

## Welcome to the October edition of our newsletter

**W**elcome to the October Animail from Tauranga Vets. Many of you will have survived another calving – well done! It's always a challenging time of the year. Of course the focus now shifts to the reproductive health of your livestock and making sure your young stock continue to thrive. This month we cover a Reproduction Seminar that we held earlier in the month, discuss Drenching and Leptospirosis in calves as well as looking at Digital Dermatitis. Don't forget our Spring Special for Eclipse and Arrest and we hope that you enjoy the publication.

### Leptospirosis Vaccination of Young Calves

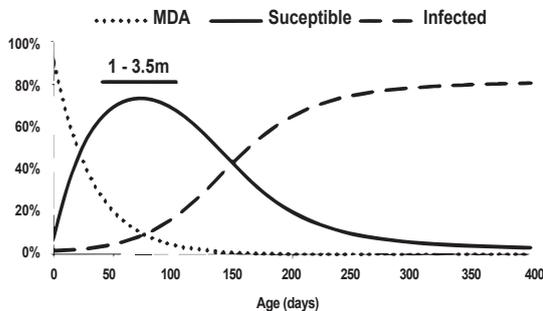


Leptospirosis remains a serious threat to the health and livelihood of farmers. While control of lepto in New Zealand dairy cattle has improved markedly thanks to widespread vaccination, evidence remains that there is still room for improvement. Every year almost 100 cases of leptospirosis are reported in humans, and it is estimated that the numbers of unreported or undiagnosed cases are even higher. Farmers or farm workers have a 4 to 7 % chance of contracting leptospirosis, which is a risk 25 to 50 times higher than the average person in New Zealand.

Traditional vaccination programmes in calves have delayed vaccination until around 6 months of age. This has been due to a belief that calves are not at great risk of infection before 6 months of age and also because of doubts about how effective the original lepto vaccines were when given to very young calves.

We now know that calves are at risk of lepto infection well before 6 months of age. And if they do become infected they can become chronic shedders of leptospirosis in their urine for months or years, presenting a health risk to you any time they are handled. Once infected, vaccination is too late to be of any use and will not cure their infection.

Therefore calves need to be vaccinated early before they have a chance to become infected. Fortunately there are vaccines which are effective in young calves such as Ultravac<sup>®</sup> 7 in 1 can both be used as early as 4 weeks of age. Early calf vaccination with two injections 4 - 6 weeks apart, then yearly boosters, is the best way to protect you, your family and your valuable employees from this debilitating disease.



The graph to the left is a summary of the original NZ research showing that vaccinating earlier than 6 months of age subsequently reduces the risk of urine shedding in a herd. A convenient time to do early calf lepto vaccinations is at the same time as 5 in 1 clostridial vaccination.

This is possible with Ultravac 7 in 1, a vaccine that provides protection against leptospirosis and clostridial disease in one simple shot.

Therefore in keeping with current risk management best practice, leptospirosis early vaccination course for calves from 2-3 months of age in the spring followed by a third shot in the autumn is recommended.

For further information about early calf lepto vaccination and lepto control, speak with one of our large animal vets by calling your local vet clinic today.

### Digital Dermatitis or "Infectious dermatitis" - you may not even know your herd has it!

**A highly infectious disease of the feet of dairy cattle Bovine digital dermatitis (BDD) is appearing all over New Zealand. It is suspected that isolated cases may have been seen as early as the 1980's, but now the disease seems to be changing and spreading within and between dairy herds.**

It is thought to be caused by a treponema bacteria, spread from cow to cow, so buying in a single infected cow is a great risk to a clean herd. Because it is so infectious it can also possibly spread on hoof knives and dirty equipment.



This lesion can be quite big, like a 1 - 3 cm strawberry, or as small as a dry little scab when it is healing. There is often a characteristic foul odour. It is usually at the top of the cleft between the claws at the back of the foot. Very seldom is the cow lame unless the lesion grows big however overseas experience demonstrates that over time it can become more serious & start to effect large proportions of a herd. You often won't notice the lesion unless clean the mud off the back of the foot at milking time. There is no swelling of the foot. Sometimes cows will flick their foot repeatedly due to the irritation.

Look out for cows with a lesion like those in the photos. Separate the cow and get us to come and take a biopsy to confirm the diagnosis & work out a treatment plan as well as a management plan to help control the spread of the disease amongst the herd & to other herds. BDD responds well to topical antibiotics & footbathing.

More than 50 herds around New Zealand have found the disease in the last two years. In nearly every case only one cow was identified by the farmer, but on examining the herd there were nearly always multiples.



