

## What's best for the cow = what's best for the calf

- ✓ A healthy cow will produce higher quality colostrum.
- ✓ A healthy cow will push a calf out quicker.
- ✓ A healthy calf will get up and drink earlier.
- ✓ A healthy cow will more likely produce a healthy calf.

The two are innately intertwined.

Managing your freshly calved cows and newborn calves is your number one priority on farm.

Colostrum cows must be offered ad lib high quality feed asap. After calving these animals do not have their full appetite. Therefore if they are not offered food and plenty of it, they will not compete with the cows in the mob that calved 4-5 days ago. Colostrum cows will not graze to 1500-1600 kg DM/ha and therefore accepting that this mob will have slightly higher residuals than the milking herd is required. There is no point filling these cows up with poor quality silage, or hay either, as this will end up suppressing intakes further leading to body condition loss.

Getting the calf off the cow and the cow milked as soon as possible after calving, has great advantages for cow and calf. There is research in many studies (including research from our own Cognosco group) that support this management strategy.

**By reducing the time the cow has a calf on her and the quicker she is milked out fully you can expect your cows to have:**

- ✓ Less mastitis
- ✓ more likely to start eating quicker
- ✓ higher intake of food
- ✓ less milk fever /down cows
- ✓ less ketosis
- ✓ higher milk production.

**The advantages for the calf are:**

- ✓ Less likely to get navel ill
- ✓ more likely to get the right amount of good quality colostrum (if you have a tubing policy on your farm).
- ✓ Better quality colostrum (the colostrum in the udder also deteriorates over time (both in the udder and in the bucket) so the fresher it's collected the better.

## Testing for Mycoplasma bovis

*By John Penry, Anexa FVC Veterinarian & Researcher*

Over the past month or so, the Anexa FVC team have been fielding an increasing number of inquiries around testing for *Mycoplasma bovis*. This increase no doubt reflects the discovery of *M. bovis* in, now, two dairy herds in the Waikato.

There are two types of tests that have been developed for detection of this infection in cattle. The first is a PCR test which attempts to identify the presence of the *M. bovis* bacteria by the DNA of the bacteria. The second test type is an ELISA which looks for the presence of an antibody response to the bacteria in an infected animal. They work in fundamentally different ways. The PCR is generally used on whole milk or nasal secretions, while the ELISA is a blood test typically. Neither test is perfect at identifying infection – in fact, they are tests with only average performance and this is due to the nature of the infection. *Mycoplasma bovis* is very good at establishing a subclinical infection with a low level immune response making detection with both tests challenging.

Testing for *M. bovis* has now become available at commercial labs other than those run by MPI. If a sample returns a positive test, the commercial lab is obligated to forward the results and sample onto MPI as is standard for an exotic disease organism. If you are contemplating testing animals for *M. bovis* (eg testing introduced herd bulls) it is important that you contact your Anexa FVC veterinarian for further advice on the number of animals required for testing and what this means for interpreting any results. It may also be a timely opportunity to conduct a Biosecurity Risk Assessment with your herd vet. This process takes around an hour and is highly useful at identifying risk factors for multiple diseases we are wishing to minimise or prevent.



# Calf flat? Call the Vet!

By Arnica van der Wiele, Veterinarian, Anexa Vets Ngatea

Investment in your replacement heifers is an investment in your future profit. Calf illness pre-weaning has an impact on production later in life.

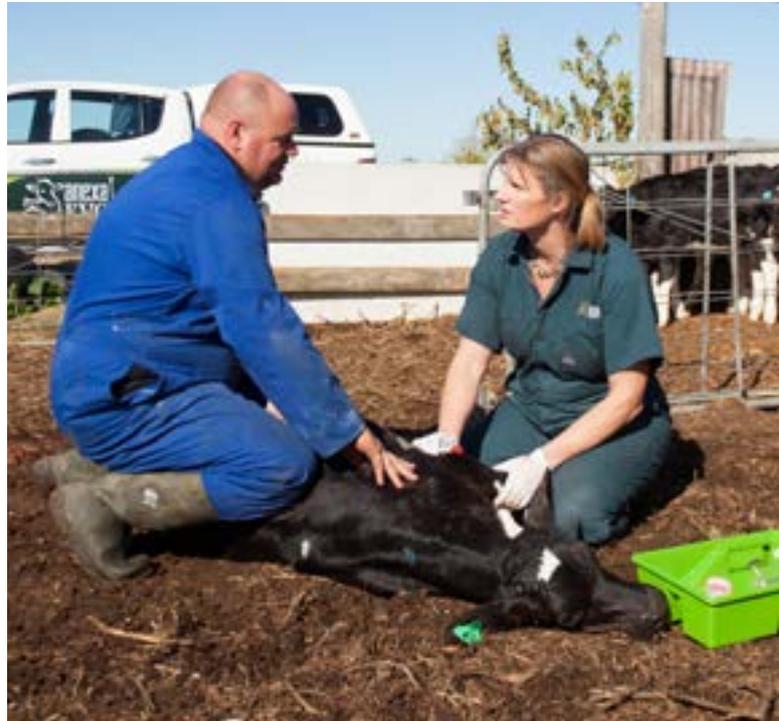
## Research tells us:

