

## Mycoplasma bovis detected in NZ

By John Penry, Anexa FVC Dairy Veterinarian and Researcher

As most dairy farmers would be aware, MPI has confirmed the presence of the bacterial disease *Mycoplasma bovis* in a South Canterbury dairy herd. The disease diagnosis was confirmed on July 22 and made public on July 24-25. This disease, while present in other dairying countries such as the US, UK, Ireland and Australia, is new to New Zealand.

*Mycoplasma* is a bacterial disease where diagnosis is not via the routine microbiological methods (such as standard milk culture) due to the nature of the organism. It affects mostly calves and adult cattle. *Mycoplasma* does not cross-infect humans from animal sources (not a zoonosis) and it does not survive milk pasteurisation.

While we do not yet know the specifics around how this specific outbreak is being managed, it is worth briefly outlining aspects of surveillance for this disease that can then be "front of mind" for all farmers. Hallmarks of the potential presence of *Mycoplasma* in a herd are:

- Clinical mastitis in multiple quarters in the same cow and increased numbers of clinical mastitis unresponsive to treatment
- Cows with mastitis that appear to have a lot of milk but give very little
- Cows with mastitis that is also associated with arthritis in adult cows
- Concurrent increased ear and joint infections in calves or an increase in calf pneumonia

*Mycoplasma* is a highly contagious organism in both calves and adult cattle. In all dairying countries where it has become established, it is associated with expanding herds where cattle, including young stock, are traded. A test (PCR) is available for use on bulk vat milk to assist in biosecurity where herds are expanding.

Members of Anexa FVC and Cognosco have connections with overseas based veterinarians and researchers who are experts in mycoplasma control. These networks are being activated in light of this news so that our veterinary team is fully prepared. Should you have any concerns or questions about this disease please contact a member of the veterinary team.

*Dr John Penry recently joined the Anexa FVC team. John has been involved in the veterinary and dairy industries for over 25 years as a Veterinarian, Advisor and Researcher.*

## What impact is this extremely wet weather having on your farm?

By Katrina Roberts,  
Anexa FVC Herd Health Veterinarian

Sodden, boggy, sloppy, swampy, sloppy, muddy, pugged and "wet as a shag" (as my Nana would have said!). That's what you are having to deal with right now, and have been dealing with for the last three or four months. Not much fun we know! So what impact is this extremely wet environment having on your farm and your cows and what things can you be doing to ensure a speedy recovery?

- ✓ Rotate severely pugged paddocks into crops this season (options for your herd will depend on your system and your location).
- ✓ Ensure you feed the plants – getting spring fertiliser on at the right time.
- ✓ Paddocks with some damage? Look for weeds; some weeds love having wet feet so ensure you can fit in a spray now.
- ✓ Review your farm system and how you manage it. Maybe next season you might now do things differently i.e. use it as an opportunity to look for areas to improve (get cows off farm in winter, change your infrastructure, have more supplement on farm, be stricter about average pasture cover targets for drying off etc).

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**QUIZ**  
Night

Get a table together with your neighbours or bring your farm team along for a good social night before the mating season begins

**Thursday 31st August, 6.30pm - 9.30pm**  
Morrinsville Golf Club, Links Road

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**BURGER NIGHT**

An informative evening of fun,  
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**Tuesday 5th September | 6.30pm**  
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RSVP [anexa.events@anexafvc.co.nz](mailto:anexa.events@anexafvc.co.nz)



# What's new with dirty cows?

By Katrina Roberts, Anexa FVC Herd Health Veterinarian

Dirty cows have a post-calving infection in their uterus termed endometritis.

Until recently in New Zealand we haven't had an idea of the true extent of endometritis in the national herd. In the 2015 mating, our research team Cognosco worked with Dairy NZ in this field, and some of our Anexa FVC herds were involved in the study.

Nationally 1806 cows from 100 herds were checked 30 days before their herd PSM. The prevalence of metri-check positive (score 2 or more) cows was 25%.

As expected cows that were metri-check positive had lower conception rates, three and six week in-calf rates, with increasing score (more pus) having a bigger impact on these outcomes.

Previous research has shown dirty cows take 2 to 3 weeks longer to get in calf and have empty rates 10-30% higher than clean cows.

Herd level prevalence of endometritis varies hugely, some herds with only a couple of dirty cows and some at 30-50%. We do not understand all the risk factors for endometritis, but once we get to this time of year, it's too late to prevent. The best we can do for these cows is find them and treat them. This gives these cows the best chance of conceiving early in the mating period.

There will be cows in the herd more likely to develop endometritis. This group of animals are known as 'At Risk' cows and includes any animal that has had retained foetal membranes (RFM), twins, milk fever, an assisted calving and/or a dead calf. However, there are cows with no health issues recorded that are also diagnosed with endometritis on metri-check. In fact, 71% of metri-check positive cows come from non-at-risk cows!

