Oamaru meeting was cancelled due to Ivan being ill but we will organise a similar meeting at some point, but do not hesitate to contact him in the mean time for one-on-one chats on the issue.

The meetings had five broad topics which included:

- What the health effects of BVD are?
- How BVD works?
- What BVD costs?
- Control and monitoring options.

Plus a talk from researcher Dr Hinrich Voges from LIC Genemark Lab who presented bulk tank milk results for the area.

The following tables provide a brief overview of the five topics discussed at the meetings.

Health effects
Reproductive effects on dams.
Poorer semen quality in bulls.
Reduced growth rates in calves.
Increased disease incidence in all stock.

BVD transmission
Persistently infected (PI) calves perpetuate the disease.
PIs are created only by infection during the first four months of pregnancy.
PI animals will always give birth to a PI calf.
PI animals are not affected by vaccination and cannot mount an immune response.

Costs
5% less milk production annually.
6.6 days later calving to conception.
11% less conception to AB.
3.1% increased empty rate.
$13.67 increase in disease costs in transiently infected cows.

Monitoring
Bulk tank milk tests for the milking herd.
Blood testing of all bulls.
Checking calf crops for virus incursion.

Control options
Biosecurity: do not allow a PI animal to enter the herd. Test incoming animals.
Vaccination: protect animals up to four months pregnant.
PI removal: find and remove PIs already in the herd.

One of the main points from the meetings was bulk tank milk testing is invaluable to monitoring; this can be done through a scheme run by LIC - "BVD Monitoring Pack". It costs around $350 per annum and includes five tests that are automatically picked up through your supplier. This is the most cost-effective way of monitoring and saves you over $400 compared to testing through other laboratories. Results need to be sent to your vet and we recommend you have a meeting to discuss these results along with your particular situation. (See *Figure 1* for an example of LIC's Bulk Milk BVD Results.)

Another common question was, "If most Canterbury herds are infected is there any point in controlling the disease?"

There is strong evidence in New Zealand research that using at least one method of control is more beneficial than living with the disease. Control methods are focused around removing the carrier animals from the herd and keeping them out. Depending on your herd's infection status (based on milk antibody levels) and farm setup there will be options for you to manage this disease. Not many will want to reach a gold standard of eradication but most farms will be able to reduce the cost of disease.

In the future, with other countries heading towards eradication and individuals in New Zealand practicing BVD control, there will be more pressure to acknowledge the disease. As

Figure 1

carrier animals are created through infection of the foetus during the first four months of pregnancy, New Zealand's spring calving dairy herds have a good opportunity to control this. In the future, graziers may move to exclusively grazing BVD controlled farms and there may be future revenue opportunities if you deal with the disease now.

If you have begun testing and have not used the information as yet, think about starting to monitor your milk and book a meeting with your Vetlife vet to consider your options.

Hazel Foley
Vetlife Ashburton

Hot off the press from the LUDF!

A quick glance of weekly farm data	25th Dec	1st Jan	8th Jan	15th Jan
Pasture growth rate (kg DM/d)	104	93	74	76
Pre-grazing pasture mass (kg DM/ha)	3312	3346	3211	2942
Average pasture mass	2628	2481	2272	2378
Post-grazing pasture mass	1750	1700	1650	1750
Pasture quality (MJME/kg DM)	11.8	11.8	11.3	11.8
Pasture offered (kg DM/cow/d)	18.4	18.3		
Pasture silage offered (kg DM/cow/d)	0	0	0	5
Milk solids production (kg MS/cow/d)	1.95	2.20	1.77	1.75
Milk solids production (kg MS/ha/d)	7.63	7.41	6.95	6.82
Herd mean body condition score				4.4
Monitor group LWT (kg)	477	479	484	475
Bulk milk somatic cell count ('000)	110	100	110	105

For more detailed information go to www.siddc.org.nz

SIDDC
South Island Dairying Development Centre

The next focus day is to be held:
21st February 2013.
Book into your diary now!!

VISIT YOUR LOCAL VETERINARY CLINIC TO SEE WHY CHOOSING MERIAL ANCARE SHEEP PRODUCTS IS THE SHARP DECISION FOR MORE THAN ONE REASON. FOR A LIMITED TIME GET YOUR HANDS ON ONE OF THESE RAPALA KNIVES* PERFECT FOR WORK AND PLAY.

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*WHILE STOCKS LAST

Children's sunflower competition
Hurry, time is running out!

How are your sunflowers coming along? If you have not got them planted by now, it is time to start seriously planning where you are going to plant them, as you have just over three months until the competition ends!

Top tips:
- Sunflowers take about 12 weeks to mature.
- They need a spot that gets plenty of sun and is protected from the wind.
- Keep the soil moist until the seedlings emerge then protect them from pests.
- As your plants reach about 1.5 metres tall, it is a good idea to provide some form of support. You do not want your prize winner falling over now do you!

With the wonderful family trip to Te Papa and an iPad2 up for grabs, what are you waiting for!

While we are talking about planning, have you considered your needs of B_{12} supplementation for this year?

If you are not already doing so, take the time to consider SMARTShot B_{12}:
- Long-acting product, so no need for repeat injections.
- Available in plain formula for lambs or with selenium for sheep and cattle.

Speak to your local Vetlife clinic today to discover the full benefits SMARTShot B_{12} has to offer.

Remember, in addition to the benefit you will see in your stock by using SMARTShot B_{12}, your child's sunflower entry will also be eligible for the iPad2 should they be the lucky winner!

So let's get growing with Vetlife and SMARTShot B_{12} today.

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SMART Shot® B_{12} Prime Lamb
Long acting Vitamin B_{12} injection for lambs

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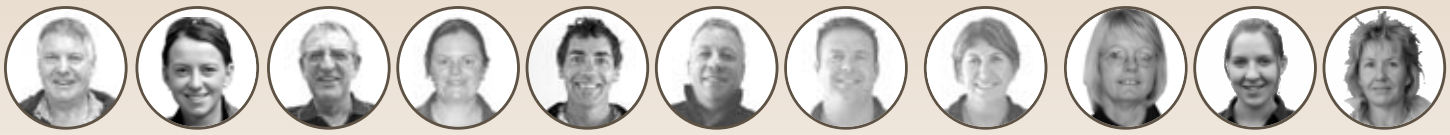
Long acting Vitamin B_{12} and selenium injection for sheep and cattle

Meet the Vetlife field representative team...



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Comments and feedback

We value your feedback. Please feel free to comment or lodge a complaint in confidence on our services, advice and products.

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