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Facial Eczema Alert

Are you using zinc to protect your cows from Facial Eczema (FE)?

Do you know if your zinc programme is working?

Is sub-clinical FE damage affecting your production without you realising?

Did you remember to prime your troughs before the spore counts rose?

Talk to your Vet about all of this and more - we're here to help. Recent research in the Waikato has shown an alarming 2/3rds of farms supplementing with zinc are not hitting the mark. Despite supplementing with zinc, their cows were still at risk of FE. Zinc is a proven preventative treatment for FE, but the levels within the cow need to reach a certain threshold before it is effective.

Blood samples can be taken to check that cows are protected. If you are relying on an in-line dispenser, water samples can show whether the correct concentration is reaching the cow. Talk to your vet for farm specific advice.

Zinc is an insurance policy. Make sure it's done right, and you can rest easy that your cows are protected.

5 steps for an optimal zinc programme...

1. Monitor regional spore counts

When you start to see spores in your area, go to step 2

2. Farm specific spore counts

Due to enormous variation in spore levels on and between farms and paddocks, farm specific counting should be done.

✓ Choose 4 paddocks randomly. Do not count the paddock before they go into it. We know there can be a huge variation even within paddock, so just randomly sample 4 paddocks

✓ When you start to see spores on your farm, it is time to start zinc

3. Implement your Zinc programme

4. Zinc sample - a couple of weeks after starting zinc.

Ask your Vet to take 10 random blood samples to check zinc levels

Did you know? 2/3rds of farms in a 2014 study were not reaching zinc levels in the protective range, which means their Zinc programme was completely ineffective and a waste of money.

If zinc levels are protective, great

You can repeat Step 4 if there are any changes to supplementation

If zinc levels are too low

Reassess the delivery system. Talk with vet about farm specific approach and how to get more reliable Zinc delivery / where are the downfalls of your system?

5. Continue to supplement Zinc and monitor spore counts.

When the regional spore counts for your area are dropping, bring in grass samples from another 4 paddocks for a farm specific spore count. Do not stop zinc until there are no spores on your farm.



Test your Facial Eczema knowledge

You'll hear it from your mates. You've believed it your whole life. You'll swear it black and blue. But is it actually true? Take our quick quiz, then check out the answers on the back page to see how you score.

- Black cows don't get FE
 True False
- A pregnant cow with a FE damaged liver can live off her calf's liver until it is born
 True False
- Cows with FE are damaged for life and don't perform as well in subsequent lactations
 True False
- Sun burn or photosensitivity indicates that the FE disease has broken out from the inside, and the cow is therefore on the mend or over the worst
 True False
- Heavy rain will decrease FE risk by washing away spores
 True False
- Frosts will kill off spores
 True False
- Water is a reliable method of supplementing Zinc
 True False
- My farm doesn't get FE
 True False
- South facing paddocks are safer than north facing farms
 True False
- Spore counts below 50,000 don't pose a threat
 True False
- Fungicide sprays will kill all spores
 True False

Answers on the back page

Milking liners – among the many choices there are some simple rules

By John Penry, Anexa FVC Veterinarian & Researcher Morrinsville

In most dairying countries, there is a myriad of milking liner options to choose from; New Zealand is no exception. Not only are there decisions around the type of liner you can fit to a shell within manufacturer specifications, but there are often “after-market” liners designed to fit shells which are from a different manufacturer. Regardless of how you make the decision on liner type, there are a few simple guidelines to follow which apply to all liners:

Firstly, does the liner fit the shell? This sounds like a simple principle, but mistakes are made in this area more commonly than you would think. Shells are not all the same in physical dimension (let alone weight), and the range of shell dimensions gets even larger when shells from the past four decades are compared with more modern designs. Given that they are often stainless steel, 30 to 40-year-old shells can readily be found still in use.

Liners are designed to be stretched between 7-18% when mounted, with the mounting tension a design consideration of the liner geometry (shape) and the shell dimension. Hence the “marriage” of liner to shell is important to retain the design performance of the liner as intended by the liner manufacturer. If their mounting tension is under or over specification, due to an ill-fitting shell, the liner will not perform as intended. This will potentially affect both milking speed and milking gentleness and, it is easy to avoid. Use only a liner designed to fit the shell you have in your shed.

Secondly, liners are not intended to last forever. In fact, they are designed to last for only a certain number of cow milkings. In most cases, synthetic rubber liners available in New Zealand have a service life of 2500 cow milkings only. Beyond this point, two things happen to a liner. They will harbour more bacteria on their worn internal surfaces, despite after milking cleaning and, they will experience a reduction in liner compression and hence milking speed. Gentleness of milking may also be compromised.

Like a set of bald car tyres, getting more than 2,500 milkings out of a set of liners may not necessarily see the liner-teat relationship “crash”, but it will certainly increase the risk of teats becoming less healthy. This is to be avoided. Also, like worn car tyres, the cost saving in delaying the liner change is false economy, even when just viewed as a milking speed consideration.

Working out how many cow milkings your liners are doing each milking session is straightforward.

