DAIRY TALK

PROVIDING VET CARE 24/7

SEPTEMBER 2015 | NEWSLETTER

anexa FVC animal health & vet services

TOP TIP:

We've had a great response to our free Repro Ready consults. Book in now if you haven't yet sat down with your vet to discuss options for this year's mating.

Articles:

IT PAYS TO BELONG anexa FVC

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Avoid Letting Your Calving Pattern Slide

The payout may have changed, but days in milk is still one of the biggest drivers of production and a tight calving pattern is one of the key influencers of your reproductive performance. Can you afford to let your calving pattern slide?

The first step is identifying whether you have non-cyclers

In order to identify the non-cycler group, we recommend tail painting cows 5 weeks before the planned start of mating (PSM). This captures information from the bulk of two cycles and gives a more accurate indication of the number of non-cycler cows than tail painting for a shorter period.

You can expect conception rates of around 35-45% for a non-cycling group compared to the target conception rate for a healthy herd of 60%. Although it would be better to look for the predisposing causes for the non-cycler group, but these factors often cannot be changed at this late stage.

The second step is identifying whether you need to use non-cycler treatments

Although the factors that led to a high proportion of non-cycling cows in your herd have already happened, you still have time to make a difference to these high risk groups.

CIDR programmes are 10 days in length and treating cows 10 days before the PSM will give you the best return for your investment. Ovsynch programmes are essentially CIDR programmes without the intra-vaginal device - basically just the injections. Although, in some herds this works well, at the current payout this option is less economic because the results are generally poorer.

According to InCalf work, if less than 15% of the herd are not-cycling at the PSM, it may not be necessary to use CIDRs. If you don't use CIDRs, approximately half of the non-cycler group should cycle in the first 3 weeks of mating, which means you may still achieve the target 3 week submission rate of 90%.

PG or 'why wait' synchrony is used in many herds to 'short cycle' cows. This form of hormonal treatment is only useful in cycling animals and experience leads us to only recommend it in herds where heat detection systems are excellent and there are very few non-cycling cows.

There are also other options for encouraging cycling in non-cycling cows. A commonly used option is Once A Day milking (OAD). However, research shows that cows that are on OAD for 4 weeks from 7 days before the PSM until the end of week 3 of mating had no improvement in conception rate and an increase in 3 week submission rate of only 11%. Moreover, the milk production loss in this group, even at a $3.80 payout, is considerable. Therefore, the decision to manage your non-cyclers in this way needs to be an overall farm systems decision.

To maximise results from your non-cycler treatments, speak to your vet about how you can get the most from the available programmes.

BVD - Common, Costly and Controllable

BVD (Bovine Viral Diarrhoea) is one of the most common and costly diseases in New Zealand cattle. Many of the losses associated with BVD are not obvious, meaning your cattle may have this disease and you may not be aware of it.

In NZ about 15-20% of dairy herds and 65% of beef herds are infected with BVD, with most beef and dairy herds infected at some point in time.

The infection can cause scouring and ill-thrift in young stock, infertility, increased somatic cell counts and production losses in adult cattle.

When breeding cows are infected you likely won't see any obvious direct ill-health effects in that animal. However, the effects on fertility and on the unborn calf can be profound, including low in-calf rates, abortion, stillbirths, birth of "dummy calves" and the birth of persistently infected (PI) carriers of the BVD virus.

The economic impact in dairy herds has been estimated at between $35 and $87 per cow per year in an infected herd. In beef herds economic losses are associated with ill-thrift in young stock and on average, a 5% increase in empty cows.

Control of BVD is relatively simple, involving testing and culling of PI cattle, biosecurity measures to minimize the likelihood of virus entry and vaccination.

Advances in laboratory diagnosis mean that it is now simpler and more cost-effective to diagnose and eradicate BVD from a herd than ever before. Tests can be done on individual animals and on bulk milk samples.

Biosecurity measures include testing of all incoming stock onto the farm. As a minimum, we recommend that all breeding bulls are tested for BVD virus before purchase.

Vaccination may be recommended by your vet as a simple and cost-effective measure for controlling BVD. Vaccination is highly effective in preventing losses due to BVD, including protecting the foetus and preventing the birth of carrier (PI) cattle.

The first step in BVD control is to determine the BVD status of your farm through appropriate testing. Then work with your vet to put in place a long-term management plan for control of the disease.

For further information on BVD control, talk to your vet today.