Metri-checking is a simple and cost-effective method for finding dirty cows and studies have shown better responses to treatment when cows are detected and treated earlier

Recent New Zealand research indicates that the in-calf rates of cows diagnosed metri-check positive and treated were higher when herd was metri-checked in batches i.e. cows with endometritis detected earlier and treated earlier leading to



better reproductive outcomes (9.6% higher 6 week in calf rates) than the traditional whole herd metri-checked in one batch before PSM. This is consistent with the anecdotal evidence we have seen in herds that batch metri-check, more cows treated but better in-calf rates in the treated cows. In order for the batch metri-check system to work, cows need to be clearly marked based on their calving date.

Cows can be checked in batches from two weeks after calving.

If the whole herd is to be metri-checked in one go, it needs to occur at least 35 days before the start of mating to give the treated cows time to cure before mating starts.

There is a positive return on investment to whole herd metri-checking in herds where there are more than 2% of dirty cows, which is probably >95% of herds!

There are options for treating the dirty cows. The most common is an intrauterine antibiotic with a nil milk withholding.

Talk to your Vet about metri-checking and treatment options. Is there room for gains to be made in this area on your farm?



**Premating  
Farmer Workshop**  
Tuesday 12th September  
Gordonton Hall

For further information  
visit [anexa.co.nz/events](http://anexa.co.nz/events)  
or contact your local  
Anexa FVC clinic

## Bull Power – It Comes Down to Simple Maths

By Margaret Perry, Anexa FVC Veterinarian

A shorter mating period is the new normal. This means getting 'the bull bit' right after the AB period has finished becomes even more important.

To some extent, it comes down to simple maths. If the same numbers of cows are required to get in calf over a shorter period, you will need more bull power and better bull management. This means both quantity and quality.

Our bull fertility testing service continues to grow and can give you greater confidence in the quality of your animals. More than 10% of the bulls we tested last year had low fertility scores and several farms had high failure rates. Just one dominant 'dud' bull amongst many can hold back conception rates and more than one in a small team can be disastrous.

We can also help you structure your bull teams according to individual test results, and give tailored advice on bull to cow ratios and bull management according to your farm and farm system.

If you would like more information, please contact our Anexa FVC Morrinsville on 07 889 5159 and ask to speak with one of our Bull Fertility Team Vets.



# Having mastitis issues?

By Hamish Clare, Anexa FVC Veterinarian

The rain hasn't stopped this winter, and with more mud around this increases the risk of mastitis at calving. The period two weeks prior to and after calving is when a cow is at most risk of picking up an infection so it has been a challenging calving.

If you are having more mastitis than usual for your farm, or more than the industry target of 10 cases for every 100 cows calved, you should act.

## Options include:

- ✓ It is still important to try and prioritise giving the remaining springers and colostrum cows fresh, clean breaks in your drier paddocks.
- ✓ Milk heifers and cows quickly after calving. Milking animals within 9-12 hours of calving, achieved through twice daily pick-up of calves can reduce mastitis by almost 50%.
- ✓ Teat spraying springers two to three times a week until calving can also help.

## If your issue is more a problem of mastitis cases responding poorly to treatment then:

- ✓ Take pre-treatment sterile milk samples. These samples can be tested at our lab in Morrinsville. Refrigerate the sample if it is going to the lab to be cultured that day, otherwise freeze the sample. If you need more information around taking samples ask your vet or ask for an information sheet from your local clinic. Taking samples from every case and freezing them also gives you the opportunity to focus on the samples from those cows which aren't responding well. They also assist greatly should an investigation into excess clinical cases be required. The results will help to identify the likely cause and the most appropriate treatment. Holding frozen mastitis milk samples in your freezer, should they be required, is excellent milk quality "insurance".
- ✓ The Dairy Antibiogram is a new test available which looks at the susceptibility of the two most common mastitis causing bacteria to a range of antibiotics. This can provide you with invaluable information for choosing the right treatments for your cows and monitoring the resistance status of your herd. Many clients have already had a Dairy Antibiogram performed prior to dry off or have them booked for spring. Talk to your local Anexa FVC Vet for more information, we're here to help.

# Theileria is here to stay

We are still hearing about, and diagnosing, cases of Theileria across the Waikato. While we aren't seeing massive outbreaks of Theileria-affected animals, there is still potential for outbreaks if a large number of "naïve" cattle are transported into an affected area. Most farmers are now aware of the signs of Theileria and treat these cattle successfully without contacting their Vet. There are still a few cows requiring blood transfusions (often cows affected around calving time), and Theileria is still causing problems in some beef calves. If you are unsure whether your cow has Theileria, remember that a simple blood test will help distinguish between a cow with anaemia (Theileria) and other types of sickness.

Record treatments cow side

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## Grading or not happy with your bulk tank somatic cell count?

Every season we have herds grading or struggling with high somatic cell counts around calving. We have Vets available who have had extra training in mastitis and milk quality management. They are accredited by Fonterra and can access demerit relief if you have been grading, to help cover the cost involved with solving a milk quality problem. We can attend an afternoon milking with extra Technicians to help identify cows causing the HSCC and get your SCC under control. The accredited Vet can then work with you to identify and deal with the specific processes causing this problem on your farm and prevent future issues.

