



How much Zinc is your herd really getting?

By Mike Denholm, Anexa FVC Rototuna Veterinarian

Last summer, spore counts were excessively high causing wide spread Facial Eczema outbreaks across the Waikato. Ensuring adequate Zinc supplementation is key to prevention. We have already tested herds this season by checking blood Zinc levels, and this has shown a wide range of levels even when full dosing has been provided.

The protective range for Zinc levels in the blood is above 18umol/L. Anything under that is likely to be ineffective and your herd could suffer liver damage, causing further problems throughout the year. Some herds have had up to 80% of their cows with inadequate levels. We have intervened and modified the dosing accordingly to ensure protective levels are met. Unfortunately, this is commonly seen with Zinc dosing, particularly when Zinc is provided through water treatment. We have also seen inadequate Zinc levels in herds that drench with Zinc oxide as well.

Water intake depends on rainfall and individual cow risk factors like age, milk production, 'pecking order' in the herd and walking distances, so water based Zinc supplementation becomes quite unpredictable.

If you are using water treated with Zinc to protect your cows against Facial Eczema, it is best to check your Zinc levels two to three weeks after you start full Zinc dose rates. Call your Vet to arrange blood samples to be taken from your cows to check they are getting enough. Last season was a terrible year for Facial Eczema and we don't want it to happen again!

9 things to check if you are using water treated with Zinc to protect your cows against Facial Eczema:

- Try to make sure that your cows don't have access to untreated (no Zinc added) water.
- Make sure there are no water leaks.
- Use a flavour like aniseed, caramello or apple to encourage the cows to drink the Zinc treated water.
- Check the weight of your cows and the product you are using and work out a dose rate - your Vet can help.
- Measure the amount of Zinc you are adding every time you add it- no guesstimates!
- Dose the cows daily.
- Start your Zinc water trough treatment early to 'prime your troughs' before Facial Eczema season.
- Start the cows on a half dose of Zinc to 'prime' your troughs and get cows used to the taste of Zinc
- If you have 'missed the boat' you can prime your untreated water troughs now - talk to your Vet about how best to do this.

Scanning update

The trend for lower 6-week in-calf rates this season has continued with more scanning results in.

The data collected from 164 of our herds has the average 6-week in-calf rate 4.1% lower this season, with an average of only 68%. However some farms have improved with many over 80%. If you are not reaching your targets, please discuss your options with your Vet.





Milk Quality Consultations

As the time to dry off your cows approaches, so does the time to have your annual Milk Quality Consult with your local Vet. Forms were sent out in late February so if you have misplaced yours, contact your local clinic for another copy. Please take time to fill these out accurately before you have your consult as the information is essential for making the best recommendations for the management of mastitis and your drying off strategy in your herd.

The tools available to help manage mastitis are constantly evolving and your Vet can keep you up to date. We can help you with:

- Calculating dry cow therapy cure rates and new infection rates.
- Drawing up cull lists based on persistent subclinical infection, age and clinical mastitis.
- Individual herd test samples or sterile milk samples collected by yourself can now be tested specifically for Staph. aureus.
- Bulk milk tank sample testing to look at the susceptibility of mastitis bacteria to different antibiotics to check you are using the right products for your farm.

Having your staff members present at the Milk Quality Consult as well can help make them appreciate the cost of mastitis, and understand the importance and methods of prevention.

Anexa FVC have a number of Vets specially trained in mastitis investigations and control. If you require more in-depth assistance with mastitis or related issues, your Vet can refer you to a specialist within our practice and they will work together on your behalf.

If you haven't completed your Milk Quality Consult then ring now to book a time with your local Vet.

Controlling mastitis in late lactation

As cows reach the end of their natural lactation length and milk volumes drop, somatic cell counts can creep up and clinical mastitis can rear its ugly head. If you are struggling to keep your bulk tank somatic cell count in check, you may need to be more vigilant in looking for clinical mastitis cases. A good strategy could be to choose a quarter each milking to strip out and look for signs of clinical mastitis such as clots in the milk and heat or swelling. If clinical cases are detected early, then milk can be held out of the vat to keep bulk tank somatic cell counts under control.