Trace Element Blood Tests - Worthwhile

It is worth checking the trace element status of your cows now as we come into the mating season, as low levels of certain trace elements have been shown to impact on reproductive performance.

It is well known that low selenium can lead to retained foetal membranes, but it is also associated with poorer reproductive performance in clean/uninfected cows. Sub-clinically low levels of calcium and high levels of ketones in the blood have also been associated with poorer conception. These cows can look totally normal, which is why testing is important to allow sufficient time to correct issues before they impact on fertility.

Although copper levels have often dropped over winter, be careful not to give copper injections within four weeks of your planned start of mating. Safer alternatives are to give copper oxide bullets or to add copper sulphate to drinking water.

Mastitis Reminders

- **Contagious Mastitis.** With most farmers well through calving and weather conditions improving, the emphasis begins to switch from environmental causes of mastitis to predominantly contagious causes. Cows will be more likely to pick up infections leading to mastitis from bacteria on their skin, other cattle, the people milking them and from the milking machine rather than from muddy areas of races or paddocks. Bacteria responsible for such infections include the well-known *Staph. aureus*, often referred to as 'Staph'.

- **Teat spray every teat after every milking.** Teat spraying after milking reduces new infections due to cow-associated bacteria such as *Staph. aureus* by 50% and is also important in reducing *Strep. uberis* infections. It is one of the most effective somatic cell count and mastitis control measures available, but it only works if done thoroughly. It is not something you should consider cutting to reduce costs.

- **Emollient if teats are cracked or damaged.** Bacteria live in cracked or damaged skin, whether this is the cow's teats or milker's hands. Emollients help soften and condition the teat skin, reducing the numbers of mastitis pathogens in teat sores and cracks. As a general rule of thumb some extra emollient is generally required during spring. Be sure to follow mixing directions so the effectiveness of the teat spray is not compromised.

- **Milk mastitis and HSCC cows last.** Bacteria in milk from infected quarters may contaminate the skin of the teats of other cows during milking. After a liner has milked an infected quarter, bacteria may be transferred to the next 5-6 cows milked with that cup.

- **Wear Gloves.** If milk from infected quarters gets on your hands this is another potential source of infection. Gloves, while not always popular, offer a marked improvement over bare hands. Bacteria cannot colonise the skin and gloves can generally be rinsed clean quickly. It has been shown that potentially harmful bacteria can be found on milkers hands for up to 10 days after contact.

- **Use a disinfectant and lots of warm water to clean potentially contaminated clusters and hands.** Note that teat spray is not ideally suited for this task as most products require some time to achieve good bacterial kill rates. This is even more important if you are having mastitis or cell count problems in the herd with a requirement for routine stripping or RMT testing.

- **Take pre-treatment milk samples.** Take a sterile milk sample and store in the freezer prior to treatment. This gives you the option to submit the sample later if the cow doesn't respond or if you have an increased number of clinical cases. Knowing the cause of mastitis allows your vet to make the best treatment recommendations. Results are typically back within 48 hours. You can pick up sterile containers from your local clinic.

- **Culturing samples from high somatic cell count (HSCC) cows based on herd test results can also determine if a cow should be culled or treated.** Be aware that it is not uncommon for cows with ISCC of 250,000 cells/ml to be positive for *Staph. aureus*.

- **Somatic cell count testing.** If you have some suspect cows and don't have a herd test booked in the near future, we offer same day (24hr) somatic cell count testing from fresh milk samples (your clinic will send these to our Morrinsville lab).

- **Predicting Cure Rates on your smartphone.** In our June newsletter we launched our new smartphone app, to assist with predicting cure rates of clinical mastitis after treatment. This free and simple app offers the opportunity to make smarter and quicker treatment decisions about cows with clinical mastitis. 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. The app is available from the Play Store, by searching "bovine mastitis cure calculator". To find out more visit https://www.anexafvc.co.nz/news-item/an-app-that-predicts-the-cure-rate-of-clinical-mastitis

Young Stock – Weaning, Vaccinating & Worming

Weaning

In order for calves to have a smooth transition from a rich, milk-based diet to a tougher pasture-based diet, they need to have adequate rumen development. If calves are weaned before their rumen is well developed, they will encounter delays in their growth rates, as they will not be able to properly extract and utilise the nutrients contained in their feed.

