CLUTHA VETS DAIRY FARMER NEWSLETTER

CLUTHA VETS

October 2023

Clinic News

This season has had a particularly windy start, and although it has helped to dry the ground out, some settled warmer conditions would now be welcome. Ground is being worked, and the first cut is heading off to the silage pits.

Repro work has started and you will have been considering your options to get your heifers and your older girls cycling for a compact calving spread next year. We've covered a couple of options in this newsletter along with some of the issues associated with post-calving, and selecting the right bulls. Even if you are underway, these are things to keep in mind for next calving.

On the staff front here at Clutha Vets we are pleased to report a good level of vet & tech cover which means we can "get the vet out" to you when needed.

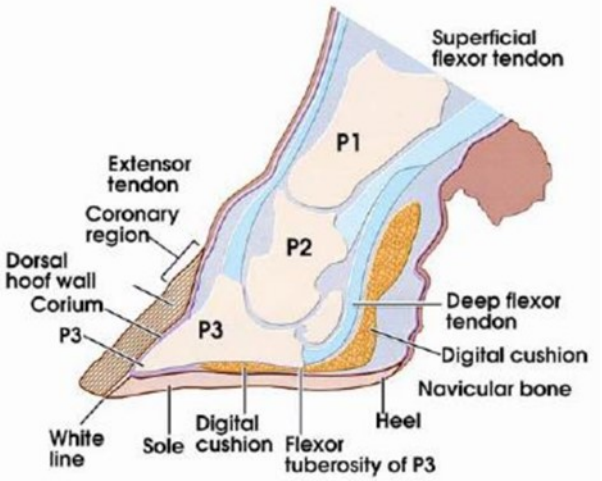
Calving effect on lameness

By Eckard Abrie

Every year, in preparation for calving, all the connective tissues in our cows' bodies loosen up to allow the birth canal to stretch and the calf to pass through easily. However, it's not just the birth canal that loosens up. Unfortunately, the enzyme that loosens the birth canal also loosens connective tissue elsewhere in the body, including the ligaments in the foot. This results in pinching, inflammation and bruising of the soft tissues in the hoof. The resulting lameness is often seen a couple of months post-calving in November and December.

So, what can we do about it? Studies have shown that early intervention with anti-inflammatory drugs such as Ketomax / Rheumocam at calving significantly reduce the duration of lameness and the likelihood of future lameness events.

For those who don't show lameness until October – December early action is still very important. If left for several weeks the bone structure of the toes changes with bony growths forming. These 'growths' can cause internal pressure points in the hoof which further predispose the cow to future lameness.



P4 Gold—a new way of troubleshooting poor reproductive performance

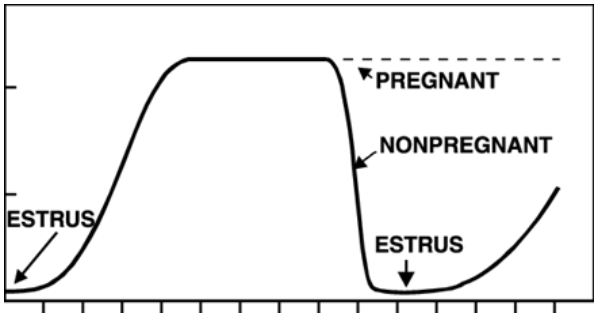
By Anneke Muller

What is it?

P4 gold is a 20 minute test you can do on farm to measure progesterone and determine where in its oestrus cycle a cow is. All you need is a milk sample and the test kit.

The test will tell you if:

- Cow is truly on heat ⟶ AI
- Cow is either coming in or out of heat ⟶ Retest in 24h as progesterone will either increase or decrease
- Cow is NOT on heat ⟶ DON'T AI—she may be pregnant (if AI'ed previously), may be a "non-cycler" or is just not on heat on the day



When to use it?

We recommend using the test for cows with late/long returns (eg. Heats 35+ days apart) or weak/ suspicious heats (eg. Low heat index on collars).

Why use it?

