

DAIRY TALK



MAY 2015 NEWSLETTER

PROVIDING
VET CARE
24/7

When you think **Animal Health** think **Anexa**

Planning for next season

Veterinary medicine and farming has changed dramatically over the last number of years, shifting focus to a more preventative approach. Your vet can provide some excellent insights into how to best plan for the new season ahead. Prevention of animal health issues is always preferable to curing them!

New staff and new ideas

Farm staff turnover is still high in the Waikato. One of the biggest challenges to your farming business is finding compatible working relationships, where all farm staff are focused on achieving the same goals.

The first step in achieving this is to set goals! Setting up a new plan for each new season means you need to ask yourself what your changing targets are. For example:

- What are your goals for clinical and subclinical mastitis rates?
- What are your body condition score targets?
- What about heat detection and submission rates?
- What are your young stock target liveweights?

The next step is to work out how you plan to achieve the goals you have set. Having new faces and new ideas on your farm can be a very positive experience. On the other hand, it can also be challenging to get everyone on board with how things are done on your farm. Communication and dialogue are critical.

As vets we find ourselves more involved in these planning conversations, particularly through the Herd Plus consultancy arm of Anexa Animal Health. Our approach is based on a 'plan, do, review' protocol, such that ideas and plans are revisited to check whether or not they worked. How useful did your planning turn out to be towards achieving your goals? The 'plan, do, review' approach allows you to develop a tailored plan for your herd as you quickly discover what works and what doesn't for your farming system and staffing.

Anexa Animal Health vets offer an Animal Health Plan service which encourages you to plot, by calendar month, what actions are timely on your farm. These can be as simple or as complex as you like, covering all aspects of animal health from trace element testing and supplementation to milk sampling. This season in particular, there has been a lot of interest in developing mastitis treatment plans. This takes the guess work out of antibiotic choice and means that everyone on your farm is choosing the most appropriate drug for treating mastitis, based on cow age, time in the season and number of quarters affected. Email and text reminders can be sent to prompt you on the actions detailed on your Animal Health calendar. Our technicians can help you to action some of your monthly tasks (e.g. facial eczema bulleting or weighing calves). Creating an Animal Health Plan calendar is also a prime opportunity to get your staff together to plan the coming season. Everyone will have their own ideas on how best you can work together to get things done.

Month	Task/Action	Frequency	Notes
Jan	Trace element testing	Once	Check levels for Selenium, Zinc, Copper, Manganese
Feb	Milk sampling	Monthly	Check for mastitis, somatic cell count
Mar	Facial eczema bulleting	Monthly	Check for facial eczema, use appropriate products
Apr	Weighting calves	Monthly	Check liveweight, condition score
May	Rotavec vaccination	Once	Check for mastitis, somatic cell count
Jun	Heat detection	Monthly	Check for heat, submission rates
Jul	Young stock liveweight	Monthly	Check liveweight, condition score
Aug	Supplementation	Monthly	Check levels for Selenium, Zinc, Copper, Manganese
Sep	Milk sampling	Monthly	Check for mastitis, somatic cell count
Oct	Facial eczema bulleting	Monthly	Check for facial eczema, use appropriate products
Nov	Weighting calves	Monthly	Check liveweight, condition score
Dec	Trace element testing	Once	Check levels for Selenium, Zinc, Copper, Manganese

TOP TIP:

Check out the back page for Anexa's upcoming events dates & details.

Articles:

Planning for next season

Preparing for calving

End of season grading

Once a day milking in the lead up to dry off

Rotavec™ vaccination

Weirburn Update

- Reproductive Results

- So how did we go in 2014?

