

CUD

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



May 2023

Practice News

The temperatures of the first few days of May are far from typical drying-off conditions, leading some around the region to decide to try to push milking the later calvers back into June. However it is important to keep an eye on cow condition too, and it is now time to have all the light cows dried off, so they have a chance to reach adequate BCS by calving

It's been great weather for getting heifer teatsealing underway, and the teams are getting plenty of jobs knocked off. This week a new record was set—504 heifers through the trailer in one day! It has been great to have full team of vets on board for the big days— Anneke Muller and Wing Szeto have just returned from their vet school graduation at Massey, and Claudia Talbot and Dana Marais are hitting their straps after their recent arrival in the Balclutha team

We recently held our first Awards dinner for our Dairy and Beef clients who used our pregnancy testing services for their herds. The evening included a couple of presentations on Collar Technology and BVD Management, along with a few awards. Highest 6WICR went to Louise Oldham and Scott Johnstone; Lowest Not in Calf Rate went to Rhonda & Spike Bamford; Coral Williams took out Best Breakfast after Scanning Award! Look out for more next year.

Dry Cow Therapy—misconceptions

We were thrilled with the number of entries we had to our “Dry Cow Therapy Best Practice” quiz last month, and are pleased that most of you know the whats and whys of doing the job right. However, a couple of questions seemed to fox a number of people:

Some people thought we should aim to reduce milk production to less than 5 litres per cow per day before drying off, but this is actually too low! If there is not enough milk in the udder at drying off, the antibiotic cannot diffuse through it to all of the parts of the udder it may need to reach, to treat any existing infection. And if the antibiotic is not well distributed, it increases the risk of an inhibitory substance grade in spring, because it may not all be removed from the udder in the first 8 milkings. Ideally, milk production will be between 5 and 10 litres at the time of drying off.

A number of people said the best time to move cows from the milking platform to the runoff is when they are no longer seen to be dripping / leaking milk or DCT. Actually, the aim is to move the cows at a time when teats are closed. After dry off, as the cow continues to produce milk, pressure in the udder builds, and she can start to leak milk again. So the best practice advice is to move her either within an hour or two of dry cow treatment (before udder pressure builds and opens the teats up) or after ten days, by which time they will have had plenty of chance to close, and a teat plug to form.

Finally, some people did not recognise that cows with teat end damage are not suitable candidates for “teatseal only” treatment. Inserting anything up the teat requires absolute cleanliness, and never more so than with teatseal. Rough and damaged teat ends are almost impossible to get clean enough to insert teatseal, and so should be treated with antibiotic. Also, damaged teat ends are a significant risk factor for developing mastitis, so these cows should probably get the highest level of protection, involving an antibiotic.

The winners of the grocery vouchers will be announced next month!

Clostridial vaccination : 5-in-1, 6-in-1, 7-in-1, 8-in-1 or 10-in-1?

There is a range of “Clostridial” bacteria that are widespread in the environment, and cause diseases such as Pulpy Kidney, Tetanus, Botulism and Black leg. They have also been linked to several other diseases that seem to be increasing in frequency (eg Jejunal Haemorrhagic Syndrome). The common factor amongst all of these is their tendency to cause sudden death in otherwise healthy animals.

There is also a range of clostridial vaccines available, each containing a different number or combination of bacterial strains. Traditionally, we have used a “5 in 1” vaccine that can be combined with Lepto vaccine, to create “7 in 1”. But in some circumstances we have found the infectious challenge has overcome the protection this vaccine provides, and recommended a vaccine with more (or different) disease strains included.

Vaccination is like an insurance policy against disease—when it is working well you don’t even realise you need it, but you can be in nasty trouble if it’s not in place when you do need it. If you’d like more “comprehensive cover” against clostridial disease, please discuss the options with your vet to choose a vaccine and develop a programme that fits in with your management goals.

A Johne’s Disease story (thanks to Sam Lewis)

We recently put-down ‘Peanut’, one of our pet cows, who was sick from Johne’s disease. Calved into the world by vet Andrew Roe 14 years ago, reared away from all other cattle (on milk powder), never having had a calf herself, and generally cruising around at BCS 7 – she was not the typical case of Johne’s we see as vets

But the appearance of the classic bottle-jaw alongside profuse scours, we knew that the complementary colostrum that she came with, was probably the point-source of Johne’s infection that sealed her recent fate.

Johne’s is one of the more challenging cattle diseases to manage, because of its ability to hide in apparently healthy (and often test-negative) animals for many years, whilst spreading infection to the next generation. Typically, Johne’s-infected animals show signs of disease between 4-7 years of age, and whilst symptoms can be masked for a while, once seen, they are generally fatal. In hindsight, ‘Peanut’ probably showed disease much later because of her relatively stress-free life, and low dose of Johne’s infection as a calf.

There are a several testing options now for Johne’s disease – either through milk and/or bloods. Whilst testing alone is no silver-bullet for managing the disease, it can mean that major savings can be made by allowing culling decisions to be made before they get sick. It also means some of the highest Johne’s shedders can be removed before the next calving season, helping to slow the chain of transmission.

Please get in touch with one of the Veterinarians at Clutha Vets, if you would like to discuss how we can help with your Johne’s Disease management plan.



‘Walnut’ (left) and ‘Peanut’ (right), last year

Things to do in May:

- Separate cows into mobs to be dried off at different times (light cows NOW!)
- Reduce feed intake (particularly protein), and reduce milking frequency for 3-4 days before drying off to “turn off the milk tap” (aim to get production between 5 and 10 litres)
- Go over “best practice administration” of dry cow antibiotic and teat sealants with all staff
- Get final Lepto vaccinations out of the way; salmonella vaccination
- End of season preg testing, to make sure you are not carrying any unknown empties through winter
- Book liver biopsies (or cull cow livers through the works) for trace element testing