The advantages of knowing if a cow is truly on heat are:

- Prevent aborting cows that were already pregnant
  - Inseminating pregnant cows causes approximately 20% of them to abort
- Save money on semen
  - A cow that is not on heat will not get pregnant therefore wasting that straw and AI cost
- Identify cows that may be non-cyclers to give them the best chance of getting in calf

For Dulcie it was the perfect Valentine's Day gift.. everything a cow could want without all the rest of the bull.

How much does it cost?

$11.57 incl GST per test - cheaper than a straw of semen and an aborted cow!

Heifer Synchrony

By Dave Exton

Synchronisation of heifers allows us to practically AI these animals without having to heat detect for several weeks. There are a couple of ways to achieve varying degrees of synchrony in heifers.

Double PG shot

- 2 shots of PG 11-14 days apart in a group of cycling animals will synchronise most of the group to cycle over 5 days
- Expected cycling pattern after 2nd injection

Days after PG injection	2	3	4	5	6+	No heat
% of cows likely to be inseminated	5%	40%	20%	10%	10%	15%

- The animals need to be observed for heat and then presented for AI daily from days 2-6 after the second injection. Excellent heat detection is important
- Animals will need to be yarded 7 times
- 15% of the mob may not respond to the injection and thus won't be AI'ed
- Cheaper than CIDRs, but much less convenient!

CIDRs

- CIDRs produce complete synchrony with all animals aligned to be mated on one day (Fixed time AI)
- No heat detection is required
- Animals will only need to be yarded 3 times
- More expensive than PG option, but you pay for convenience!

If you are interested in talking more about heifer synchrony please get in touch with your vet ASAP!

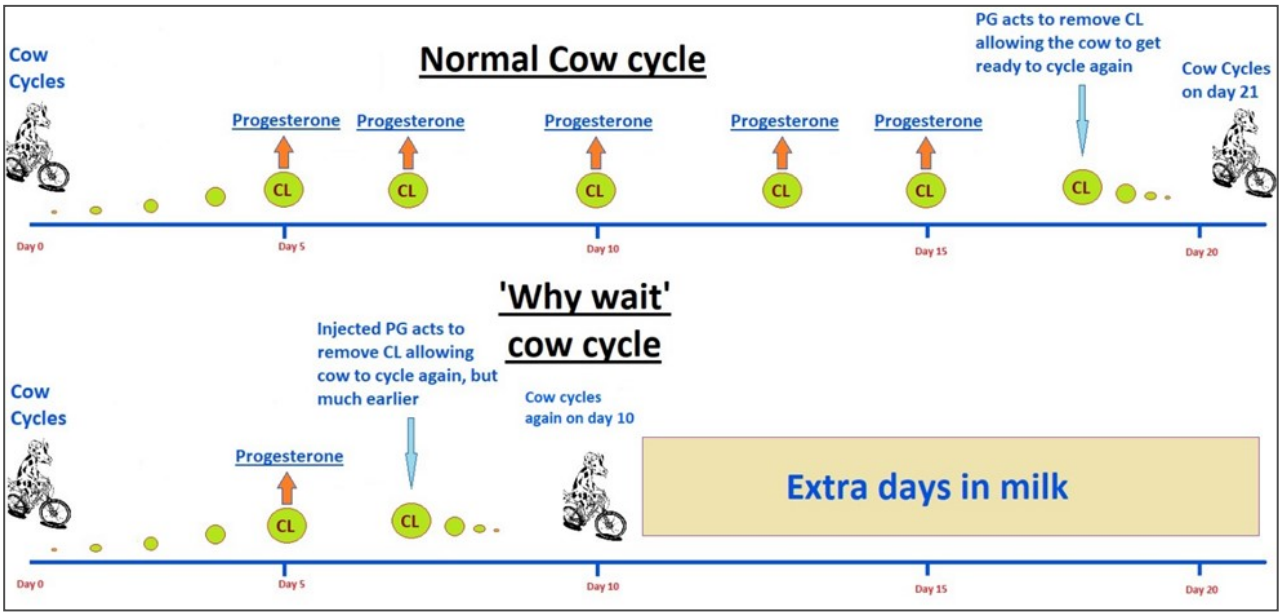
'Why Wait?' Programme

By Dana Marais

Cows that are on heat during the last week prior to PSM become frustrating because we know it will be another 21 days before they come on heat again.