Upcoming Events:

Animal Welfare Seminars

7th, 14th, 19th, 22nd May

Calf Rearing Workshop

27th May

Herd Owners Seminar

3rd & 4th June

Spring Farm Staff Training

15th, 16th & 18th June



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Preparing for calving

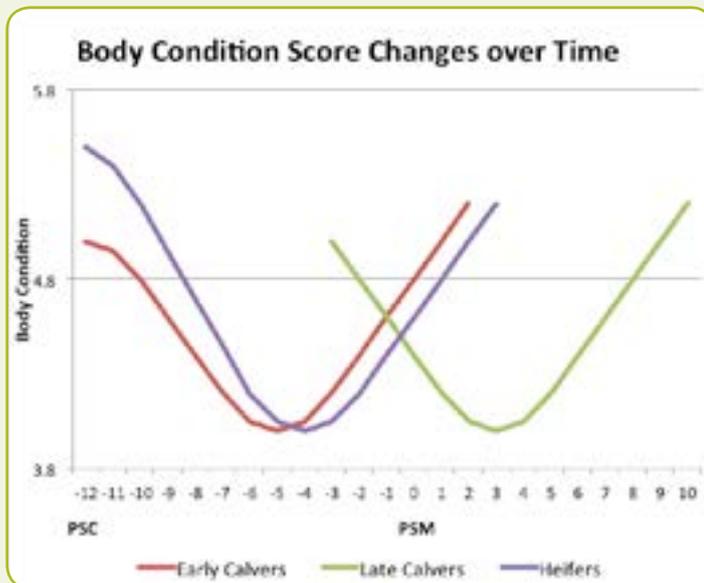
Before the start of calving, there are many considerations to ensure things go smoothly and that you set the cows up for prime fertility next mating period. The DairyNZ InCalf program focuses on several aspects of calving management including managing calving patterns and cow health and nutrition. This article details some of the topics covered in the pre-calving sessions.

Managing cow health over calving

Certain levels of cow health problems are normally expected; even in the best managed herds, it is impossible to have absolutely no cow health problems over calving. To improve cow health, you need accurate records and a strategic approach to treatment and prevention. With accurate record keeping, your vet will be able to help you establish the scale of the problem and what can be done to manage it.

Managing nutrition in early lactation

New Zealand dairy cows are pre-programmed to lose condition in the early period after calving as they produce milk. The graph below illustrates that cows will lose condition for 6-8 weeks after calving before they 'turn a corner' and move back into positive energy balance. Positive energy balance means they are able to consume enough feed to meet the energy demands of lactation and body condition score maintenance.



It is clear from the graph that young animals lose body weight more rapidly post-calving than mature cows do. It is therefore recommended that heifers calve down in higher body condition score (BCS=5.5) than mature cows. All cows will lose condition in the early part of the season but the aim should be to avoid excessive loss of body condition. Late calving cows will not have moved from negative to positive energy balance by the time mating starts so will not perform as well. Proper transition and springer cow feeding will play a big part in keeping condition on cows.

Aim to offer the best possible quality feed to cows around calving, while still keeping your grazing residuals in check.

'Guesstimating' condition score losses between calving and mating will not be good enough. Cows should be scored in July just prior to calving and again in September just prior to mating. Animals that have lost more than 1 body condition score between calving and mating will not perform as well reproductively.

Consistent body condition scoring will allow you to assess cows over time. More immediate assessment of cow nutrition in early lactation may be made using the 7 quick nutritional checks. These can alert you to nutritional problems more quickly:

1. Check your pasture residuals before and after every grazing
2. Check cows are eating the supplements on offer
3. Monitor daily milksolids yield
4. Monitor milk protein
5. Monitor milk fat
6. Check cud chewing
7. Check manure consistency

For more information on quick nutritional checks for your herd, refer to pages 70-74 of the InCalf manual.

Managing your calving pattern

Research shows that earlier calving cows are more likely to get back in-calf earlier in the following mating period.

Calving pattern has a major impact on subsequent herd fertility in the next mating period, so it must be actively managed (see table below). Aim to calve as many cows in the first 3 weeks of the calving period as possible. Bear in mind that proper consideration will need to be given to feed allocation with many animals calving down early.