Give your Vet a call if you want to discuss this further, we're here to help.

## Internal teat sealant

Internal teat sealant is an important tool in protecting cows and heifers prior to calving and many of our clients took the opportunity to have our awesome team of Technicians insert this. 27% more heifers had internal teat sealant inserted and 17% more cows had either selective or combination dry cow therapy inserted by our technicians this season compared to last. Internal teat sealant will only become more important as pressure increases to reduce the use of antibiotics in the food production system.

To build on extensive local and international studies, a new study managed by Cognosco and DairyNZ involving more than 35 herds nationally is currently underway to assess use of teat sealant alone in low somatic cell count cows across a range of farming systems and cows.

# Get your calves on track to reach their potential

By Rachel Hamill, Anexa FVC Veterinarian

Making an effort to feed calves well from day one will go a long way to ensuring this year's replacements grow to their full potential.

Sickness, poor nutrition and energy demands that exceed intake can cause calves to get off to a bad start. These calves are always behind the eight ball, fighting to make up for lost gains. They are also at a higher risk of coming in below target weight when they calve down as two-year olds.

## Feeding Tips

- ✓ **Newborn calves require 10% of their bodyweight in good quality colostrum (>22% brix refractometer reading) within 6-8 hours of birth.** This is critical to establish a good strong immunity, so that calves can put their energy towards growing. Weak and sickly calves with poor immune response will not grow well.
- ✓ **Offer good quality starter meal (minimum 20% protein) from day one.** Starting meal early gives calves the chance to pick at it and develop the taste for it earlier. Getting calves eating meal promotes rumen development.
- ✓ **Offering hay is good, but should not take the place of meal.** Offering hay increases the roughage in the diet, helps to "stretch" the rumen and promotes some rumen development. However, hay does not have the nutritional value of meal, and should be limited to 10% of diet. Do not let the calves fill up on hay at the expense of meal.
- ✓ **Feeding calf milk replacer (CMR) is a good option in higher pay out years** like this one, sparing vat milk. It also reduces the spread of diseases that can pass from cow to calf via milk, such as Johne's disease.
- ✓ **Although a common practice, feeding of waste milk (penicillin milk) should be avoided** when possible. Just think, waste milk is produced by the sickest members of your herd. Aside from containing high levels of inflammatory cells and debris from an inflamed udder, it is more likely to contain high levels of bacteria. In herds where Johne's disease has been diagnosed, feeding this milk to calves can increase the risk of spreading Johne's disease to the next generation.
- ✓ **Remember, not all calf milk replacer is the same.** It is important to get a good quality calf milk replacer that meets certain standards – talk to your local vet for more information.
- ✓ **Ensure consistency of feeding day to day.** Do not change between brands of CMR, concentration, or volume fed suddenly, as it is likely to result in nutritional scours. Recent best practice information indicates that calves need around 20% of bodyweight per day in milk to achieve adequate live-weight targets at first calving.
- ✓ **Observe calves closely when feeding, to make sure that none are being bullied.** Ensure slow drinkers are monitored carefully. Compartmentalised feeders help to ensure all calves are getting the right volume.

## Keep your calves warm this winter

Your calf shed must be warm and dry, and never draughty; cold calves waste energy shivering.

**Feeding warm milk can help calves to maintain their temperature in cold weather.** A bellyful of cold milk will mean the calf has to expend energy to warm the milk up to body temperature.

**Calves should stay inside for three weeks.** After this, getting them outside sooner rather than later will reduce the chance of disease outbreak. However, when the weather is bad, keeping them inside for longer may be necessary. In this situation, it is critical that your calf shed hygiene and air quality is maintained to the highest standards. Avoid overcrowding. Top up bedding with fresh shavings or wood chips, and ensure the air is clean with no stale odour.

## Leptospirosis

Autumn AND Spring herds

### Calf vaccinations are due

Yes, it is calf vaccination season. To be effective, leptospirosis vaccinations need to happen before calves are exposed to the disease. The best timing to start vaccinating is when your youngest replacement animal is four weeks of age.

### Autumn and split calving herds

If this has not happened already, make sure your autumn born calves get their two vaccinations, four weeks apart (priming dose and booster dose).

### Spring calving herds

For most of you, the first vaccination will be due next month, once your youngest replacement is four weeks of age. Again, this should be followed with a booster for weeks later.

Calves should also be vaccinated against blackleg from 1 month of age (5 in 1 or 6 in 1 vaccine). They will need two injections four weeks apart. Talk to your Vet about other vaccinations to use on your farm (for example BVD and Salmonella). We will help you draw up the best vaccination protocol tailored to your farm.

**Calf disbudding - have you booked in yours?**

Call Rhonda on 027 886 5621 or visit [anexafvc.co.nz/disbudding](http://anexafvc.co.nz/disbudding)

### NEW FOR 2017: BVD Ear-notching of replacement calves at disbudding

- ✓ **Easy.**
- ✓ **Effective.** Newly developed test. PIs found and culled very early. Don't have to be over 35 days old.
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