Subclinical mastitis (with no obvious changes to the milk) can be more difficult to tackle, as high somatic cell count cows with subclinical mastitis are essentially invisible. Regular herd testing can be a useful tool to detect your 'repeat offender' cows. Older cows with consistently high somatic cell counts (over 200,000 cells) should be moved up the cull list as they can often be difficult to keep in check and they may be contributing to high bulk tank cell counts. A Rapid Mastitis Test (RMT) paddle can also be used to detect subclinical mastitis cases where herd testing records are unavailable. This can be a time consuming task, but our Anexa FVC technicians can help to RMT your herd. Really 'snotty' cows need to be held out of supply and monitored to keep the bulk tank somatic cell count down.

Having milk cultures performed on these problem cows can help by identifying bacteria present in the affected quarters. This will help with decision making around whether it is worth treating or carrying these cows over or if culling is the best answer.

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Want to know more?
TALK TO YOUR VET, WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Why should I drench my young stock?

The current warm and wet weather is likely to lead to an increase in the level of worms on pasture. Spring born calves are probably around seven months old now, and are still quite susceptible to intestinal parasites. It is important to maintain a good drenching program, especially during wet summer periods. Calves are now large enough that most people don't want to oral drench, so if you are using a pour-on you need to make sure that it's a dual action product.

Why should I drench my young stock?

- Young animals are more susceptible to the effects of internal parasites (worms) as they have limited natural immunity.
- You want your calves to grow, and worms depress growth rates, so calves will take longer to reach live-weight targets if they have worm burdens.
- Calves with worms can scour and be ill-thrifty, they can cough and in extreme cases they can die.
- Worm burdens are difficult to measure and can be an invisible thief of productivity.
- Failing to worm your calves is particularly problematic when the same paddocks are used every year because worm eggs build up on the pasture - this means that calves will be challenged with high worm burdens year after year.

Leptospirosis infection

- are you at risk?

Controlling leptospirosis by vaccination has historically been an acceptable way of preventing leptospirosis in humans. However vaccination only minimises the risk and there are other things which increase the risk of you contracting human leptospirosis that we need to be sure you are aware of.

Rising rates of human infection have made it clear that further steps are needed to reduce the risk of people becoming infected. Basic hygiene and care when handling animals are essential, and reducing cattle contact with potential sources of infection is also helpful. Most importantly, every person on farm needs to be regularly educated about the severity of leptospirosis, and how to reduce their own risk of infection.

To minimise the risk of you contracting leptospirosis and provide you with the best service we can, we need to ensure we are passing this information on to you and all your staff members.

What is leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a zoonotic disease, meaning it can spread from animals to humans. Many species can be infected, including cattle, pigs, rodents, dogs and humans. Affected dairy cattle may abort (occasionally resulting in abortion storms) or may show no outward signs of infection.

How do you catch leptospirosis?

From exposure to the urine or aborted material from infected animals.

The infection most commonly enters through cuts or grazes on the skin or through the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth.

If an infected animal gets vaccinated she will continue to shed leptospirosis; a carrier will continue to shed leptospirosis despite vaccination. For this reason animals need to be vaccinated at a young age BEFORE they get infected with leptospires from the environment to offer full protection to you and your staff.

Wear gloves during milking



Vaccinate all animals on farm



Prevent direct contact with urine



Control pests



Use water proof plasters on wounds/scratches



7 ways to prevent leptospirosis infection

Wear appropriate footwear on farm at all times



Leptospire thrive in moist conditions. Both humans and animals can be infected by contact with contaminated water.

What happens if you are infected with leptospirosis?

There are several forms of the disease, ranging from mild flu-like symptoms to severe fever, light sensitivity, liver damage, vomiting, severe headaches and kidney failure.

Many people are forced to give up work because the disease is so debilitating.

Many people require hospitalisation.

Long lasting effects occur when people suffer kidney or liver damage and people can die of this disease.

Other risk factors

Pigs and rodents can be a source of infection for both cattle and humans. Ideally pigs should not be on dairy farms. If pigs are kept they should be vaccinated (at 6 monthly intervals) and should come from leptospirosis free piggeries, or be treated with antibiotics on arrival.

- Rodent control, especially around feed, will reduce risk.
- Effluent and waterways are also risks. Contact with these should be reduced by effective fencing.

I have read and understood this information – what do I do now?