Calving Group	6 week in-calf rate	Not in-calf rate
Very early - before PSC	76%	4%
Early - 1st 3 weeks	71%	5%
Mid - 2nd 3 weeks	62%	8%
Late - 3rd 3 weeks	51%	11%
Very late - within 3 weeks of MSD or later	22%	19%

Note: MSD= mating start date

There are several strategies which can improve calving pattern, many of which will have already been determined by this stage in the season. Maximising your conception and submission rates during the next mating period will ensure the maximum number of cows become pregnant in the first 6 weeks. Since heifers will take longer to cycle post-calving, it may be a good plan to mate them slightly earlier next year (5-10 days before the planned start of mating for the herd). Poorly grown heifers will not be fertile, so it may pay to check that your young stock are hitting liveweight targets to ensure they get in-calf early. Other strategies, such as selling off later-calving cows and buying in early-calving cows (often at a premium) may help to manage your calving pattern in the more immediate future.

How effective your strategies are to tighten up your calving pattern will depend on how well they are planned and managed.

If you are interested in a detailed and tailored reproductive plan for your herd, please contact your local clinic to be put in touch with one of our trained InCalf advisors.

Thanks to the DairyNZ InCalf program for the technical content of this article

End of season grading

With the end of the season approaching, many farmers are noticing increases in their bulk tank somatic cell counts. As milk volume drops, the somatic cell counts are not diluted out as efficiently. Grading at the end of the season is all too common and is often accepted as a 'normal' course of events. It is possible to manage clinical and subclinical mastitis at the end of the season to avoid the financial penalties and stress associated with grading. Please talk to your vet if you need some help.

Once a day milking in the lead up to dry off

Many people are considering milking some or all of their cows once a day (OAD). This may be for management reasons (e.g. staff holidays) or, more usually, to preserve body condition approaching calving.

OAD milking normally results in doubling of the bulk tank somatic cell count (SCC) for 7 to 10 days; after which time the bulk tank will settle. Even after 10 days, the OAD milking bulk tank SCC will usually run at 10-20% higher than the twice a day milking bulk tank SCC.

If your bulk tank SCC is running at an average of >200,000 for the year then it is unlikely that you will be able to use OAD milking as a management tool without grading. Fonterra penalises bulk tank SCC of >400,000 cells/ml, and this will be difficult to avoid if your bulk tank doubles from 200,000 with OAD milking. It may be an option to put the younger, lower cell count cows on OAD rather than the whole herd.

It is recommended that cows are dried off when they are producing less than 10 litres per day, since high-producing animals are predisposed to mastitis around dry off time. This is often the reason people choose to OAD milk in the lead up to drying off to try and reduce milk volumes in high-producing cows.

Careful planning and decision making will help you to manage OAD milking in your herd.

Rotavec™ vaccination

Rotavirus is one of leading cause of calf scours in New Zealand. It causes viral diarrhoea and is picked up by the calf from its mother or from the environment. Rotavirus can make your calves very sick and may cause death through dehydration. There is a vaccine on the market which can help you to protect your calves from the devastating effects of this disease.

Rotavirus vaccination can be given to your cows and heifers 3-12 weeks before the planned start of calving. Vaccination 3 weeks before the planned start of calving will give you 9 weeks of protection. The vaccine boosts the antibodies to Rotavirus in the colostrum of the cow or heifer.

It is also important to ensure that calves receive colostrum within the first 6-12 hours of life. The large antibody molecules that you have worked so hard to get into the colostrum by vaccinating will not get into the calf's bloodstream unless you feed the calves within the correct time frame. After 12 hours, the gut lining will start to close off to the large antibody molecules so feeding colostrum after this time is not ideal.

Calves should receive at least 2 litres of colostrum within the first 6 to 12 hours of life. This is vital to their health, well-being and future reproductive and productive performance. Timely colostrum feeding will ensure the calves get the best start in life.

Talk to your vet about whether a vaccination program is appropriate to manage calf scours in your herd.

Weirburn Farm Case Study

Reproductive Results

- So how did we go in 2014?

