

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2018

VET NEWS

HOPPING HORSES

EWE MASTITIS

WELFARE LEGISLATION



Some photos by Richard Hilson

VETservices
www.vshb.co.nz

The humble foot abscess is by far the most common cause of lameness in horses, and something we often see through the winter months, especially when they are living in mud!

Horses will often present acutely lame, sometimes with swelling into the pastern and fetlock. The lameness can be severe and present suddenly. I've had owners call in a panic suspecting broken bones!

Abscesses result from bacteria gaining entry to the deeper, sensitive structures of the foot. This can be directly via a penetrating foreign body (think nail prick), or via cracks in the sole or hoof wall. Horses with existing hoof wall damage, separation and weakness are particularly at risk (identifying these horses and keep on top of hoof management!), for example seedy toe or laminitis.

As localised infection establishes itself and pressure builds the horse becomes incredibly lame. Imagine trying to walk on your finger nail with a blood blister under it! If there is no option for drainage then infection will continue to underrun the sole or hoof wall and ultimately form a discharging sinus, often at the coronary band ('blow out'). By this stage a large amount of damage has already occurred to the sensitive attachments of the hoof wall, which may take up to 9 months to grow out as healthy hoof again.

In extreme cases, deeper unchecked infection can lead to osteomyelitis (bone infection – see picture) which may require extended courses of systemic antibiotic and possibly surgery to debride infected bone.

Diagnosis is usually a simple case of hoof tester application,

with a repeatable pain response (flinching, pulling foot away, attempting to rear!). In some cases nerve blocks may be necessary to facilitate further treatment and rarely radiographs may be warranted to rule out underlying damage to the pedal bone.

Treatment and relief for the horse is simple and best performed sooner rather than later. Drainage, drainage and more drainage! The hoof should be pared away over the affected site and underrun sole removed. Often poultices for a further 3-5 days will promote further drainage as well as keep the abscess site clean and covered. Depending on the size and site further bandaging of the hoof may be required for up to a week until provisional keratinization (hardening) of the sensitive structures occurs.

The abscess site is the ideal environment for *Clostridium* species to thrive, which can lead to tetanus, so treating with antitoxin and/or a toxoid is essential. In 99% of cases antibiotics are NOT warranted due to the localised nature of infection and difficulties in penetrating the site.

Did I mention that effective drainage is key?!

Once effective treatment has been instigated resolution is usually rapid, with complete healing and a return to work possible once lameness has resolved and the sensitive sole has hardened.

Keeping feet tidy and well trimmed, identifying problem horses and trying to minimise mud (good luck!) will help in reducing the risk.

Don't let hopping horses get you down this spring, if you have any concerns please don't hesitate to get in contact!

You Are Invited to: **VSHB Working Dog Seminar** **Wednesday 7th November @ 3pm**

This seminar will be held @ the Waipukurau clinic
Takapau Road, Waipukurau

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- First aid & emergency
- Pregnancy & mis-mating
- Injury
- Cysticercus Ovis (sheep measles)
- Arthritis & disease
- Nutrition & optimal performance.
- Injury & heaps, heaps more!

Spaces will be limited

To register call the Waipukurau clinic on 06 858 9060
or email jess.nielson@vshb.co.nz before the 26th October.

BEER & LIGHT REFRESHMENTS WILL BE PROVIDED

A great all round refresher – Prizes up for grabs!

EWES MASTITIS

STUART BRUERE

Uddering ewes at or around lamb weaning time is a common practice on most sheep farms in New Zealand. Survey data has shown that between 2% and 6% of breeding ewes have defective udders at weaning. Australian surveys have reported 6% - 14% of defects. In contrast to the dairy cow industry there is remarkably little research information about udder defects and mastitis in ewes under New Zealand farming systems. Mastitis is of concern and noted as important in dairy milking ewes. An example of a case has been reported to have affected 50/400 ewes in a milking herd. The infectious agent was *Staph. aureus* – these cases are usually gangrenous and ewe survival is poor with or without



Figure 1. A photo of a well formed udder in a two tooth ewe a couple of weeks prior to lambing.

treatment. In a case we have already seen this season 5/400 ewes died of gangrenous mastitis. This coincided with a short burst of cold wet weather. Since then no further cases have been observed. Note comments about this below the photo.

