

6 reasons why you should consider an early scan – Accurate calving dates for every cow

1. More milk in the vat

Why dry off a cow in March that isn't calving until September? The difference between feeding a milking and a dry cow is ~ 6kg DM. At 30cents/kg DM this is \$1.80 / day; a cost far outweighed by milk in the vat. Don't forget, your later calvers will likely be the highest producers in the herd later in the season.

2. Manage body condition and plan late season feed

Set your cows up better for next season. More heavily pregnant cows (the early calvers) take longer to eat their daily ration and can't compete with the later calvers towards the end of the season. The end result is earlier calvers tend to be lighter and later calvers are often too fat at calving.

3. Transitional cow management

Allocating cows to the springer mob is easy and accurate when you have calving dates for every animal.

4. 6 week in calf rate

Your 6 week in-calf rate is the most powerful and useful indicator of reproductive performance. Early scanning helps you to identify areas where you are performing well, and also sheds light on aspects where there is room for improvement. You can also assess the impact of any management changes you might have made.

5. Early culling decisions

After the first scan, you can identify cows that are NDP (not detectably pregnant/rechecks). These cows will either be empty or late calving cows, so you can consider culling any older, low producers around Christmas time, before the cull cow price drops and the drought arrives.

6. Value for money

There is little extra cost involved for the amount of information you get. In a herd with a 6-week in calf rate of 70% you would expect to have only 20% of the herd needing to be rescanned as NDPs/rechecks depending on the timing of scanning and the length of mating.

**Talk to your Anexa FVC Vet today about booking in your early scan.
Get the most bang for your buck.**



Want to produce great calves?

One of the secrets to producing great calves lies in minimising the number of growth checks that they suffer. All management changes should happen gradually and at the right time; this requires a little bit of forward planning so that things go as smoothly as possible.

Invasive husbandry practices like dehorning are going to be stressful for calves and will temporarily suppress their intakes. Dehorning calves while they are still on milk will result in a smaller growth check than if they are dehorned after they are weaned. It's also faster and safer for you to handle them when they are smaller.

Weaning calves off milk can cause problems as their rumen may not be developed enough to get all their nutrients from solid feed. Weaning on weight is a good way of ensuring that later born calves stay on milk long enough and don't get left behind. DairyNZ recommendations are to wean calves at 80 – 100kg, depending on their breed.

Calves should have had access to high quality roughage right from birth in order to stimulate rumen development. Historically people fed hay or straw, but studies have shown that high protein meal is the best way to get the rumen going. Calf meal will usually also contain something to prevent coccidia, which can cause ill-thrift and scouring in young animals.

As soon as calves start eating pasture they will be picking up worms. It takes most worm species at least three weeks between being eaten and starting to shed eggs, this is why we recommend drenching young stock once a month. A dual action oral drench such as Arrest C is a very cost effective way to achieve good parasite control and minimise the build-up of resistance in young stock.

The wet cloudy weather recently has meant that pasture quality isn't as high as we might like. This makes the milk and meal components of a calf's diet even more important, and it might pay to hold off any weaning decisions until we've had a bit more sunshine.

When you do decide to wean calves off meal, make sure it's done gradually. If calves have got a properly developed rumen there shouldn't be a noticeable change to their growth rates, as they will be able to eat enough grass to compensate for the loss of the meal. A pre-ruminant calf is sometimes described as being round or 'apple' shaped when viewed from behind, and as their rumen develops they take on a 'pear' shape; wider lower down.

Remember that the meal has been preventing coccidia, and any scouring after meal is stopped should be investigated. Try to avoid weaning off meal at the same time as moving stock to run-off or to grazing, as the doubling down of stressors can make them even more susceptible to disease.

Before calves leave your property they should be up to date with all their vaccinations. This means two shots for blackleg and leptospirosis, plus two shots for BVD if that is part of your BVD control strategy. You should be contacted by your local clinic soon to make sure that these are all done in time.