- Sick calves pre-weaning produced less in their first lactation. This effect was greater if they were not treated promptly.
- Calf illness has an impact on age at first calving.

Think about the above for a second: you and your staff's approach to sick calves might have consequences for their performance and therefore your profitability years down the track. Talk about hidden costs!

A comment that we hear regularly as a reason for not getting Veterinary advice is that "it is not worth getting the Vet out for just one calf" or "she is so flat she won't survive anyway". Here is the thing: Ill calves dehydrate very quickly which makes them look dramatically sick. You have to act fast for the best chance of a good result. Rehydrate them quickly with a tube feeder and/or call your vet to give her intravenous fluids. It is amazingly satisfying to see how an animal that is flat on her side is up and standing an hour later like nothing has happened.

Another reason to get a Vet out immediately is to assess if there is risk of a disease outbreak. We can get you the right treatment early or put preventative measures in place to stop the problem from spreading.



## Some other pre-weaning facts from recent studies:

- Calves should be handled gently, especially in the first four days when socialisation with humans is extra important
- Pre-weaning calf nutrition has a major effect on future production
- The first few months of a calf's life can have lifelong effects on her productivity
- There is a strong relationship between average daily gain (ADG) pre-weaning and lifetime milk production
- There is a strong relationship between pre-weaning nutrition and the development of mammary tissue mass
- Compensatory growth to make up for underfeeding in the first few months is hard if not impossible to achieve

Invest in your youngest stock and they might pay your investment off faster and quicker. Remember that dairy heifers as a group do not start generating revenue until their second lactation. It is your job to give them the best chance of getting there and nailing that pre-weaning period is a very important part of that.

**Order your quality calf feed and milk replacer now contact your local Sales Rep phone 0800 284 3838**

# Feeding raw milk to calves and biosecurity risk

By John Penry, Anexa FVC Veterinarian & Researcher

Feeding whole, raw, milk to calves from either the bulk tank or waste milk (cows under treatment) has been common practice for many years. However, it does come with risks for disease transmission which cannot easily be overcome unless the milk is treated to reduce the overall load of "bugs". The types of diseases which can be transferred to a calf from the dam via raw milk include Johne's, Salmonella, E coli, Cryptosporidium and Mycoplasma, among others.

The best method of reducing the pathogen load of raw milk is through on-farm pasteurisation. While still an uncommon technology on New Zealand farms, we are likely to see growth in its adoption as farm size steadily increases. The most common type of pasteurisation unit is a batch pasteuriser which is designed to heat a small quantity of milk (up to a few 100 litres) for around 30 minutes. Most units take the milk to 63 degrees C. This level of pasteurisation does not sterilize the milk, but rather, reduces the pathogen load. At 63 degrees C for 30 minutes, the majority of bugs we are trying to keep out of our calves will be at negligible levels.

A less costly method of "treating" milk is adding citric acid. This is not a chemical form of pasteurisation but rather a method of preserving milk by lowering its pH to around 4-4.5. Getting milk pH to this lower level can reduce the load of bacteria such as Salmonella or Mycoplasma. However, the effectiveness of this strategy is dependent on the eventual pH of milk after the citric acid has been added and become stable in the milk solution. Hence, if this method is being used, it is wise to measure the pH to assess how much risk of bacteria spread has been lowered. This method is not satisfactory for reducing Johne's disease risk. It should also be noted that treating colostrum with citric acid is not advisable as it ruins the immunoglobulins (IgG) in this precious commodity.

Farmers should recall that feeding calves with milk powder is a good low risk alternative to disease control provided dilution instructions are followed accurately.

