

MARCH 2017

VET NEWS

MORE ABOUT SEX

TEAT SEALING

MINIATURE HORSES



SOME PHOTOS BY RICHARD HILSON

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DAIRY - DRYING OFF DECISIONS IN DRY CONDITIONS

GEERT GELLING

At the time of writing this article Hawke's Bay has been dry for months. Pasture cover on dairy farms has dropped to low levels, supplement feeding has been the norm for months already and consequently silage stacks are disappearing rapidly or have disappeared already. The only farms that still look green are the farms with irrigation, but even in that category a few farms start to look dry as river take irrigation has been shut off for weeks already. The weather forecast for the next weekend promises rain, but we will need more of that as a follow up before we are out of trouble. This year shapes up as one of those years where an early dry off decision could be the right one to ensure that cows are in the right condition again for the start of the next season.

Depending on the feed situation on farm (silage stacks, pasture and concentrates) it could be an option to dry off low producing cows and remove those to the run off or a grazing property. This will ensure that higher producing cows will have more feed available in the next few months, sustaining their milk production and supporting their body condition score towards drying off.

A low body condition score at this moment could be another trigger to dry off cows early. Aim is to have cows calving at a BCS of 5 (heifers at 5.5). Cows will not put on a lot of weight/body condition in the last weeks before calving, due to higher feed demands of the growing calf and diminishing dry matter intake towards the date of calving. To ensure acceptable BCS at calving Dairy NZ recommends the following drying off times based on condition score:

Days (months) from next calving	CONDITION SCORE	
	Cows	R3 heifers
120 (4)	3.0	3.5
90 (3)	3.5	4.0
60 (2)	4.0	5.0
Calving	5.0	5.5

This means that for an August 1 Start of Calving early calving cows at a condition score of 3 should be dried off around April 1; cows at a condition score or 3.5 should be dried off around May 1.

Dry Cow Therapy drugs are designed for an international normal dry cow period of 45 to 60 days. It may be clear that cows dried off early, due to low production of low BCS, are dry for a longer period than 45-60 days. Even the "long acting" dry cow products will not last longer than 10 weeks. An option for cows being dried off early is to combine a short acting Dry Cow Therapy tube with an internal sealant (Teatseal). The antibiotics will treat existing infections and will protect against reinfection in the weeks after dry off, the Teatseal will block off the teat opening and will protect the udder against infection in the weeks before calving.

We are happy to discuss the options and, depending on the data available, we can help to decide on the most cost effective Dry Cow Therapy for your situation.

THE USE OF TEAT SEALANTS IN HEIFERS AND COWS

HARRY WHITESIDE

Up to 85% of antimicrobials used on dairy farms are directed at the treatment or prevention of mastitis. Significant pressure is growing within the veterinary and dairy industries to try and reduce the amount of dry cow antibiotics used. Knowledge of effective alternatives is therefore essential for the future success of mastitis control programmes. One such product leading the way is teat sealant, several variations of which exist on the market.

We consistently receive overwhelmingly positive feedback here at Vet Services HB about the benefits gained from the use of teat seal, particularly in heifers. Continued commitment to this product was especially notable last season, given the lower payout, when farmers were understandably more circumspect about animal health costs.

Furthermore, Geert has established records of heifer mastitis on several local farms that have used teat seal in recent years, and collated the data on Infovot. Unequivocally, rates of heifer mastitis on these properties are seen to decrease by up to 80% within the first season of use, a figure commonly quoted by New Zealand wide trials.

In cows too the results are no less impressive as shown by a recent trial conducted in Southland. Housed cows and cows on fodder beet (both systems at significant risk from environmental infection) were subjected to varying treatment regimes. Untreated cows had significantly higher rates of mastitis pre-calving and at calving, higher SCC in the subsequent lactation. In contrast, cows treated with teat sealant alone achieved protection levels of 70-100% in the dry period and a decline in calving mastitis of 50-90%. Untreated cows had almost three times as many cases of clinical mastitis than treated cows.

