

# DAIRY TALK



JUNE 2015 | NEWSLETTER



## TOP TIP:

**New app available that predicts the cure rate of clinical mastitis, read more inside...**

## Articles:

### Introducing Anexa FVC

An app that predicts the chance of mastitis cure, developed by leading NZ research veterinarian

The Importance of the Transition Period

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## Introducing Anexa FVC Vet Club Merger Confirmed

We are delighted to announce that the merger between Anexa Animal Health and Farmers Vet Club (FVC Veterinary Services) has been approved by the FVC farmer members. Anexa Animal Health and Farmers Vet Club (FVC Veterinary Services) will operate as one practice called Anexa FVC effective June 1st 2015.

Chairman Brian Gordon said, "This merger provides a sustainable Vet Club model in the Waikato-Hauraki region for the future. Farmers Vet Club (t/a FVC Veterinary Services) was established in Ngatea in 1923 and the Morrinsville Vet Club (t/a Anexa Animal Health) was established in Morrinsville in 1939. These clubs were established by farmers, for farmers and the Boards of both clubs wish to ensure strong competition remains in the market for local farmers."

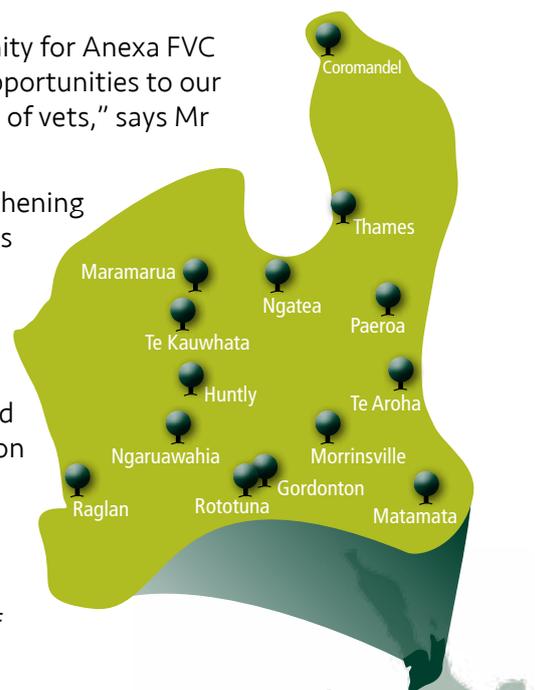
The two clubs have a good natural fit in terms of operating style and geographic boundaries. The merger will strengthen both business operations as one and will provide a low risk approach to delivering growth to both areas.

Chief Executive Terry Youngman said, "We're excited to be able to offer a broader range of services to our clients, including utilising resources of Large Animal Technicians, Herd Consultancy and Companion Animal Services. Cognosco, Anexa FVC's research division, is also looking forward to offering members in the Hauraki area the opportunity to participate, should they wish, in Animal Health and Production Research projects."

"The merger also provides the opportunity for Anexa FVC to offer more attractive employment opportunities to our staff, focusing on longer-term retention of vets," says Mr Youngman.

Anexa FVC will initially focus on strengthening its member base, with all farming clients having the opportunity to become a member of the business. This will provide greater economy of scale for product and service delivery. The merger will also streamline the overhead cost structure through the amalgamation of many processes within both businesses, such as computer systems, inventory management, human resources, marketing, on-going training and professional development of staff and a number of other areas.

Most importantly, the merger will allow farmers in the Waikato and Hauraki districts to have a farmer lead veterinary practice for generations to come, with Mr Gordon summing it up by commenting that Anexa FVC will "continue to focus on adding value to our member's farming enterprises."



Waikato



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# The Importance of the Transition Period

Improved transition cow management has resulted in some of the most significant advances in dairy nutrition and production world-wide over the past 20 years; providing a major opportunity to improve cow health, milk production and reproductive performance.

The transition period is defined as the four weeks before and after calving and is characterised by a greatly increased risk of disease as cows adapt to the demands of late-term pregnancy and milk production. When the cow fails to adapt adequately from a non-milking to a milking animal, disease may result.

## Transition cow diseases include:

- Milk fever (low calcium) and downer cows;
- Grass staggers (low magnesium)
- Ketosis and fatty liver
- Udder oedema
- Abomasal displacement
- Retained foetal membranes (RFM)/ metritis
- Poor fertility and poor production

**If you have had problems with calf scours or you are concerned that Rotavirus scours**

**could be a problem on your farm this spring, you may want to consider vaccinating your herd.**

The Rotavirus vaccine is usually given 3 weeks before the planned start of calving. It acts to boost the antibodies (protective protein molecules) in the colostrum of newly calved cows. When a new calf (within the first 12 hours of life) is fed this 'boosted' colostrum it is protected from the potentially fatal effects of Rotavirus scours. Because Rotavirus is so contagious, once you have one calf in your calf shed with the disease, you usually have a difficult time controlling its spread. Calves tend to pick up the virus from their mothers' udders and vaccination has been proven to protect calves. However, when you vaccinate, you need to be sure that you protect this considerable investment by making sure that your colostrum management is also impeccable. This means that you need to be sure that calves get 2 litres of warm colostrum early in life. After 12 hours old they will not be able to absorb the Rotavirus antibodies you have spent considerable time and money boosting in the colostrum.

