MAY 2019

VET NEWS

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Some photos by Richard Hilson

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PLAYING A PART IN THE M.BOVIS RESPONSE…

NICOLETTE ADAMSON

Early last year we were asked to assist with the Mycoplasma bovis response in Hawkes Bay as many hands were required at very short notice once a decision was made to attempt to eradicate this exotic disease. We would like to extend our thanks to all of you unfortunate enough to be caught up in the testing response thus far. We enjoyed working alongside local farmers affected by the tracing programme and found all the farmers very willing to test while working with us to make the process run smoothly. It was an interesting ten months with plenty of pressure to get jobs done promptly and efficiently.

To put our involvement in perspective, here is an outline of last year. We started on-farm work in March 2018 and in the months since we…

- completed 162 farm visits for 78 farms across Central and Northern Hawke's Bay
- took 14,060 blood tests and 1,484 nasal swabs from all sorts of cattle
- drove nearly 12000km
- worked the equivalent of thirty two full 40-hour weeks on this one job

Earlier this year we were advised that our team would no longer be required to be part of the response, now that the initial "rush" is over.

We appreciate that you as farmers will not have a direct veterinary link in order to discuss your questions about not only the disease itself, but also the procedures. So, if we can be of any help to you in future, please get in touch. We reckon we know our way around many of the issues that may crop up and we are also happy to discuss the disease itself, any implications for your stock and how to deal with any given situation. We are also available to help with advocacy if you or your case manager require it.

We will continue to be a voice for our clients going forward and are very appreciative of the opportunity to be involved in this disease response. Not only to take our part in the national effort, but mostly to allow you, our clients, to have an ear to talk to during what is understandably a very stressful time!

BULL TESTING

HARRY WHITESIDE

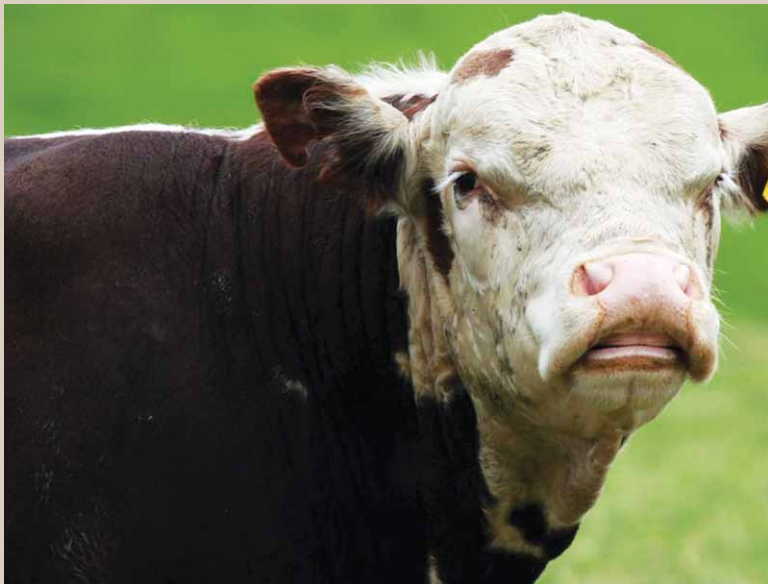
Having just about finished the beef cow scanning we have seen a number of " shocker" results this season where entire mobs of cattle have been found to be empty, mob sizes varying from 20-45. The common denominator in each case has been a single sire mating policy with no rotation of bulls. There have also been other cases with high empty rates (25-30%) where single sire mating has again been used AND bulls were rotated. When these cases are accompanied by high numbers or a total absence of "late" mated animals, suspicions around the performance of an individual bull again come to the fore.

As a result, we are going to be pretty busy in the next few months catching up with some of these bulls to assess their fitness and fertility. It is not always easy to pinpoint the problem at the time of examination as some bulls may only be infertile during the crucial mating period only to recover fertility by the time an examination is carried out. Infections such as footrot, transient BVD or viral pneumonia are common causes of such problems. This is because when the animal responds to infection with a fever the high temperature at that particular time renders the sperm infertile. It can then take a further six-eight weeks for a new round of fertile sperm to be produced…. two whole mating cycles effectively missed.