Weighing calves just before they go off grazing is a great way to check your own calf rearing, but also as a way to ensure that expectations with your grazier are clear. If you send well grown calves off grazing you should expect well grown heifers to come home, but if you send under-grown calves they may never be able to catch up to targets. If you can identify animals that might need a bit of extra help and preferentially feed them from the get-go then their prospects are much brighter than if they are identified later on.

CALF VACCINATION SEASON

Why do we vaccinate against Leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis is a horrible debilitating disease that is spread through urine from various animals, including your dairy cows. In the first 6 months of this year there have been 14 notified cases in Northland alone!

Vaccination is one part of the puzzle in protecting your cows, yourself and your staff. But you need to vaccinate early:

A recent Massey University study showed that vaccination needs to happen before calves are exposed to the disease. Once an animal contracts leptospirosis it will shed the bacteria despite vaccination, which might give you a false sense of security; you will vaccinate the animals and think they are protected but the vaccine does not remove an already existing infection and therefore these animals pose a risk to you, your staff and any unvaccinated animals on farm.

The best timing to start vaccination is when your youngest replacement animal is 4 weeks of age, with a booster to follow 4 weeks later. A good 'rule of thumb' is to vaccinate your calves twice before Christmas to give them early protection against Leptospirosis. They will need annual booster vaccinations after these two initial shots to keep their immunity up, which usually means that you give your calves a third vaccine in winter to line them up with your heifers and herd.

Make sure you complete a leptospirosis risk assessment with your vet to fill in the other parts of the puzzle. There are other aspects of Lepto control to consider, for example: don't smoke, eat or drink in your cow shed; keep on top of your rodent control and keep pigs well away from your cow shed. This is a serious health and safety issue for you and your staff. You need to take the necessary precautions to protect your animals and your team.





Lameness during mating - what YOU can do to reduce the impact

We are all well aware that sick cows are less likely to get in calf but what are the actual numbers like for lameness and can you do anything about how much a lame cows' reproductive performance is affected.

So why would a lame cow be less likely to get in calf early or at all?

Like mastitis and other diseases, lameness causes inflammation and the inflammatory process can reduce conception rates by affecting the quality of the corpus luteum which is what sustains pregnancy in the first couple of weeks. However, lameness also has the potential of severely impacting energy intakes. Research shows that milk production and dry matter intakes often drop well before lame cows are detected as lame. Lame cows walk less, walk slower, graze less and sit more; all factors that lead to severe negative energy balance if not corrected.

From my experience analysing herd reproductive records over many years and from the InCalf data, we know that there is a huge range in how much lameness impacts reproductive performance at both the cow and herd level.

Australian InCalf research indicated the variation in impact on 6 week incalf rate with a lame cow to be between 2 and 17% reduction with a 3 to 12% increase in not in-calf rate. That is a variation of up to 8 times! New Zealand InCalf research puts the average impact at 6% reduction in 6 week incalf rate and 3% increase in not-in-calf rate. At the individual cow-level there is always a negative impact but at the herd-level of course the size of the impact depends on how many lame cows you have.

Some factors that are likely affecting the size of the impact are at cow level are; when did she get lame (before or during mating), how early in her lameness was she detected and treated, how successfully was the lame cow treated, how much BCS loss has she suffered as a consequence of her lameness i.e. how well has she been managed since she was first lame (own mob, adlib feed, OAD are all tools), are the lame cows able to show heat (are there sound cows in the lame mob that can mount them) and if they show heat are they mated i.e. are there bulls in the lame cow mob.

So if you are getting a few lame cows coming into mating, firstly make sure you record them, so you can review their performance at the end of the season, secondly make sure you look after them (draft and treat promptly, run in their own mob, reduce walking, increase access to feed, use tools such as cowslips/blocks and anti-inflammatories to speed up the recovery process).

VET TIP:

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 and then identify the best management areas to target. Results are typically back within 48 hours. You can pick up sterile containers from your local clinic. The lab at the AnexaFVC Morrinsville clinic offers significantly cheaper prices than those at the commercial laboratory in Hamilton.

Milk cultures are also useful for dealing with HSCC cows.