In cases where *Staph. aureus* is the causative agent, a potent toxin is produced causing a severe gangrene. Apart from infected ewes, the carrier state exists in normal ewes. Factors that play a role in the development of mastitis include quantity of milk produced, stage of lactation and host (ewe) immunity. Cold stress appears to be important – it is thought the cold reduces the blood flow to the udder, causing tissue damage. Added to this the stress increases the blood cortisol levels; which in turn reduces the immune response and antibody production. Mud contaminates the teats.

In New Zealand, clover dominant pasture and improved pasture has been associated with higher incidence of mastitis. The reason for this is unclear but may be related to high milk production or the oestrogenic effects of clover. Other factors include loss of a suckling lamb leading to an over filled udder, Scabby mouth virus, thistle injury and in dairy ewes; high milking machine vacuum and poor shed hygiene.

The obvious clinical features of mastitis include a ewe that separates herself from the flock, is swollen on one or both sides of the udder, in the case of *Staph. aureus* has very quick development of a blue/black udder and a high temperature. This is generally known as Black Mastitis. The prognosis for successful treatment of these cases is extremely poor. Other bacterial infections can respond to antibiotic treatment.

Control of mastitis can be assisted by providing good shelter for ewes during the early stage of the lambing season and early lactation. If Scabby mouth is a potential problem then consider a vaccination programme in your lambs. Tidy up thistles, particularly in the camp areas of paddocks. When you wean the ewes, put them on a lower level of nutrition for a week or so; in order that the udder reduces in size more quickly.

CATTLE TRANSPORT CERTIFICATION - BEWARE!

STUART BRUERE

I attended a meeting run by MPI, the Veterinary Council and the Veterinary Association back in July.

The presentation by the MPI Vet provided some very interesting information about some of the “highest rating” infringements that occur when cattle are transported to the works. The list from number one is as follows.

1. Ingrown horns in cattle – we are now sorting out quite a few of these prior to going to the works. This usually occurs as result of poor dehorning technique.
2. Injured horns in cattle/broken antlers in stags – this happens when animal heads hit the frames in stock pens on trucks, often fracturing the skull. This is exceptionally painful. Try and get near the head of one of these!
3. Lameness in cattle – cattle must be able to weight bear on all 4 legs. If you are uncertain please call us and we will help you with this. If an animal is walking on three legs and carrying the fourth one we will not certify it for transport. We need to be confident that the animal will not “go down” or fracture a leg during transport or unloading.
4. Cancer eye – any cattle with eye lesions need to be carefully thought through. If the lesion is bleeding and/or larger than a one dollar coin, don't send it. We have performed surgery on several cows this year to remove cancer eye. Once these heal you can send them with a transport certificate in most cases. We can certify cattle with small “pin point” lesions.
5. Diseased udders in cows – udder blow outs following mastitis are not acceptable. These need to be drained and cleaned up and well healed before we will certify them.
6. Cows in late pregnancy – it is not unusual for cows to calve in trucks on the way to the works or in the pens at the works. Really? Yes really – cows need to be carefully checked by the person loading the cattle. I can imagine this happens when “wires are crossed” between the person giving instructions and the person loading the animals.

If we are uncertain, we will contact one of the MPI Veterinarians at the works to clarify what will qualify for transport.

ANIMAL WELFARE LEGISLATION WILL SOON HAVE MORE TEETH

DAVE WARBURTON

CODES OF WELFARE

Detailed minimum standards for specific species and situations

Reflect good practice and scientific knowledge

Not directly enforceable, no attached offences

REGULATIONS

More specific than the Animal Welfare Act

More directly enforceable than the Codes of Welfare

Low to medium level penalties for lower level offending

E.g. A dog in a hot vehicle becomes heat stressed

Animal Welfare Act 1999

High level obligations to provide for an animal's physical, health and behavioural needs

High level offences and penalties for the most serious cases

E.g. a dog left in a hot vehicle is fatally, or near fatally, heat stressed

Poor animal welfare will now be legally more enforceable as most of the new regulations will start to roll out from 1st October 2018.