One of the most common groups of problems affecting a bull's ability to serve involve the locomotor system; legs and back (mainly pelvis and hips). This is not surprising when you consider how much work a bull allotted 40-50 cows has to get through! The older the bull the more time he's had to accrue a bit of arthritis working a tonne weight up and down on those joints. On hill country and uneven ground the likelihood of injury is increased further and if you throw in the odd scrap between bulls and a few frisky cows/heifers that refuse to stand still for mounting…..

Penile defects can also be detected during the service capacity test. Most common amongst these are the "corkscrew" penis… once seen, never forgotten! We also see an inability to "hit the target" for other reasons, most notably nerve damage which affects the bull's ability to direct its penis properly. Penile warts are also seen from time to time and we also pick up the occasional "broken penis". As a further part of the service the testicles can be examined for size and consistency whilst semen testing adds further invaluable information on the fertility of individual bulls.

Testing can be carried out at any time of the year but most bull sales are imminent in June. It is a good idea to take the opportunity now and assess whether or not replacements are needed before the next season. Please feel free to ring the clinic if you would like your bull team tested any time soon.



PROTECTING THE FUTURE

SIMON MARSHALL

Every autumn and into the winter we hear of young cattle under performing. It is generally hard to explain why young stock stop growing to desired targets. Some causes could be trace mineral deficiencies, parasite challenges or fungal toxin ingestion. What is worse is that this is when we want our young stock growing really well to ensure that they are up to weight for mating in spring or in the case of dry stock, to make the most efficient use of the feed we are giving them. Weight gain in dairy heifers is crucial to ensuring good mating performance and also lifetime performance in the dairy herd.

Breeding values can be used to determine individual animal weight targets at a certain age. These values are obtainable from your breeding company. If weights are input against the individual animal, some software will even tell you which animals need attention. Even if you don't have access to these BV's then you can rely on the old school Plunket line based on the breed of your herd. With regular weighing and use of these values we can figure out whether heifers are growing at the desired rate. Weighing should be done at least quarterly, preferably monthly, throughout the year. The heifers that are not reaching target weights can then be drafted off and fed preferentially. Also, an ill-thrift investigation can be instigated if things are looking like they may be more than just a lack of feed quality or quantity.

The same applies to beef cattle but the individual breeding values won't be relevant. In their case the use of adult body weight is important. You can then work back to where the weight should be at a certain age.

The following paragraphs are applicable to both dairy and beef stock.

Gastrointestinal parasitism can often be an issue in young cattle. Generally young stock are well drenched and in many cases over drenched! What we need to bear in mind with young cattle is that they will more than likely be infected with more than one type of parasite, those being Ostertagia and Cooperia species. A drench resistance survey completed in 2006 showed that 90% of the farms surveyed had Cooperia that could survive the Macrocyclic lactone drenches, that is drenches such as Ivermectin, Abamectin, Doramectin, Moxidectin, you get the idea! So the moral of the story is to use combination drenches and preferably give them orally. The drench intervals should be around 30 days. Also some form of Refugia should be considered, that is leaving some of the parasites in the population not exposed to drench. If you want some ideas about how this can be achieved give us a call as I don't have room here to explain it.

Yersiniosis is a bacterial disease that can cause scouring and ill-thrift. It is often associated with some form of stress on the animals. This may be under-nutrition or trace element deficiency. We see diarrhoea and elevated temperatures in the affected animals. It is relatively easily treated with either oral or injectable antibiotics.

Trace mineral deficiencies such as copper, selenium or cobalt can sometimes lead to poor growth in young cattle. Historical data from blood or liver tests should give you an idea of whether supplementation is required. If no data is available then getting some testing done is a good investment.

We can sometimes see a disease called Polioencephalomalicia (also known as thiamine deficiency) in dairy weaners. This is a lack of Thiamine (Vitamin B1, not B12). It will cause brain damage leading to calves that separate themselves from the mob and are often found sitting on their own. They will appear blind and can have seizures if not detected early. It doesn't follow any set pattern but can be seen when a feed change occurs either from good quality to poor or vice versa.

Overall keep an eye on the young stock and be pro-active about keeping a handle on their weights and any impending animal health issues. We are ideally placed to provide advice about dealing with these issues before they occur and if they do unfortunately occur. We can also help with feed budgeting and nutritional advice to ensure optimal growth rates so give us a call.