Teat sealants work by providing an external physical barrier for the teat orifice during critical times of the dry period but it is vital to choose cows wisely before electing to use this product; cows with SCC of less than 150,000 are the ideal candidates. Don't forget that higher counts can also be sealed in! Heifers are exceptional inasmuch as blanket treatment is recommended owing to no prior existing infection.

To help with administration of product we have a specially designed trailer that has been purpose built to accommodate 5-6 heifers at a time and can be parked anywhere on any farm or at any distant run-off. The trailer is staffed by a team of 3-4 technicians and a vet to ensure a seamless and hygienic operation from start to finish...bookings come in thick and fast and we aim to teat seal most animals in the 8-4 weeks before planned start of calving so it is well worth looking at the calendar now to avoid disappointment and secure a date. Anyone wishing to discuss the use of sealants further are strongly encouraged to talk to us, and even more so to talk to another farmer they may know who has had experience of this product and the service we offer.



ABOUT SHEEP, SEX, SODOMY, STDS AND SUCCESS –

RICHARD HILSON

We at Vet Services have been extremely relentless in our pursuit of the last ram with brucellosis- witness our close association with all your local ram breeders, our proactive organisation of Ram Runs and our thorough follow up of poor scanning performance. To be fair, we might struggle to find that “last ram” but we have given it a good nudge and for much of the East Coast that is in our patch, this significant sheep venereal disease is quite hard to find now.

This tale is an interesting one of persistence with an unusually difficult case of brucellosis but it also demonstrates the ease with which brucellosis may get into your ram flock, why vigilance is necessary and how hard it may be to actually eradicate infection.

We often think of brucellosis being an issue for extensive farms with leaky fences, lots of scrub, rogue rams and dodgy buying behaviours. Not so. This farm is a well performed farm on flat land but we think the bug got into the ram flock like this...

- An infected ram lamb pushed through a flood gate from a neighbouring farm that had a few trade lambs.
- He ended up running with Blackie, the family's pet ram. You can probably guess what colour the pet ram was.
- The ram lamb went home quite soon, untested and probably not long for the works. But not soon enough, as it turned out....
- Blackie ran with the main line of rams: about eighty teasers, maternal and terminal rams.
- Fourteen newly purchased rams were kept well apart from the main flock rams but spent a week or two with Blackie.
- Then Blackie died of natural causes, sadly: untested and unaware of what a dirty bugger he really was.

The flock had been routinely tested the year before with no lesions found. The owner made a very unusual mistake and actually got us to test his rams again just before Christmas and well within the year, which turned out to be very fortuitous indeed. Three of the rams had testicular lesions (so they were

blood sampled) and one of the new rams did too, oddly. The blood samples came back positive for brucellosis and so the story was unravelled.

We were able to get the entire ram flock (new and old, still in their two separate groups) blood sampled immediately- the result being that only half the rams were clear and brucellosis was confirmed in the new rams, effectively fingering Blackie as the key player, bless his soul.

To cut a long story short, this was a case of farmer persistence that has been rewarded with a happy ending. It hasn't been easy, it hasn't been cheap and it hasn't been fast. That is actually unusual as most brucellosis cases we deal with can be nipped in the bud quite fast. The recent infection at a time when rams were becoming very sexually active meant infection had spread quickly and pushed the boundaries for the very good blood tests we have available.

Two tests were completed before tupping, but in each event a few more suspicious results turned up, indicating some ongoing infection. We could not guarantee the flock was clear before tupping so some infected animals were used on one part of the ewe flock while the “clear” rams were used at safe ratios. Scanning results were good and we then embarked on a round of ram testing through winter. Taking advantage of the relative lack of sexual activity amongst the rams, we hoped to clear the flock within two more tests. Not so, we needed a third, but happily, well in advance of the 2016 ram purchasing season, the farm achieved a second consecutive clear round of tests: officially clear.

To sort this all out there have been eight vet visits (\$1470) plus about 300 blood tests (\$4410) and associated travel costs (\$400). On top of that there has been plenty of discussion on farm, over the phone and via email.