We aim for a smooth and gradual transition from milk to pasture. High quality meal with 20% crude protein offered to the calves from birth will help to achieve this rumen development. Weaning calves when they are consuming 1-1.5kg of meal per calf per day will ensure they are prepared to handle a fully pasture-based diet when sent to grazing.

It is recommended that calves are weaned based on weights rather than age, particularly as a reduction in weaning weight can affect the long-term productivity and survival of cattle. Calves should gain about 0.7kg/day of liveweight over the entire milk feeding period. Your calf weaning weight will depend on the genetic liveweight potential and breed of your herd. Talk to your vet about the right weaning weight for your calves.

Vaccinations

For calves, the recommended vaccinations are against Clostridial diseases, such as pulpy kidney, black leg and tetanus (5 in 1 or 6 in 1) which can be done from any age, as well as Lepto, which can be done from one month of age. They both require a booster shot one month later. When your youngest replacement calves are one month old, give us a call at the clinic to arrange your calf Lepto vaccinations.

Worming Young Stock

Calves and young cattle are susceptible to parasites which can have a marked economic impact if left untreated. Parasitism can be fatal, or cause long-term growth limitations and poor performance. The use of anthelmintics and other specific management techniques can control exposure to infective larvae on the pasture.

So how does it all happen? As soon as calves start grazing they are exposed to infective larvae, shed by the previous year's calves. Over October/November calves become the main source of pasture contamination and faecal egg counts rise. Increasing temperatures correlate to increased larval development resulting in peak egg counts in March, followed by peak larval numbers between April and June. As the temperature decreases during winter, larval development slows, but some larvae can over-winter, allowing re-infection in the next spring.

Preventive Drenching Programmes: The first drench is very important and oral-combination drenches are recommended. They are relatively cheap and have good effectivity, for example, Arrest C would be an appropriate choice.

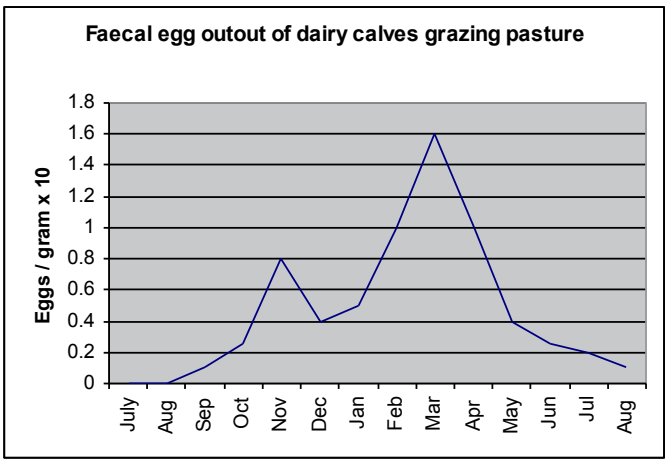
The first drench should be at weaning, although some calves on heavily contaminated paddocks may need a drench prior to this. Drenching is then recommended at 4-weekly intervals. This interval can be extended to 6 weeks if you are using a drench with residual activity.

Weigh and dose to the heaviest animal in the group. Do not estimate calf weights, especially when using products containing abamectin.

A pooled fecal egg count can be performed prior to drenching to verify that drenching is necessary, and a pooled sample 10 days after treatment will check you drench is working.

Control of GI Parasites In Cattle – Keeping Infectivity Low: Calves should not graze paddocks that had been grazed by last year's calves in the previous autumn/winter.

Calf paddocks should not be grazed by calves or other young cattle during the rest of the year, but rotating with older cattle is a good idea to decontaminate these areas.



Lameness Workshop

Thursday, 15th October

Time: Time: 11-2pm (lunch provided)

Location: *Contact your vet if you would consider hosting this workshop.*

A good practical teaching session regarding how to safely treat lame cows. Group sizes will be small to ensure all who attend receive hands on experience with lots of practical tips.

You can be confident if your staff come along to this training day, they will be prepared for the prevention and treatment of lame cows!

To register your interest email anexa.events@anexafvc.co.nz

Anexa FVC Gordonton Clients

Saturday Spring Hours have finished

Anexa Gordonton clinic is open 8.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday

CALF REARING: To tube or not to tube newborn calves? Find out what Anexa FVC Vets recommend. https://www.anexafvc.co.nz/news-item/tube-feeding-calves-in-new-zealand-the-great-debate

Support is available

Free and confidential help is available through the trusts' coordinator.

0800 787 254 | www.rural-support.org.nz