BEEF & LAMB NZ MONITOR FARM PROGRAM

GREG TATTERSFIELD

It has been a few years since we have had a monitor farm project running in Hawkes Bay, and judging by the interest generated at the launch in February, the monitor farm concept is still very relevant to farmers across the region.

Patrick and Isabelle Crawshaw are great hosts. They are a remarkable young couple on a mission, and they have set very clear and measurable goals. It is a bold move to open their new business up to the community to be a part of and have input into. It is going to be a productive four years at Te Hau and it's a real privilege to facilitate the project alongside such an awesome group of people.

From discussions with the community group (read: bunch of local farmers with lots of innovative ideas and experience) at the program launch two main streams of work have been initiated.

Briefly these are:

- Modelling the base production plan and various proposed options in Farmax, against the pasture supply curve. John Cannon is performing the modelling and will present the key findings. Using Farmax as a modelling tool has multiple benefits: including testing and comparing multiple systems before ripping into half-cocked and benchmarked expected performance, giving confidence that the farm business plan can deliver on financial goals. Generating data is useful in developing land and environment management plans and it enables easy forecasting of pasture covers so smart buying and selling decisions can be made at the most opportune times.
- Land Management and Environmental planning
- Work has started identifying key issues on farm as a base to develop a sensible land and environment plan. Paul Train and Madeline Hall (Hawkes Bay Regional Council) have been working with Briar Hugget (B&LNZ) on this and have been very supportive, utilising their experience to contribute in a constructive way. Initial issues include: management of old willow plantings along streambanks, run off from cattle yards, protection of native areas, provision of shade and shelter for stock, which trees are most appropriate and what programs are available for farmers to tap into.

Keep an eye out for upcoming community days and feel free to get involved. Any questions? You can contact me at the Hastings clinic.

FACIAL ECZEMA; A SEASON IN REVIEW

CAMILLE FLACK

So we all refer to the FE season of 2016, will 2019 be the new 2016? Are these major events happening all too frequently? Is no one safe? There are regions in CHB this season that got hit with FE that have never experienced it before. Moving forward, are FE outbreaks going to be the new norm for all?

What we do know is every year FE could occur between the months of November to May. What we don't know is when and how bad. Key factors that determine this are temperature, moisture and dead matter. 2019 had all the warning signs it was going to be a bad year and it didn't let us down. Good summer growth created dead matter going into autumn, tropical weather was felt early on in March with mozzies and flies a plenty.

Every year you should know your spore counts: are they rising or falling and what is the trigger level to start a prevention plan? This way you can take action early when it is necessary rather than asking yourself how bad was the damage this season and how much has it cost me? To be honest, the full extent of the loss this year will not be seen until scanning time. Early monitoring and prevention should be your new norm.

So what have you learnt this year, what would you do different? Make sure next time you are one of those farmers that has prevented FE, not one trying to do damage control.

Monitor: regional data hasn't always shown what's been happening on your farm – do your own monitoring, record your own data and use this to make decisions early.

- *Spore counting:* FE spore counting costs $26 a sample – consider choosing an area on farm, peg it out in the worst paddock you have, take samples weekly. Taking from one spot on farm successively will give you a feel for trends. If counts are rising, set a trigger point for when you will take action.
- *Grass minimum temperature:* FE spore counts rise if overnight lows are over 12 degrees for at least two consecutive nights so it is a great monitoring option. As simple as putting a max/min thermometer on the lawn every night and recording the answer in the morning.

Prevention: Once your on farm trigger point has been reached carry out preventative measures.

- *Fungicide spray:* if it's possible on your farm, this prevention method gives a paddock six weeks protection against spore growth (as long as applied prior to high counts in the paddock – monitor before spraying to be sure). This is cheap but needs some planning.
- *Zinc treatments*: early decisions with dosing is required. Understand the timing and level of cover - oral drenching with zinc, zinc bullets, zinc in the water. All options with benefits and pitfalls – ring us for the best option for you. In high value stock such as rams consider a capsule every year. Consider age and species groups, which class of stock is most at risk because of where it is grazing – target your efforts.
- *Grazing Management:* Monitor and graze around FE
- *Crops:* use crops, alternative feed and species (Lucerne is great) to avoid high levels of spores. This works well alongside growth rate and tupping aspirations so provide a great double benefit. Plan soon for autumn options.
- *Genetics* – for sheep mainly, although work is occurring in the dairy space. Consider breeding as part of a plan for your long game. Heritability for number of lambs born is 0.1, FE tolerance is 0.42 – gains can be made.