Veterinarians are often drawn to the profession because of a love for animals and a desire to uphold and assist with protecting animal welfare. As veterinarians, we do see cases of abuse and neglect, and we believe it is integral to our job to protect and help injured animals, and ensure they are kept safe.

New Zealand was one of the first countries in the world to write the five freedoms into law: freedom from hunger and thirst; freedom from injury and disease; freedom to express normal behaviour and adequate shelter. These concepts are now captured as part of the five domains model, where mental state is included when considering an animal's welfare.

WHY WE NEED REGULATIONS

The Animal Welfare Act (1999) provides for offences and penalties for serious animal abuse or neglect. Before the new regulations, New Zealand didn't have good tools to address low to medium animal welfare offending.

In May 2015, the Government amended the Animal Welfare Act enabling regulations to be made on matters such as animal care and procedures performed on animals.

Regulations fill the gap between the Act and codes of welfare as they:

- are more specific than the Act
- are directly enforceable – unlike codes of welfare
- have appropriate penalties for low to medium offending.

The Animal Welfare (Care and Procedures) Regulations 2018 are the latest set of regulations to be issued. They were issued in March. Most will come into force in October 2018.

The animal welfare regulations will lift specific minimum standards from codes of welfare into regulations to provide an expanded range of enforcement tools and appropriate responses for less severe cases of animal welfare offending.

Some of the changes relevant to sheep, cattle and deer farmers are around penalties for what is considered short term harm:

- Trucking animals not suitable for transport (see article on previous page) – ingrown horns, bleeding horns/antlers, inappropriate length of horns/antlers, lameness, late pregnancy, eye cancer, injured or diseased udders, truck not suitable for size of animal, use of prodders on animals less than 150kgLW. NB – A Vet certificate for suitability for transport covers this – so if in doubt ring us.
- Dogs must also have shade, a dry area and shelter for their housing, not left in hot vehicles and secured on the back

of the ute so they don't fall off or get dragged (when not mustering stock).

- No goads (alkathene, waddies etc) to be used on the sensitive areas of all animals – heads, eyes, genitals.
- All equipment for handling stock must be appropriate and not cause injury (including skin wounds). This has specific reference to halters, tethers, dog muzzles, collars.

The above offences carry a penalty of \$300-500 flat fee.

There are also penalties of \$3,000-25,000 for what is considered long term harm to the animal. For sheep, cattle and deer farmers the relevant ones are:

- No use of a vehicle to deliver the calf or lamb for a difficult birthing
- No tail docking of cattle or dogs
- No dew claw removal of dogs unless carried out by a Vet
- No castration without pain relief to cattle and sheep over 6 months of age. If high tension bands are to be used at any age then pain relief must be appropriately applied.

The calf disbudding and cattle dehorning regulations also fit this category – which state that pain relief must be administered appropriately at the time of the procedure. **However this won't be enforced until 1st October 2019. The reason being that it is possible to obtain training and ongoing veterinary supervision to perform these procedures as farmers.** MPI have offered a 12 month grace period for this training to occur before the regulations are enforced. While this doesn't apply to the castration with a high tensile band, we can also provide training and supervision for this procedure.

Please get in touch if you would like to do this.

SUMMARY

Yes it's a lot of regulation and for the complete list (pigs, llamas, horses etc) and in full detailed wording of policy, please refer to the animal welfare section of the MPI website.

I am sure you will agree that as for most regulation it is really to lift the game for 10% of the population that should be doing better. However the public attention on animal welfare is reaching further into our communities and is damaging our reputation. Bad animal welfare is not acceptable and shouldn't be condoned. Whistleblowing poor welfare should not be considered in a negative light. Are you happy that our industry is tarnished by the few bad eggs?

We as your Vets and the Veterinary profession are here to support you with education and technical guidance to make sure you meet your requirements.

SEASONAL UPDATE

HASTINGS/NAPIER

Spring is here and new calves, lambs and foals are bounding around. We had torrential rain last week with some large lamb losses and still a lot of water lying around. This week the sun has been out so hoping for some great grass growth in the coming weeks.