**ROTAVIRUS  
VACCINATIONS  
ARE NOW DUE**



In recent years it has been discovered that all metabolic dysfunctions, such as milk fever, grass staggers and ketosis, are linked. As a result of this increased understanding, the concept of transition feeding has evolved from one focused only on the control of milk fever to an integrated, nutritional approach that optimises:

- ✓ Rumens function
- ✓ Calcium and bone metabolism
- ✓ Energy metabolism
- ✓ Protein metabolism; and
- ✓ Immune function

Nutritional deficiencies during the transition period will likely affect lactation, animal health and reproductive performance.

The transition period is a brief but critically important period in a cow's life where careful manipulation of the diet can impact substantially on subsequent health and productivity.

In light of this knowledge, it seems logical to split your 'high risk' springer and colostrum cows from the rest of the herd. Typically, springer cows will struggle to consume their ration in the time that other cows, in earlier stages of pregnancy, are able to. This means that if they are mixed with the herd, they may be at risk of nutritional deficits, right at the time when you want to protect them from disease. Forming a separate springer mob allows these animals access to the best nutrition to consume at their leisure. It is also necessary to avoid calcium supplementation to cows in the last 3-4 weeks of gestation as they need to mobilise their own calcium stores pre-calving. In contrast, colostrum cows may require calcium supplementation to meet the demands of early lactation. This is just one example of how the nutritional demands of the springer cows and colostrum cows differ. If you would like any advice on how to best manage the transition period in your cows, have a chat with your Anexa FVC veterinarian who can help you develop the best plan for your farm.

## **An app that predicts the cure rate of clinical mastitis, developed by leading NZ research veterinarian.**

Each year, more than 700,000 dairy cows across New Zealand are treated for clinical mastitis. However, the success rate of these treatments varies between 20% and 90%. This means that a significant amount of money is being spent treating cows, with no guarantee of success.

This huge variation in cure is partly predictable if four key factors are known; the cow's age and stage of lactation, the gland and bacteria causing mastitis.

Extensive New Zealand research studies of over 1,200 mastitis cases collected key information on cow age, breed and days in milk, gland position and bacterial species at the time of treatment. Importantly, follow-up milk samples were also collected to determine whether treatment had been successful (i.e. whether the bacteria causing the mastitis was no longer present in the gland).

Based on analysis of this data and with funding from the Sustainable Farming Fund, Dr Scott McDougall has developed a smart phone app, which allows herd owners and veterinarians to estimate the cure rate of clinical mastitis cases. Dr Scott McDougall is a registered specialist in bovine reproduction, has been involved in the dairy industry for over 25 years and is the Managing Director of Cognition, the Research Division of Anexa FVC.

### **So where might this app be useful?**

"There are some cows in which the probability of cure is sufficiently low that treatment may not be a viable option."

"For example, a cow that has had recurrent cases of clinical mastitis across the lactation, is infected with *Staphylococcus aureus*, is an older cow, and/or has multiple glands involved, is likely to have a very poor cure rate. In these cases, if mastitis is diagnosed in later lactation, drying off or culling the cow may be the best option. However, where such cases occur earlier in lactation, then drying off the quarter may be an option. Alternatively, in discussion with your vet, high-value cows with a likely poor cure rate may be treated with alternate/longer duration therapy which may improve the outcome," says Dr McDougall.

This free and simple app offers the opportunity to make smarter and quicker treatment decisions about cows with clinical mastitis.

The app is available from the Play Store, by searching "bovine mastitis cure calculator" or pasting in the URL below:

[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.anexa\\_animal\\_health.bovine\\_mastitis\\_cure\\_calculator](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.anexa_animal_health.bovine_mastitis_cure_calculator)

### **How does the app work?**

The app calculates the likely bacteriological cure rate following input of data via drop-down boxes of four factors; cow age, number of weeks in milk, gland position and, if known, bacterial species.

In many cases, the clinical cure rate or percentage of cows in which the milk and the gland return to normal with no signs of clots, heat or swelling will be higher than the bacteriological cure rate.

What this means is that some cows will remain infected despite having milk and glands of normal appearance. This is particularly important in the case of contagious bacteria, such as *Staphylococcus aureus*. These bacteria are hard to cure and, if cure fails, the cow may act as a source of infection for other cows in the herd.

Also the app does not account for those cows that are apparent clinical failures and so are re-treated. Generally, this represents approximately 10% of cases; hence the overall cure rate is likely to be about 10% lower than the number indicated by the calculator. The calculator assumes treatment on-label with a 'normal' duration of treatment.

The app is only a guide and the actual cure rate will depend on individual farm- and cow-level factors.