About \$30000 of sire rams have been discarded and there has been some serious consideration given to a complete ram cull at various points along the way. For that spend the owner has salvaged the better part of half of his ram flock- a spend of \$6300 to clear the disease from another \$30000 of rams and to protect the health of his new rams. The farmer committed to eradicating the disease based on the overall value of his ram flock (of which he is justifiably proud) and an expectation that it could be eradicated maybe a wee bit earlier than we initially hoped. The entire process took a whole year and required some significant thought from farmer and vet alike to ensure tupping in 2016 was a success but without jeopardising the gains made in the testing already done to that point.

Aesop wrote some pretty cool fables and we reckon this one would be far too complicated for a kid's bedtime story. But it is an interesting study in infection, logistics and persistence. We hope it is a cautionary tale too but it does highlight the relative ease with which this devastating STD can make its way into top ram flocks. Be vigilant.



Please remember that Vet Services have this shade sail available to borrow. Give the clinic a call if you would like to use it.



NOT SUCH A SMALL ISSUE

MIKE FITZGERALD

A miniature horse does not necessarily mean miniature problems... in fact in some cases, quite the contrary

Just like ponies and horses, miniature horses have 'hypodont' teeth - i.e. teeth which constantly erupt, and are constantly worn down by grinding food, throughout their lifetime.

Modern management of horses is very different from the life lived by their ancestors. In the wild, horses will graze for around 18 hours per day, often on low quality high fibre feed, which require significantly more chewing effort than modern pasture and grain based hard feed.

Modern husbandry therefore creates teeth wear that is most often abnormal, creating overgrowths of certain areas of teeth. This creates razor sharp enamel points, hooks, and ramps; all of which eventually dig into the cheeks and tongue of the horse, creating ulceration of the mouth, and pain and discomfort.

Minatures are a special case – as well as being managed differently from their evolutionary predecessors, due to selective breeding, miniatures are over represented when it comes to mouth conformation issues – throw a misaligned jaw or tooth into the mix and we have potential for serious dental issues – all of which are manageable with regular, thorough, VISUAL dental examinations.

Having a small mouth, and an often accompanying large attitude, it is nearly impossible to accurately examine and perform worthwhile dental procedures without sedation, a suitable (small) dental gag, and the correct specialized equipment – a quick (blind) hand rasp display is simply not enough.

The frequency of dental care varies depending on the age and the use of each particular horse. Young animals up to about five years that are losing their deciduous teeth and erupting permanent teeth, should ideally be checked every 6 months. Older animals, unless there is a specific indication, require annual dental checks, and reduction (floating) of the sharp enamel points

Remember, for a horse to be dropping feed, there has to be severe issues in the mouth, with large overgrowths and large lacerations of the cheeks - please get your horses mouths checked before they get to this stage!

We have vets within all of our clinics that have a special interest in equine dentistry, and have undertaken intensive training with specialist dental veterinarians. This means we can provide you and your horses with highly qualified skills and advice.

Please feel free to ring the clinic to discuss any concerns regarding the dental care of your miniature equidae!

It keeps 'em from getting lost in the tall grass...



CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to both Valerie Tarrant and Kim Grant. Val and Kim were both lucky enough to win a free equine dental at a recent equine seminar!



SEASONAL UPDATE

HASTINGS/NAPIER

So it seems we have had one of the best summers around – however with this hot weather we are seeing a shortage of feed. Remember at this time don't short change your ewes. Trying to squeeze your system by feeding last year's lambs is not going to help you improve your performance for this year. Also if feed

WAIPUKURAU

We have finally had some rain! Many farmers have had over 100mls of rain which has been soaked up due to the soil moisture deficit of 150mls in many areas. It is amazing how little the rivers rose showing the ground really was thirsty! Now we need to keep an eye on spore counts rising due to perfect conditions of greater than 12 degrees at ground level and now much needed moisture.