Calf rearing is in full swing. With that we have seen a lot of calf scours and most samples brought in to the clinic are rotavirus or crypto. If you have scours ring us for a chat to discuss the best treatment plan. The key is early rehydration with electrolytes,

GEORGINA CAMPBELL

managing hypothermia and providing energy by alternating milk and electrolyte feeds.

Our vets are busy with calvings and disbudding calves on both dairy and beef farms. We also have been to many lifestyle blocks with lame sheep, bearings and lambings. Our equine vets were busy with dentals during August.

We welcome Hardy as our new large animal technician and Morag on large animal reception.

WAIPUKURAU

The weather was our friend but rapidly turned into our our foe a couple of weeks ago. If there is a positive, the soil moisture levels are great as we head into the warmer months.

Some sunlight hours and slightly warmer midday temperatures will go a long way to starting the Spring grass growth.

Our winter seminars were run during the week of the 13th of August with great turnouts. We hope that you got some useful information from the wide range of topics. Handouts are available if you would like a copy.

GEERT GELLING

Calves are starting to hit the ground left, right and centre with all the fun that goes along with it. If you still have time left for some of your cows, it may well be time to get onto vaccinating ahead of calving so that the colostrum is as beneficial as possible. Stock up the cupboards with all of the calving goodies – electrolytes, disinfectant and lots of chocolate!! The lambs are everywhere too... busy weekends on call are in the future for all of us here, and we hope not to see you - it's at this point that we say "see you on the other side!"

DANNEVIRKE

After having a wet but reasonably warm August with some really nice days thrown in we have had a pretty rough start to September with very cold temperatures and high rainfall. This may well impact on the lamb survival during this period. In saying that most stock are in good condition and there was a reasonable amount of feed around. We have heard reports of higher numbers of bearings in ewes unfortunately but this also indicates good levels of feeding.

The dairy cows are well through their calving and although we

SIMON MARSHALL

have done a few calvings there doesn't seem to have been too many major issues. Some farms have had big calves being born coming from one line and mainly in heifers. Metabolic problems haven't been too bad either although some farms have had more downer cows than others for various reasons.

We are always only a phone call away if you would like to have a catch up about animal health issues or trying to prevent them. We can even have a yarn about the rugby or anything else for that matter! Have a good Spring.

WAIRARAPA

After a warm and fine July, and a mostly warm August, everyone is struggling with the wet and cold start to September. Lots of lambs were born in the southerly storm the first week of September and that put stress on everyone. We'll see what the rest of the Spring brings, hopefully settled warm weather! Lambing and calving can be difficult times - take care of yourselves and your neighbours. By the time you read this, some of you will be getting your team and local children ready for docking. Talk to us if you have any questions about clostridial vaccinations in lambs. We can blood test the first lambs at docking for B12 and selenium - this will tell you whether lambs

SARA SUTHERLAND

require supplemental B12 or selenium for optimum growth rates. Remember Summer is not far away - we want to get faecal egg count reduction tests (FECRT) out of the way early while most worm species are still present. Don't wait until Autumn - ring and speak to one of us pre-weaning to make a plan. A FECRT is still the only way to tell which drenches are effective against which worm species on your farm. These should be done every 3-5 years. With the rise of resistance to triple combinations it is wise to know what you can use on your farm and make a solid parasite control plan. Enjoy Spring!

OUR VET TEAM

Napier & Hastings:

Clare Ryan, Dave Kruger, Dave Warburton, Georgina Campbell, Greg Tattersfield, Helen Crawford, Ian Leadbetter, Joao Dib, Mark Matthews, Neil Stuttle, Rachel Griffiths, Richard McKenzie, Roger McKinley, Sharné Boys, Stuart Badger, Veronika Pipe and Vicki Gilchrist.

Waipukurau:

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

Dannevirke:

Corinna Minko, Ingrid Meijer, Johnny Atkins, Kate Matthews, Naomi Barrett, 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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NAPIER 210 Taradale Road **06 843 5308**

HASTINGS 801W Heretaunga Street **06 876 7001**

WAIPUKURAU 43 Takapau Road **06 858 9060**

DANNEVIRKE 193-195 High Street **06 374 7021**

MASTERTON 24 Lincoln Road **06 378 2662**

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