- How many cows are normally milked per session – e.g. 240
- How many units do you have in the shed – e.g. 16
- The number of cow milkings per session = 240 divided by 16 = 15 (rounded). Then take 15 and divide this into 2500 = 166 days or 5.5 months. Stretching out the liner use beyond this limit is creating risk you can and should avoid.

Scanning Update

By Katrina Roberts, Anexa FVC Herd Health Veterinarian

Scanning is well underway now. Of the 108 spring-calving herds scanned so far, the average 6-week in-calf rate is similar when compared to last years results for the same herds at this time.

As usual there has been a huge range in 6 week incalf rate across the practice – 41% to 84%. A good number of farms are achieving the industry target of 78%.

The average 6 week incalf rate last year had dropped in our herds to 68%, which was the first drop we had seen in about 3-4 years, and was consistent with the National Dairy Statistics, which indicated a national drop in 6 week incalf rate last season.

There is hope for this season's results at this early stage, with improvements in 6 week incalf rates of about 1% in both the Gordonton and Te Aroha areas.

It is too early to give an average empty rate as yet, as most herds the final scan for empty rate is only being completed as this newsletter is being prepared.

The results vary from farm to farm, and there are farms this season who have made big gains in performance, and some who have dropped back. The reasons for the changes in performance are many and will be individual to every farm. Good herd reproductive performance requires on-going attention. It requires focus and hard work, and we understand that it can be hard to stay motivated. Progressing to a higher in-calf rate will require extra effort. Doing the same as you've always done won't improve the situation.

If you are not reaching your herd reproductive targets, consider talking with one of our trained InCalf advisors.



**Anexa have 20
InCalf Vet Advisors**

How can Anexa's InCalf Vet Advisors help?

We will take a detailed unbiased approach to reviewing your herd reproductive performance and then work with you to create a tailored plan to achieve your herd's reproductive goals.

DON'T PROCRASTINATE

Start looking and measuring now

(January/February)

By Katrina Roberts, Anexa FVC Herd Health Veterinarian

That was the feedback from farmers that were involved in the Body Condition Scoring (BCS) project a few years ago.

Waiting until March to start body condition scoring your herd and identifying the lighter cows limits your options, or compromises calving BCS.

The earlier you identify the lighter heifers and lighter early calving cows the better. It means you have the option to change something (inputs (feed in) or outputs (milk out)) and still get to your desired target with these animals.

Just because you've already put the herd on OAD in December doesn't mean that the lighter cows are going to miraculously start gaining BCS at a faster rate than everyone else in the herd. These high risk animals may still need to be dried off earlier than you would like. They may still need to be aggressively fed in the dry period. Unfortunately this is the reality.

The cows that 'managed' the awful infamous spring of 2017 better, were the cows that were in BCS 5 and heifers/second calvers in BCS 5.5.

The time to do something about hitting this target is now.



Why does a vet need to come and see every Woody Tongue case?

I just want the drugs to treat it...

By Anne Gelling, Anexa FVC Veterinarian Te Aroha

Most of you would have experienced the above. Why do we insist on a Vet visit for every suspected Woody Tongue case?

The usual symptoms that make a farmer suspicious of Woody Tongue are a swollen jaw and/or drooling. Pretty straight forward, right? Not really...

Roughly 80% of the 'Woody Tongue' cases that we go out to see are NOT Woody Tongue!!

So what are they?

- Many cases are Johne's disease! This disease causes the so-called 'bottle-jaw', which can sometimes cause them to drool as well, putting you on the wrong foot quite easily
- Adult teeth erupting, causing inflamed gums and drooling
- Tooth root abscesses, quite commonly seen in 2nd and 3rd calvers
- Cellulitis and diphtheria (laryngitis)
- Lumpy jaw
- Broken jaw
- RDA (displacement of the abomasum)
- Drench gun injuries
- A stray copper bullet accidentally lodged in soft tissue of the throat
- Swollen glands/lymph node abscesses/blocked glands
- Foreign bodies stuck in the mouth/throat: a piece of rubber, an alkathene pipe, a broken bucket, a baked bean can lid or a stick to name a few
- Oedema due to liver disease/ lymph node swelling due to facial eczema



Or this case seen this month:

Woody Tongue is not usually seen in calves, but this girl looked quite convincing from a distance. The farmer had brought the calf in the day before and looked in its mouth and found a hard tongue, so suspicions were that I was actually going to find Woody Tongue.

However, once I opened the mouth it turned out that her entire throat was filled and blocked with a large amount of half-chewed grass!

She was obviously unable to dislodge this herself, which meant she also could not eat or drink anything. Luckily I managed to keep my fingers intact while freeing up her throat and we confirmed free passage by passing a calf drencher successfully into her oesophagus. Time will tell if she was just unlucky or if this was a case of pharyngeal paralysis.

Note: the big risk for this calf would be to drink too much water too soon, as she was very dehydrated and this could cause something called salt poisoning. With some careful nursing we hope she will recover well and grow into a nice, big milking cow.