Instead of waiting up to 21 days for the cow to come on heat, groups of cows are given **prostaglandin (PG)** after they have cycled, causing them to cycle again 2-5 days later.

Important note here. PG that we inject into cows will only act on a corpus luteum, indicated by the green circle with CL inside. Hence PG does not have any effect on a cow that is not cycling.
How it works…in a simple Dana-minded brain—



As seen on the normal cow cycle-

1. Cow cycles on day 0
2. Corpus luteum forms and starts producing progesterone. Progesterone makes the cow think she's pregnant and will not allow her to cycle again
3. On day 18, PG (prostaglandin) is produced by the cow if she has not conceived, and allows the cow to cycle again

With the 'Why Wait' cow cycle, we affect the cow's cycle by removing the period in the middle. So by day 7 when all cows have formed a good CL, we inject PG and cause the cows to cycle again.

Benefits of a 'Why Wait' programme

- Two thirds of cycling cows can be mated 1 week earlier on average
- Maximise early in calf rates
- More days in milk next season
- Extra 7 days in milk x 1.8kgms cow/day = 12.6kgms
- 12.6kgms cow x $7kg = $88.20 per cow
- Improved cow longevity

Bull Power

Bull Selection

Fit

Strong, healthy, well grown (85% mature weight at 2yrs), BCS 4.5-5.5 and walking easily and freely. Any doubt here and common sense suggests that the bull should be removed immediately and replaced.

LOOK FOR LAMENESS ESPECIALLY AND ACT!

Fertile

Ensure bulls are vaccinated for BVD + lepto, and tested negative for BVD. Bulls that are carriers for BVD will cause havoc with your mating causing early embryonic loss, or complete failure of conception.

Multimin can also be given (1ml/100kg), ideally 12 weeks before joining the herd.

Fever within 60 days of mating period can lead to infertility/ low sperm numbers. Ensure the scrotum is of appropriate size. Min: 28cm for a yearling jersey bull and >31cm for all other breeds. Visualise the prepuce and penis to ensure no obvious deformities.

Appropriate for your stock

Use bulls that are likely to minimise the number of calvings requiring assistance, especially with the heifers. Select bulls of similar size to the cows or heifers to be mated. If bulls are substantially heavier than the cows or heifers (e.g. >100kg heavier) then injuries to both bulls and cows are more likely. Observe bulls serving tall cows; ensure they are able to serve correctly. Also observe larger bulls serving cows. If the cows collapse under the weight, find lighter bulls.

If you are not keen on trying to wrap your old rusty Stanley around the privates of that angry bloke in the paddock, then try and imagine a couple of cans of Speights dangling away, as this is about the size you are looking for

Able

Observe all bulls mating over the first cycle, identify any libido, mounting or intromission problems.
This is important—if in doubt, flick him out!

Select bulls of similar size and age and from the same mob to reduce fighting when they are in the herd. Mix them together prior to the breeding season.

The Bull to Cow Ratio

Having enough bulls when cows are likely to be on heat is important in ensuring good reproductive performance. The number of bulls required will depend on the number of cows or yearling heifers likely to come on heat while the bulls are with the group.

1. At least 1 : 30 cows in the herd at any one time. In large operations with two herds, circulate the bulls between herds and rest one group of three with the lame/sick/penicillin mob.
2. If you are using yearlings drop the ratio to 1 : 20. Yes, older bulls are better.
3. Always build in spare capacity. Bulls have a high attrition rate—EXPECT IT!
4. Plan for extra bull power if using synchrony programmes. Discuss this with us. It may mean restarting AB for a short period to give the bulls a hand.

	Likely % of herd pregnant at start of bull mating					
No. cows in the herd or mob	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%
100	3	2	2	2	2	2
200	5	4	4	3	2	2
300	7	6	5	4	3	2
400	10	8	7	6	4	3
500	12	10	9	7	5	4
600	14	12	10	8	6	4

Table obtained from Dairy NZ bull management

And finally, if you're not entirely sure……..