- ✓ Pass the information to all staff on farm.
- ✓ Complete a Leptospirosis Risk Management Appraisal with your Anexa FVC vet.
- ✓ Implement and maintain a leptospirosis vaccination programme and ongoing risk management training with staff.

It's not too early to start thinking about drying off your lighter cows

By Hamish Clare, Anexa FVC Morrinsville Veterinarian

Most of you will know the body condition score (BCS) targets at calving of 5.0 for mixed age (MA) cows and 5.5 for first and second calvers (R3yo). **These are not just nice targets to achieve. They should be the aim of every farmer at this time of year** and a number of studies have shown that reaching these targets will maximise milk production and reproduction potential.

Through following the BCS of cows over a number of farms in the last two seasons I've found that typically cows struggle to gain significant condition while they are still milking i.e. gains of only 0.1 BCS per month are common on low input farms. If cows are fed very well and on once a day (OAD) milking they may gain 0.3 BCS per month. When cows are dry however farmers are often able to achieve gains of 0.5 BCS per month and in some cases gains of 0.5 BCS in 20 days when they are being well supplemented (for example with PKE and/or maize silage).

Time is limiting so often drying off lighter cows early is the best option. MA cows at BCS 3.5 or less and R3yos at BCS 4.0 or less need attention now.

Example dry off dates to reach BCS targets:

If the start of calving is around the 9th July (PSM 1st Oct), then the recommended dry-off dates are given in the following table.

Assumptions:

- ▶ Dry cows are being well fed above maintenance
- ▶ No BCS gain in the 1st 10 days after drying off
- ▶ Dry Cows are gaining 0.5 BCS in 30 days
- ▶ No BCS gain in the 30 days prior to calving
- ▶ The cow is calving at the PSC i.e. 9th July

MA Cow BCS	R3yo Cow BCS	Increase required	Days required	Dry off date
-	3.0	2.5	190	1st Jan
3.0	3.5	2.0	160	31st Jan
3.5	4.0	1.5	130	1st March
4.0	4.5	1.0	100	31st March
4.5	5.0	0.5	70	30th April

If you know the calving dates for your cows, then your later calvers can be milked for longer. A rougher way can be to work back from the half-way point of your calving (around 14 days after the start of calving depending on your calving pattern) so the majority of cows are at target.

If you can feed your dry cows well (good quality supplements make this more achievable) and have gains of 0.5 BCS over 20 days rather than 30 days then a BCS 3.5 MA cow or BCS 4.0 R3yo could be milked for a month longer and still achieve calving BCS targets.

As with life nothing is perfect and the same applies to the BCS of your herd. So **don't get too caught up on solely the average of your herd. Focus also on the range of BCS in your herd and aim to have no more than 15% below and 15% above** their BSC calving target (yes too many fat cows can be a problem).

Drying-off low producing, fat cows early can also be beneficial. These cows put fat on their back instead of milk in your vat. When feed is short, it makes sense to feed your more productive cows better. There is often an area of low quality feed on the farm where these cows can be put to maintain themselves, such as steep sidelings or gullies.

Don't forget your young stock. This is often when groups begin to start falling behind. Don't let the time between drenches stretch too long, especially after periods of rain and when stock are eating pasture down to low levels.

Anexa FVC has 14 Vets certified as BCS assessors. **We offer a one-off visits to score approximately 70 cows per mob to get an average Or we can score every cow in the herd to give individual recommendations. We also have Vets who can help with feed budgeting.** This provides valuable information, in particular for feed management. Contact your local vet if you are interested in discussing this further.

Salmonella cases are on the rise

As farming systems change and adapt in the Waikato, so too do the diseases us Vets come across. Salmonella bacteria cause a profuse scour, occasionally abortion, and sometimes death in young and adult cattle. We saw a big increase in cases this spring. It also causes a nasty gut infection in humans which can be very severe.

The disease is typically contracted from environments, water and feedstuffs contaminated with faeces. Cases seem to be more prevalent on farms where they regularly use a feed or standoff pad, where the environment is highly contaminated with faeces, or where birds may have access to feed. As our New Zealand dairy cows spend longer periods on pads and in herd homes than ever before, Salmonella vaccine may become a good option to try to prevent cases. The vaccine is cheap and readily available. Talk to your Vet about preventing Salmonella in your herd.



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