"It is going to be interesting to get farmer feedback on the usefulness of the tool. Our vets see it as a great opportunity for farmers and their vets to work together to minimise use of antibiotics and to reduce the cost of mastitis treatment on-farm," says Anexa FVC head vet Andy Collier.



## **Preparing calf pens and promoting a hygienic calf rearing environment**

**If you haven't done so already, now is the best time to clean out all bedding from last year and spray out your calf pens.** Many of the organisms that cause disease in calves, particularly gut pathogens, are able to survive for considerable periods in the environment. Running a hygienic, and ultimately profitable, calf rearing enterprise takes time and effort. A good clean out and disinfection of the calf shed will help to prevent diseases that were problematic last season from becoming a problem again this season. Calf bedding should also be replenished during the season (as well as between seasons) to keep it fresh and dry. Although new calf bedding can be costly, this is best practice to try and minimise your number of sick calves and sick calves are always a costly business!

Fresh, clean water is also a must for your calf sheds. Not only do calves need water as an animal welfare requirement, but it also helps to promote calf meal and dry feed intake, helping them to be weaned earlier. As well as fresh clean water, keeping your calf

milk feeders clean is important. Milk is fatty, so a hot wash is best to keep feeders clean and hygienic.

You may like to improve hygiene and biosecurity in your calf sheds by wearing gloves and washing your boots with disinfectant. Basic precautionary measures can help to prevent and contain disease.

Make good hygiene in your calf sheds a priority to keep your calves healthy and disease-free.

### **Remember your heifers**

At the end of last year, R1 heifers were sent away to grazing and many of them haven't been seen since! Make sure you prioritise a check on this important group of animals as you prepare for a busy spring period. Growth checks suffered over the dry spell will be difficult to close, but every effort should be made to help these animals to achieve target liveweights by mating time. Talk to your grazier about worming and trace element management and ask about weights of the R1s.

# Weirburn Farm Case Study

## Final Update

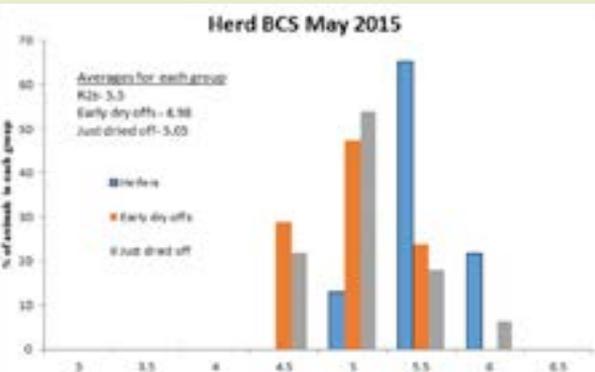
The season finished well at Weirburn with the last 1/3 of the herd dried off in late May and the farm achieving record production.

The body condition score (BCS) profile of the herd looks pretty good for calving, with the average for both cow mobs being 5. Approximately 25% of the herd is in BCS 4.5, with Kylie confident that the last 1/2 BCS will be gained in the next 3-4 weeks. When we did the late May BCS, the tag numbers of all cows in BCS 4.5 were recorded. Kylie will draft these cows out and add them to the rising 2 year old (R2) mob, as we feel they will compete better in that group. The maize stack will be closed by the time you read this newsletter. The heifers arrived home in May in great condition (BCS average 5.5) and will be weighed in the next couple of weeks. As they are a true cross-bred age group there is considerable variation in the size of these animals, which makes assessing them by eye extremely difficult. Weighing them and comparing each animal against their genetic live weight potential is the only way to know if the individual, and therefore the group, is on track. Mindaweights has made this process much simpler.

The planned start of calving (PSC) for the herd in 2015 is 15th July, with the R2s due to start calving in the week before that. So, after Field days the springer mob will be drafted, with the heifers calving down in their own mob as the first 2 weeks of heifer calving is to AB.

If you may remember that the copper story was an interesting one last autumn (June 2014 newsletter), with the liver biopsies showing a deficiency despite considerable PKE being used on-farm. This season we went back to adding 1.5 g copper sulphate per cow per day in the drench and in the troughs all season and, as a result, the liver copper results were exceptional (in fact almost too high!). This season the copper sulphate will be cut back to less than 1 g per cow, in order to create a moderate liver copper level.

Kylie has a new worker starting on 1st June, so will be focusing on training and teaching them with no holidays planned..



This is our final update from Weirburn farms and we thank Kylie and Katrina for their regular contribution to the newsletter.



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

### Spring Farm Staff Training Workshop

Be ready for Spring - topics covered on the day include: Calvings, Calf Scours, Lameness, Downer Cow, Mastitis as well as tips on how to use veterinary products & equipment

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](http://www.anexa.co.nz)

### Milk Quality Training Workshop

Learn how to keep somatic cell counts down and prevent mastitis this season.

Tuesday 23 June, Bucklin Farms, Eureka

Or Tuesday 30 June, Meddo Farms, Waitoa

Contact your local clinic for further details or register online at [www.anexa.co.nz](http://www.anexa.co.nz)

## Introducing



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