Treatment options – Unfortunately there are no treatment options for facial eczema. Do the above well and never get to this point again.

What can you do: Put affected animals in the woolshed or shed during the day and let them out at night – works a dream if they can be fed well while indoors. Getting these animals indoors before clinical signs start is even better, no green grass reduces the extent of the skin damage therefore enabling healing faster. Not possible? Ensure as much shade as possible with access to good food and water. Other options include supportive therapy to aid in the liver healing process.

Some people have won this season due to early intervention – many have capsuled ewe mobs to ensure little production loss. Those people that have succeeded with little production cost are those who have done their own monitoring and made decisions early for prevention. Trying to treat facial eczema is not possible, ineffective and will have already caused a huge loss in production. Learn from this season to be better prepared for next!

HAVING ISSUES WITH LIVER FLUKE?

RICHARD HILSON

Liver fluke aren't a district-wide issue in HB but do tend to be significant in certain defined areas, especially those with spring fed wet areas and basins. The lifecycle includes specific species of water snails so those snails need to be present for fluke to even exist in those areas anyway. And in most seasons, fluke do not cause discernible clinical issues for sheep or cattle, so we don't always have to consider treatments even in those endemic areas.

This autumn has seen a few cases of fluke causing clinical issues for sheep, even in areas that we didn't actually associate with fluke in the past. Presumably the snails had a great summer with all that water about at the end of the year and maybe that has meant greater opportunity for sheep (in these cases) to pick up a heap of fluke. In fact, gut worms are also an issue for these flocks so parasitism in general is an issue currently with some very high counts in adult stock (up to mob averages of 3000 eggs per gram).

We now have an added tool to help deal with liver fluke in sheep. Well, we have a new "old" product as Boehringer Ingelheim have recently gained sheep registration for Switch Fluke 10. We still don't have the new labels but rest assured it is all okay! This has been on the market for cattle only but this year has been approved for use in sheep as well. Same drum, same dose rate, different label. Great news for sheep farmers as it adds another option with the added benefit of a double combination anthelmintic for round worms too.

Note that fluke treatments often have long meat withhold times, often around two months. Not always a good option for late trade lambs but okay for breeding stock and replacements that won't be leaving in a hurry. And read the label for dose rates too: Switch Fluke 10 is 1ml/10kg, a convenient smaller dose for ewes but don't accidentally do double and quadruple dosing.

Fluke are difficult to deal with. Hard to work out if they are even present, hard to know how bad the infestation is and hard to know if they are actually a problem. Worried about fluke? Talk to us about the local issues and the local solutions.

OUR VET TEAM

Napier & Hastings:	**Clare Ryan, Dave Kruger, Dave Warburton, Georgina Campbell, Greg Tattersfield, Helen Crawford, Ian Leadbetter, Joao Dib, Neil Stuttle, Rachel Griffiths, Rachel Muir, Richard McKenzie, Roger McKinley, Sharné Boys, Siobhan Ellis, Stuart Badger, Veronika Pipe and Vicki Gilchrist.**
Waipukurau:	**Annelise Enslin, Anyika Scotland, Anne Gelling, Camille Flack, Caroline Robertson, Geert Gelling, Harry Whiteside, Kathryn Sigvertsen, Lucy Dowsett, Mike Fitzgerald, Nicolette Adamson and Richard Hilson.**
Dannevirke:	**Corinna Minko, Johnny Atkins, Kate Matthews, Naomi Barrett, Simon Marshall, Sophie-Leigh Anderson and Tim Hogan.**
Masterton:	**Anne Ridler, Jacques Van Zyl, Louisa Broughton, Naya Brangenburg, Nicola Haglund, Sandy Redden, Sanncke Neal, Sara Sutherland, Sarah Wolland, Stuart Bruere and Urthe Engel.**

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