## Reproduction Seminar



Katikati Veterinary Clinic recently hosted a reproduction seminar at Brownys café which was well received by those that attended. It was an interactive session and good discussion was had around the approach and management of the mating period. Some of the key points are summarised below:

- Key performance indicators of mating: submission rate and conception rate. These are the key drivers of 6 week in calf rate (target is 78%).
- Heat detection is very important. The cost of missed heats is considerable, that is less milk production and later calving. Cows need to be observed in the paddock after morning milking and before afternoon milking, not just in the shed. Heat detection aids and observation give the best detection results. The aim is to have at least 85% of the herd cycled by planned start of mating (PSM) and 90% submitted for insemination in the first 3 weeks of mating.
- Non-cycler risk factors: young first and second calvers (especially if poorly grown), thin cows, late calvers, health problems, breed (Friesian more likely than Jersey)
- Non-cycler options:
  - Do nothing. Only successful if >85% cycled by PSM
  - Run at risk cows separately for preferential treatment (no scientific evidence yet to prove successful)
  - Once a day (OAD) milking. Start at least 4-6 weeks out from PSM. Run as separate mob. Evidence shows minimal benefit. Need to factor in reduced milk production. The longer on OAD, the greater the reduction in milk production.
  - Hormonal intervention. Most cost effective when done early, even at current payout. 16 days more in milk. Select appropriate cows for treatment. Far less cost effective when done later.
  - Preferential feeding. Rising plane of feeding doesn't necessarily improve fertility, much better to have herd at optimal BCS at calving.
  - Teaser bulls. These are good heat detectors but there is no robust scientific evidence to show they stimulate non-cyclers to cycle.
- Non-cycler long term prevention important to not only improve fertility but also milk production. These key management areas include: aim to meet heifer growth rate targets, manage 2 and 3yr old cows in the herd carefully, aim to meet cow BCS targets (5 for 4+yr olds and 5.5 for 2 and 3yr olds, dry cows off on BCS, calving date and feed supply, manage to minimise herd health problems, reduce the percentage of late calvers in the herd, keep BCS loss to less than 1 BCS from calving to mating, ensure cows are at least BCS 4 at mating.

There were many other topics covered in the seminar. To discuss further or for more information please make contact with one of our large animal vets.

## Drenching of Weaner Calves – What's important?



As the period of weaning of replacement calves is approaching, they have been at pasture for some weeks now – long enough to have picked up infective larvae in the pasture.

### When is the best time to drench?

It depends upon where the calves were grazing this Spring and where (if any) last year's calves were grazing in the Autumn. This is important because last year's calves are a source of contamination that will result in infective larvae for this seasons calves now. Fortunately, the peaks of larvae from ideal conditions in Autumn mean that generally the larvae will reduce over Winter due to cooler weather conditions and grazing by adult dairy cows. However, if your calves are on these paddocks or at a 'run-off' a pre/post weaning drench is recommended. Otherwise, if the calves are rotated ahead of the milking herd or 'spread-out' the first drench may only be necessary mid-late October. See graph for larval challenge below:

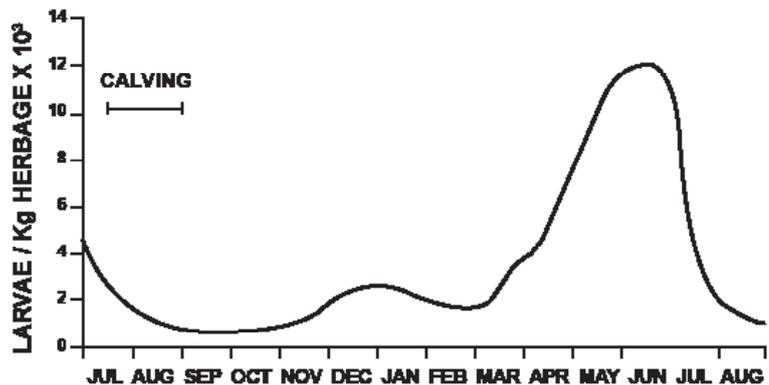
### What is the best drench programme?

With "preventive drenching", the first drench should

be given in late October followed by four-five further treatments at four- six weekly intervals depending on drench family (ending in April). This programme eliminates any appreciable build-up of worm larvae on pasture over summer and autumn. An extra treatment can be added after the basic programme has finished if signs of parasitism should appear. However, this should not normally be necessary. With "integrated control", the first drench should be given in early December and calves moved immediately to "safe pasture" (e.g. aftermath of silage or hay and/or pasture grazed only by adult animals). A second drench should be given 4-6 weeks later. A third drench should be given in early March and the calves moved immediately to a new area of "safe pasture" (i.e. not grazed by young stock since the beginning of December). A fourth drench should be given 4-6 weeks later.

### What is the most suitable drench?

Research on the prevalence of anthelmintic resistance on beef cattle farms in the North Island is about 93% of those surveyed. Resistance to ivermectin was 92% and albendazole was 76%. Dual resistance to both was 74%. No cases of levamisole resistance was seen. This was mainly with Cooperia spp. Ostertagia spp on the other hand, has much lesser anthelmintic resistance, but this parasite is more growth limiting. It is advisable to select a drench that has dual action family anthelmintic with levamisole.



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**CHECKLIST REMINDERS**

- Clostridia vaccination for calves/lambs.
- Pre-weaning lamb/calf drench talk to your vet
- Watch for Bloat and Grass Staggers in cattle
- Treat Anoestrous cows now
- Disbud calves now – check our offer
- Lock your Ponies/Donkeys up – Prevent Laminitis/Founder

We hope you have enjoyed this latest edition of the Tauranga, Katikati, Te Puna Vets and Papamoa Village Vets newsletter

Take a moment to visit the Tauranga Vets Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/taurangavets](http://www.facebook.com/taurangavets), and Like what you see. We love your feedback and are always happy to answer your animal health questions.



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