# Let's not forget about BVD

By Emma Franklin, Veterinarian, Anexa Vets Matamata

## Bulk Milk testing

Hopefully by now your herd has been signed up for bulk milk BVD monitoring. If you're not sure, just check with your vet and they can let you know.

## Test your calves at disbudding

Along with testing bulk milk to check for the presence of BVD in the milking herd, another really important safe guard is to test calves as soon as possible, to find any breakdown in the system before it has a chance to have a herd-wide impact. Testing your calves at disbudding, regardless how old they are, is a simple, cost effective way to ensure there will be no nasty BVD surprises further down the line. Simply tick the box when you book your disbudding and we can take care of the rest.

## Biosecurity

"Biosecurity" is a hot topic right now and by getting it right you can reap the rewards later. Having good biosecurity protocols in place will not only protect your herd from *M.bovis*, but is also critical in keeping BVD, Johne's Disease, Salmonella, calf scours and many more infectious diseases off your farm too. BVD is particularly important as it is known to have a major impact on the immune system and so any animal with BVD virus will be more likely to become infected and get sick with any other disease going around!

With all the recent talk of disease eradication, why stop at *Mycoplasma bovis*?! There is an increasing list of countries around the world that have or are eradicating BVD, and perhaps this is a good time for New Zealand to join that list! BVD is costing New Zealand farmers more than \$150 million per year in direct production losses, so we really need to get on top of it. Check out the new website [www.bvdfree.org.nz](http://www.bvdfree.org.nz) or talk to your vet for more information on getting involved in securing a BVD-Free New Zealand.

# Calf disbudding changes

By Michael Shallcrass, Veterinarian, Anexa Vets Gordonton

Calves will be hitting the ground soon, which means now is a good time to let you know about the changes we're making to our calf disbudding service. Historically we have offered two levels of disbudding service; with sedation and local anaesthetic, or through the crush with local anaesthetic alone.

The combination of increased awareness around biosecurity, health and safety, and the upcoming changes to animal welfare legislation have meant that we have decided to promote disbudding under sedation as our preferred method this season.

To make this change as easy as possible for our members, we have reduced the sedation disbudding price. The only difference at an on-farm level is that we don't like the calves to have been fed in the four hours before they are sedated. For some farms this will require a change of routine on the day of disbudding.

For those members who would still prefer their calves be disbudded through the crush we will continue to offer that service, but it will be more expensive than last year and may have fewer booking slots available.

If you would like to discuss these changes further please call Mike or Rhonda at the Gordonton clinic on 07 8242103.



**IT PAYS  
TO BELONG**  
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# So you never fixed those races did you? Its okay - you just need a plan B

You had more lame cows than you wanted last year

But that was because of the tracks and rain, right?

You can't control the rain so you were going to fix the tracks in the dry period weren't you. Pay-out is up, definitely keen to spend that \$ .... However then you decided to milk into May and the weather didn't play ball so those races... well they haven't been fixed and we are looking down the barrel of a repeat of last year - sound familiar???

Well maybe under these circumstances you need to control what you can:

## So what is that for me?

- **Minimise the amount of time the cows are stood off** – easy for us to say but come up with a plan B – it might be quite extreme (move them onto a new break, buy in feed so you can do that, milk OAD after calving to let your APC recover...), consider all the options and make a plan B NOW.
- **Get the herd hoof trimmed** – tidy up any problems now before you start
- **If they are on concrete a lot consider getting rubber matting** – yes expensive but so are sore feet
- **Look after the heifers at calving** – don't make them stand off on concrete, don't push them on concrete, and make sure they are trained to eat any supplements in any location required NOW (they won't learn after calving).
- **Be proactive finding the sore feet at calving** (train the staff to locomotion score) – don't let the numbers creep up on you; accept that it will happen (as you didn't fix the races and sort it out!)
- **Under no circumstances push the cows on the bad areas of race** – what high risk areas can you see now and what can you do to cover up the problem (carpet/astro turf, rubber mats, sand, sawdust anything to get you through until Oct/Nov). If you're not sure what to look for, get a Healthy Hoof trained provider from Anexa FVC to provide you with a risk assessment for your farm.
- **Most importantly make sure all staff including relief milkers understand the implications of the races not being fixed.**

Prepare for the worst and be pleasantly surprised!

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- ✓ Ultrasound pregnancy diagnosis with accurate aging and report analysis
- ✓ Milk quality and mastitis advice, including consultancy and an emergency grade busting service
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- ✓ Disease Prevention Management and Herd Health Plans
- ✓ On going product support from your local TSR including on-farm deliveries

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