Although the 6 week in-calf rate is on par with the last 2 years, the 9 week in-calf rate and empty rates are still 2% off the pace for a 10 week mating. Once we dug into the data we found that, based on a 3 week in-calf rate of 62%, the herd should have achieved an 81% 6 week in-calf rate, yet only achieved 79%. So, prior to 6 weeks into mating, we were dropping behind. Investigating further we identified early November as when the in-calf rate slowed down. At this time the cows dropped from 700 to 600 kgMS/day over 2 weeks - a significant drop in production. Interestingly, the fat and protein percentages didn't change, which meant, at the time, we didn't identify it as a huge risk for reproductive performance. However, based on our monthly herd body condition scores (BCS) we know the cows were not gaining condition during this period, coinciding with the time the PKE stopped. All this suggests that, despite the grazing residuals not changing, the cows actually needed the PKE to achieve both reproductive and production benefits.

Another interesting finding was the poor performance of the 4 year olds. This age group had a 6 week in-calf rate that was 10% below the herd average as well as a 16% empty rate. This age group had been low performing for the last 2 seasons and is the group that was undergrown at grazing (i.e. arrived home in May well under target weight). This demonstrates the potential on-going losses associated with an age group of underperforming heifers.

Kylie has been drying cows off based on individual BCS and expected calving dates. There were 200 cows still in milk on 24th April and, of these, 115 are still being milked twice a day producing 1.5kgMS/cow/day. The milkers are still being offered 20kgDM per day. The herd average BCS is well ahead of last year. Average BCS for the current milking cows is 4.7 (both mobs are the same) with only a handful of cows in BCS 4 (these are cows due to calve in August). The average BCS of the dry cows is 4.2. The dry cows are following the milkers and getting supplemented with maize. The farm is well on track to achieve target production and the cows should end the season having done 475kg MS/cow. The last cows will be dried off in mid-May.

The rising 2 year olds (R2s) and R1s were weighed in March and were 30kg and 25kg, respectively, ahead of their live weight BV target. The R2s will be coming home when the herd is dried off.

	No.Cows	1st Ser CR	2nd Ser CR	3wkiCR	6wkiCR	9wkiCR	Empty Rate
2012	333	64	59	64	80	88	10
2013	324	62	64	61	80	86	12
2014	333	65	56	62	79	86	12



We offer a wide range of educational and social events during the season, giving you the opportunity to learn about specific topics and new skills. We also focus on training your farm staff in a very practical manner.

Upcoming Events Include

DairyNZ Welfare Workshops

All workshops to run at 11am - 1pm (Please plan to arrive by 10.45am)

7th May, Oakdale Agriculture Ltd,
203 Bowler Road, Elstow, Te Aroha,
D/N: 76266

14th May, I&C Smith,
945 Kiwitahi Road, Morrinsville,
D/N: 76687

19th May, Broomore Farms,
173 Parker Access Road, Waitetuna, Raglan, D/N 73181

22nd May, McGowan Weake Partnership,
64 Old Road, Orini, Taupiri



Calf Rearing Workshop

Wednesday 27th May 2015, 11.00am - 1.30pm

Westpac Events Centre,
Ron Ladd Place, Morrinsville

Cost: \$95 clients, \$150 non-clients,
Includes lunch & handouts.

RSVP: Tuesday 19th May, phone
07 889 5159 or your local clinic or email
anexa.events@anexa.co.nz



Herd Owners Seminar

Enjoy an evening of a range of engaging topics, from the technical to compliance aspects of farming.

3rd June, Taupiri Rugby Club, Taupiri

4th June, Tatuanui Hall, Tatuanui

Spring Farm Staff Training Workshop

Topics covered on the day include: Basics, farm first aid kit, calvings, inductions, calf scours, lameness, downer cow, mastitis.

15th June, Anexa Morrinsville

16th June, Anexa Morrinsville

18th June, Gordonton Hall, Gordonton

Contact your local clinic for further details or register online at www.anexa.co.nz

0800 2 THE VET | anexa.co.nz

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P 07 889 5159

Te Aroha
P 07 884 8014

Matamata
P 07 888 8068

Rototuna
P 07 853 0027

Gordonton
P 07 824 2103

Ngaruawahia
P 07 824 8630

Te Kauwhata
P 07 826 3581

Huntly
P 07 828 7660

Raglan
P 07 825 8390