Recently a herd that was struggling with a BTSCC of around 300,000 had milk samples tested and found 22 cows that were positive for *Staph. aureus*. *Staph aureus* is a contagious bacteria and is a common cause of mastitis. It often causes subclinical infection and is difficult to treat with cure rates as low as 25% in some cases. Through selective culling and treatment of these cows the BTSCC is now sitting comfortably at around 150,000.

Thanks to everyone that came along to our Lameness Workshop, the room was FULL! Lameness has been a real problem for some farms this year and we want to be there to help. If you are having trouble on your farm, talk to your Vet they will be able to give you some advice or can organise a lead lameness Vet to pop out and have a chat.



RVM – Restricted Veterinary Medicines

Farmers in New Zealand have a privileged position compared to some other dairy producing countries when it comes to having the option of drugs on hand on-farm.

As Vets, we have shared our knowledge and worked with farmers so that they are experienced enough to diagnose many conditions in their animals and provide an appropriate treatment course, without the need to discuss every case with their vet. As opposed to many overseas farmers, New Zealand farmers do not need to get a vet out every time they see a case of footrot or difficult calving.

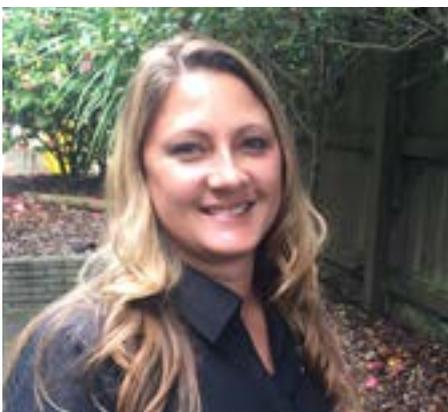
Due to stricter rules from (for example) the EU market, on-farm audits are becoming much more detailed. To prevent you, as our client, failing an audit, we have to sharpen our methods around sales of Restricted Veterinary Medicines (RVMs) like Metacam, Penicillin, Imflamol, purple spray etcetera.

This does mean that our front counter-staff could need to ask a vet to have a conversation with you (in person at the counter/ over the phone/ on-farm) if the product required is varying from the one on your personalised script, before they can hand out an RVM to you. We kindly ask for your patience and understanding.

From the Board

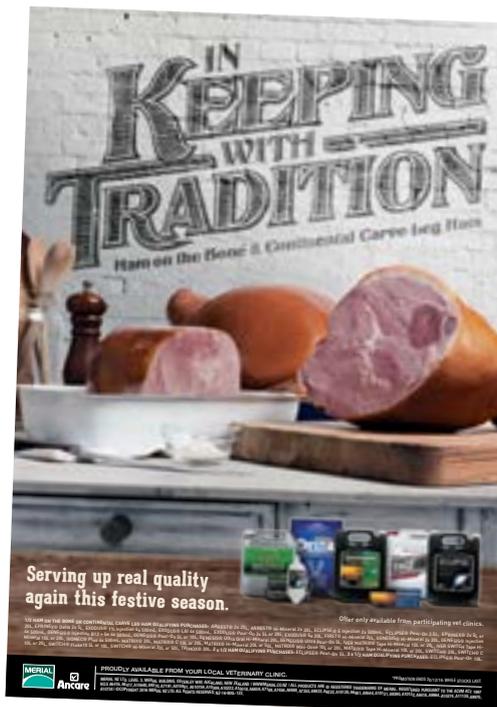
The annual AGM of Anexa FVC was held on the 28th of September this year. Two positions on the board became vacant however as there were no nominations, Alister Smith and Peter Le Heron were reconfirmed as Board Members.

Bruce Thomas, Chairperson acknowledged that it had been a tough year not only for farmers but for all businesses and communities associated with the dairy industry. He acknowledged the Board, the Anexa FVC leadership team and indeed all the staff at Anexa FVC for the work they had undertaken over the last year to ensure that the focus remained on adding value to farmer members while maintaining the highest level of service and innovation.



Welcome to the team Aimee!

Keep an eye out for our new Technical Sales Rep, Aimee Sewell. Aimee will be working in the Gordonton, Ngatea, Paeroa and Maramarua areas.



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