The larvae sitting on the ground will also be starting to hatch so keep an eye on your lambs, 2tooths, calves and young heifers.

DANNEVIRKE

To say that we have had a great summer for getting a sun tan or going fishing would be a mistake. We haven't really had a summer as such; if you define summer as windy, rainy conditions then I guess you could argue we have. If you are looking to grow grass though then it is a bit of a different story. That is not to say it has been an easy season. Most would say it has been a challenging season with a lack of sunshine leading to many issues around the growth of young stock or the submission of cows for mating. That all told though, there are still good levels of feed in most areas of the region with the least amount being the further east you go.

As with any wetter summer you are going to see more animal health issues relating to bugs that thrive in those conditions. You will need to watch for internal parasites, facial eczema, ryegrass

WAIRARAPA

The early/mid-summer period in the Wairarapa has been quite a mixed bag – some days approaching 30C and the next it will be 12C and blowing a gale. Good to report that following the information given about body condition scoring ewes, many farmers have undertaken this task well before tupping and have worked on significantly improving their tail end ewes. Ewe worm egg counts have been all over the place, with some quite high ones and low ones too. Remember we offer a same day FEC

CAMILLE FLACK

quantity and quality is limiting consider weaning a little earlier to get your calves onto some high quality feed. This in turn means you can reduce your beef cow feed intake.

Don't worry I'm sure we will get more rain on the 1st March when the Black Caps were meant to return to McLean Park.

ANYIKA SCOTLAND

Barbers pole may start to rear its head as we have already cultured some on our faecal egg counts reduction tests.

Early scanning of dairy cows has worked well with empties off to the works early. The results seem to be on par with last years figures with a ballpark of 15% empty.

Spikers seem to be much later this year with some velvet still being cut. Keep an eye out for ryegrass staggers as we know two farmers that have lost spikers due to the stress of staggers.

SIMON MARSHALL

staggers, flystrike etc. We do have ways that you can monitor for these various diseases. Faecal egg counting for sheep and young cattle are available through the clinic and we have spore counts posted in the clinic weekly. We are looking to start our own spore count monitoring soon so watch this space.

As always if you have a plan going forward it makes things easier and helps to avoid the unexpected. We are happy to help with this in any form whether it is parasite planning, feed budgeting or full-on animal health plans. Faecal egg count reduction tests need to be started soon so please call to work out what needs to be done. Hopefully we get an excellent autumn and get well set up going into winter but also fingers crossed the Black Caps can beat the South Africans and the Hurricanes can win another Super Rugby title!

STUART BRUERE

counting service. One major platform of Wormwise is to FEC counts adult sheep before drenching so there is data to support treatment. This principle along with Refugia is suggested as one of several ways of slowing the development of drench resistance. We try to address your topics of interest in our newsletters and by Stu's Virtual Field Days – if you have a topic you want discussed please let him know and he will "get to it" and deliver the information.

OUR VET TEAM

Napier & Hastings:

Camille Flack, Clare Ryan, Dave Kruger, Helen Crawford, Helen Taylor, Ian Leadbetter, Mark Matthews, Neil Stuttle, Rachel Griffiths, Richard McKenzie, Roger McKinley, Stuart Badger, Veronika Pipe and Vicki Gilchrist.

Waipukurau:

Annelise Enslin, Anyika Scotland, Caroline Robertson, Geert Gelling, Harry Whiteside, Kathryn Sigvertsen, Lucy Dowsett, Mike Catley, Mike Fitzgerald and Richard Hilson.

Dannevirke:

Corinna Minko, Ingrid Meijer, Johnny Atkins, Kate Matthews, Simon Marshall and Tim Hogan.

Masterton:

Elke Blommers, Jacques Van Zyl, Louisa Broughton, Nicola Haglund, Sandy Redden, Sara Sutherland, Sarah Wolland and Stuart Bruere.

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*WHILE STOCKS LAST. PROMOTION ENDS 26/04/17

OUT HERE SOME THINGS JUST DON'T CUT IT

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