

CUD

“Cows Under Discussion” or “Something to Chew On”



January 2024

Clinic News

Welcome to 2024 and I hope you have managed to sneak a break in at some point after a busy lead in period to the end of the year.

On the clinic front, we are very happy to welcome Rob back after a few months break and we also have another locum Sophie Harding joining the Balclutha team until the end of March. Sophie is an experienced dairy vet and although from the UK, she has worked in Southland for a number of years.

We will be also having Hayden Linton and Chase Jordan, two Massey New Graduate vets, joining us in January and February. Both Hayden and Chase came to see practice in their fourth and fifth years and were stand out students. We are anticipating they will be stand out vets!

We do truly appreciate the care and patience shown by you, our farmers as they begin their vet journey with us.

And of course, with the big change in the admin team with Sue McNutt enjoying her well deserved retirement, we again ask for patience as our admin team learn new roles! Lucy Caldwell, who is leading the admin team, is doing an awesome job as this is a very big role that she has taken on and realistically, it is difficult for Sue to impart 25 years of knowledge to Lucy in a couple of months!

Looking forward to a great year ahead and helping with any of your animal health needs, great or small!

Cow Accessories & Preg Testing

Cow collars have come a long way since the Europeans brought out the first high tech cow GPS system, the cowbell, many years ago. These days, the new electronic collars play an integral part in the modern farming system. Among their many other benefits they provide good information on the likely pregnancy status of cows. This is based on the fact that cows stop cycling when they get pregnant, and the collars detect they are no longer going through the 21-day cycle of high activity / low rumination.

Rectal pregnancy testing however, remains the gold standard for confirming pregnancy— you can't deny a 70 day foetus with a beating heart, seen on the ultrasound screen, or a uterus that palpates as empty all the way from one ovary to the other. Our pregnancy testing also often picks up pregnancies that look to be slipping, disease in the uterus, or twins. It is also not uncommon for us to find a cow that has had a return heat after she has conceived to an earlier AI—based on the collar data, these animals may still be in winter mode and not adequately transitioned when they calve earlier than expected. Or, a “false” heat in a pregnant cow, after mating has finished, may lead to her being mistakenly culled as an empty.



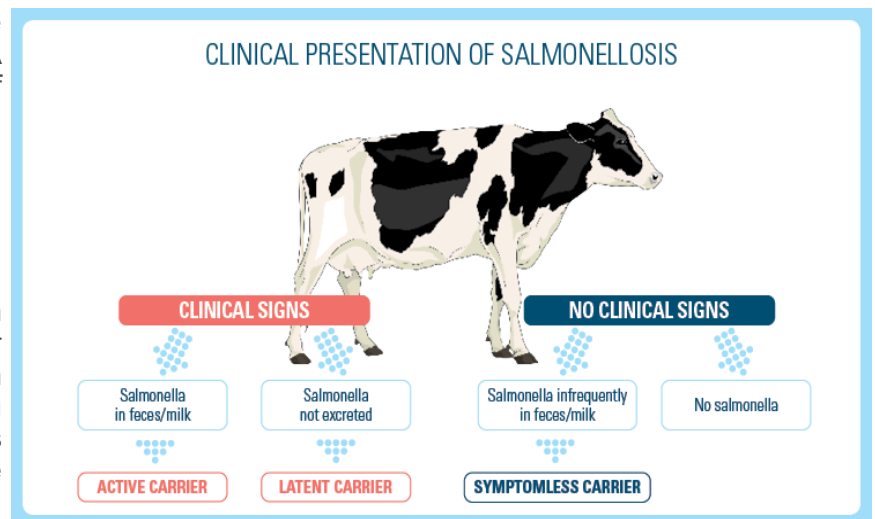
So, as the social and economic climates around us continue to shift, smart technology will find their place helping us meet goals and ease the more tedious aspects of farming. However, for assessing the pregnancy status of our cattle, we still recommend using an old-fashioned pregnancy test to provide the highest quality information to inform your drying off, wintering and culling decisions.

Salmonella... A slippery slope

A few of cases of salmonella have been popping up since late last year. A particularly nasty bacterial infection of the gut, it usually causes:

- Very sick looking cows
- Off milk, dehydrated and fever
- Scouring (sometimes bloody)
- And potentially very sick humans!

Some cows, who appear healthy, can carry low levels of salmonella in their guts. Stress or illness can result in an overgrowth and the cattle becoming clinical for salmonellosis. Some strains of salmonella are found in the environment spread in contaminated water/feed by rats and other livestock.



Clinically affected cows can be treated, but some severe cases may still die. Those that survive may still shed the bacteria for several months or more after the initial infection, posing a risk of other cows and farm staff. Treatment includes antibiotics, and supportive care with fluid/electrolytes and anti-inflammatories. Faecal sample cultures are the test of choice to confirm Salmonella.

Salmonella is zoonotic, meaning people can catch it too. If you suspect salmonella then PPE and good hygiene is a must – the same things that will minimise your risk of Lepto and other nasties.

If you think you are at higher risk of salmonella in your herd or have had a few cases, get in touch with your vet to discuss whether vaccination or other management tools may be a good option for you.

Lepto Vaccination – Protecting your workforce

- Lepto is still one of the most important occupationally acquired diseases in NZ dairy farming and can have severe human health affects
- Ongoing research shows that vaccination does work, BUT...
- Strains of Lepto not included in the vaccine still pose a risk.
- Staff education on hygiene and when to seek help (we have posters available!)
- Delaying vaccination leads to carrier animals in the herd, SO...
- **Calf vaccination (2 shots, 4-6 weeks apart) must be completed before 6 months of age.**
- All other stock need a booster within 12 months.

Things to do in January

- BCS heifers and cows
- Weigh the calves, to ensure weight gains are maintained on dry feed. Supplements may be required
- Maintain regular worm drenching of calves
- Lepto vaccinations—calves, yearlings and herd
- Condition score the herd, and adjust feeding and milking strategies for light cows
- Early pregnancy testing