Vibrostrep is the preferred treatment for Woody Tongue, however it is also a very important antibiotic in the treatment of Leptospirosis, it is relatively expensive and only cures a small range of diseases.

None of the above cases mentioned would have recovered with a course of Vibrostrep and some of them would most definitely have died without a Vet visit. Others would have continued to go downhill and have gained a 30 day meat WHP if we would have handed out the Vibrostrep without seeing the animal.

We hope that this article helps you understand that the reason we insist on seeing your suspected Woody Tongue cases is to have the chance to save you your animals, your money and your chance to send certain animals to the works.

And sometimes, we just confirm that you have a Woody Tongue case and we happily hand over the treatment, knowing that we have chosen the right product for the right disease.

Have you got a plan?

By Michael Shallcrass, Veterinarian, Anexa FVC Gordonton

Many calves have probably gone off grazing already, but that doesn't mean you can forget about them. Make sure that you've got a plan in place with your staff or grazier to make sure the following things are all done at the right time.

Drenching – Calves should still be being drenched monthly. Most people will have switched to a pour-on drench rather than oral, using a double action product will work better than a single active, and will slow the development of resistant worms.

Zinc – There's been a slow start to spore counts this year, but with the recent rain we are likely to see levels increasing. Zinc boluses are the best way to provide protection to your calves, but remember that they only last 4 – 6 weeks and usually need that second dose to get through the whole eczema season.

Trace elements – Most grazing properties are deficient in copper and selenium. These can be supplemented as injections, through the water, or as boluses. As a general rule the boluses last longer and have the lowest risk of overdose, but are more work to administer.

Vaccinations – We try to get calf vaccinations all done before calves go away, but there are always some that don't get done in time. If your calves haven't had both their leptos injections please make sure they get done while they are away grazing.

Feed levels and weighing – The dry period we had through November and December may mean that some graziers are a bit tight for feed. It's important that calves have enough feed to keep growing and reach their target weights before mating. It's very difficult for animals to catch up once they fall behind, and that can have serious consequences if they fail to reach puberty in time.

If you would like to create a young stock plan for either yourself or your grazier please contact your Anexa clinic. They are a useful way to ensure that no management steps get missed, and maximise the potential of your young stock.

Health and Safety at Heifer Teat Seal Time

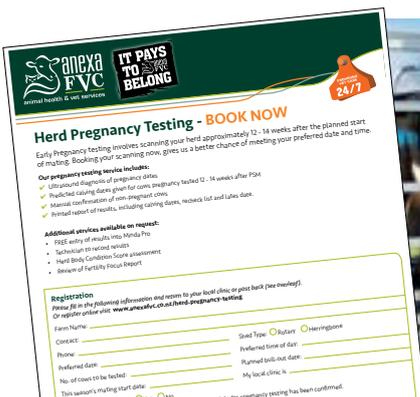
With Autumn just around the corner it is time to think about Milk Quality Consults and heifer teatsealing.

Training heifers to row up and stand quietly in the shed can be a time consuming and arduous process but vital to the safety of your heifers, farm staff and our technicians. It can also reduce the risk of teat canal injuries and mastitis due to poor hygiene during infusion.

Last season we had the lowest incidence of technician injuries reported at heifer teatsealing time. Thank you to those farmers who took the time to train their heifers. Looking back on last year serves as a reminder to those who need to spend more time in familiarising heifers to the shed.

Remember it is important to have extra farm staff on the day of your appointment to help restrain fractious heifers and reduce the risk of harm to animals and techs. Having heifers trained to the shed will reduce the time you have the technicians on farm for this very important job.

This season we have a mobile teatseal trailer which maybe helpful to those farms with poor shed facilities or who have heifers which are grazing away from home. We will have a team of techs traveling around this season with the trailer.



Mobile Teatseal Option
AVAILABLE THIS SEASON



Test your facial eczema knowledge

- answers

1. Black cows don't get FE - **FALSE**
2. A pregnant cow with a FE damaged liver can live off her calf's liver until it is born - **FALSE**
3. Cows with FE are damaged for life and don't perform as well in subsequent lactations - **FALSE**
4. Sun burn or photosensitivity indicates that the FE disease has broken out from the inside, and the cow is therefore on the mend or over the worst - **FALSE**
5. Heavy rain will decrease FE risk by washing away spores - **FALSE**
6. Frosts will kill off spores - **FALSE**
7. Water is a reliable method of supplementing Zinc - **FALSE**
8. This farm doesn't get FE - **FALSE**
9. South facing paddocks are safer than north facing farms - **FALSE**
10. Spore counts below 50,000 don't pose a threat - **FALSE**
11. Fungicide sprays will kill all spores - **FALSE**

If you were surprised with anything on our debunked list, give your local Anexa FVC Vet a call for a quick chat. We'll put our money where our mouth is and explain the reasons behind these myths.

Have you logged in to farmacy.co.nz yet?

For benefits and log in details call your local Anexa FVC clinic or catch up with your Vet. Members receive a free subscription - *It pays to belong.*

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