

CUD

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



March 2024

Clinic news

We are very fortunate to have very good vet cover this year (not all clinics can claim this) and we have had two new graduates from Massey University join us for this year. Hayden Linton and Chase Jordan have begun their veterinary journey and are proving to be excellent already! I always like to thank you, the farmers for your patience and kindness with our new grads. It is your faith in them and allowing them to have a go which sets them up for life. I had a farmer the other day wondering where the “young one was for scanning learning?”!

Eckard Abrie who has been with us as a mixed animal veterinarian for 3 1/2 years has heard the call for exploring on the other side of the world and will be answering it, mid-April. Eckie is renowned for his “give it a crack” attitude and normally coming out with a positive result.

Zoe Ross has joined the Balclutha Tech team to fill in the gap from Holly Clark who is due to have a baby. Zoe did her tech student placements with us and was excellent.

Very happy to see the rain that has finally come, and looking forward to an Autumn flush rather than a dry!

Calf Worms and Drenching

As we head through the season, worm burden on pastures are starting to increase. A correct calf drenching regime is key to maintaining growth rates, build calf immunity and limit worm resistance.

It is recommended to drench calves every 28 days (if using oral drenches) or every 42d (if using pour-ons/injectables). Pour-ons/injectables have persistent action, hence increased time between doses, however oral drenches have been shown to be far more effective in calves. Most worm cycles are around 21 days. It is essential we leave time for a worm cycle between drenches, otherwise only resistant worm eggs/larvae will be left on the pasture, driving resistance and eventually rendering drenches useless. Calves also need to encounter some worms to build immunity – otherwise there could be worm issues the following grazing season.

There are many farms that do not need to worm this frequently, especially if grazing new lays/crops. The best way to assess worm burden and target treatment is by doing Faecal Worm Egg Counts (FWEC). These can be done in house, giving same day results if brought in early enough. Using FWEC as part of your worming regime can:

- 1) Reduce the number of worm treatments required (saves cost) as you would only drench when counts are high
- 2) Help identify resistance
- 3) Target your worming regime

We stock a number of different worming options – oral, pour-ons and injectables. An effective regime involves a mix of pasture management, stocking density, correctly calibrated equipment, good calf weights, FWEC, reduced stress etc. For more information or to discuss a targeted worming regime please give us a call.

Turning Off The Milk Tap — Dry Off Decisions

Body Condition Scoring and Strategic Dry Off - It's never too early to think about next season!

If you put in the effort now getting the cows looking good you'll reap the rewards in Spring with better production, fertility and healthier animals.

Most of you will know the target BCS at calving:

- Mixed aged cows should be a BCS of 5
- 1st and 2nd calver's should be a BCS of 5.5

But how do we get there?

- Cows won't gain condition for 2 weeks after drying off and during the last month of pregnancy - their calf takes up room in the abdomen which restricts intake and uses up lots of energy.
- During the rest of the dry period, cows can gain 0.5 BCS units per month!

By drying cows off at different times, feed efficiency is maximised- preventing underfeeding or overfeeding. A cow at BCS of 5 will not benefit from being any fatter, however she will eat the extra feed that you want to give a cow at a BCS of 4. It may seem obvious but skinny cows need longer to gain condition than fat ones! Note that all cows need 42 days dry for udder regeneration and repair.

The table below gives an indication of when to dry off cows based on their current BCS in order to achieve target BCS by their calving date. For example, a cow at a BCS of 3.5 now, due to calve on 1st August, should be dried off no later than 24th March.

Cow current BCS vs Recommended dry off date to reach target BCS

Mature Cow	1st/2nd Calver	Days cows need dry	Dry off date if calving on 1st August	Dry off date if calving on 1st September
3	3.5	160	23-Feb	23-Mar
3.5	4	130	24-Mar	24-Apr
4	4.5	100	23-Apr	23-May
4.5	5	70	23-May	23-Jun
5	5.5	42	20-Jun	20-Jul

Target BCS at calving

Things to do in March

- BCS the herd for targeted early dry off decisions
- Weigh the heifers and calves, and plan to ensure they are at target weights going into and out of winter
- Johne's testing—blood and milk tests for herds that are working to reduce the impact of this disease
- Lepto vacc—get the calves (two shots), heifers and herd tidied up, plus bulls, carry overs etc
- Book your Autumn Veterinary Consult to get everything planned for the end of the season and winter ahead, including a Dry Cow Therapy prescription

Cosecure boluses - Security of mind for your youngstock

Cosecure boluses are a multi trace element bolus which provides copper, selenium and cobalt for up to 6 months in cattle.

The dose rate is 1 bolus for ruminating cattle 100-250 kg and 2 boluses for cattle over 250kg. This makes it a great option for young stock from post weaning (must be ruminating) onwards.

Trace elements are important for growth, immunity and reproduction. Ensuring that your animals trace element needs are met will maximise their potential for the future.

Now is an excellent time to consider giving Cosecure boluses. Boluses given in the next month will get R1s and R2s through the winter to August/September which makes for a convenient long term option particularly if stock are away at grazing.