

DAIRY TALK

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VET CARE
24/7

MAY 2016 | NEWSLETTER



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IT PAYS TO BELONG
anexa FVC

Season round up...

By Andy Collier, Anexa FVC Head Vet and Intelact Consultant

Whilst we would admit it has been a challenging Dairy season, grass growth generally has been good on the back of a weaker El Nino weather pattern than predicted. One downside of more rain, more grass and more humidity has unfortunately been more fungal spores and associated clinical cases of facial eczema. On a positive side, I was really encouraged to read the other day that the average Anexa FVC dairy client has had an approximate 3% reduction in clinical mastitis over the past season and a much lower bulk tank somatic cell count than the national average. This is a great example of the benefits of our clients and our Vets working together to make a difference and deliver more value on farm.

We are continually focusing on controlling costs while working to deliver the best service we can to our valued members. With increased membership across the greater Waikato our "It Pays to Belong" member offers seem to be hitting the spot with good farmer uptake and support, thanks. Offers to date have included subsidised farm staff training, bull fertility testing, mastitis sampling, culture and analysis, and liver biopsy sampling. At the same time we are working with our supplier partners to hold or reduce input costs. A topical example is the work that has been done to reduce dry cow therapy and teat sealant pricing to deliver additional member savings on top of the 2% prompt payment discount we now offer to all members.

Being service driven, not profit driven we continue to offer the full range of services from the treatment of individual animals, through to advising on calf rearing, improved reproduction and mastitis control, lameness and nutrition and farm systems. All such our services are tailored to your farm and your requirements. Leading edge research through Cognosco helps drive new approaches to solutions on farm and supports studies such as last spring's survey of calcium levels in immediately post calving cows (hear more about this at our Upper Cow Roadshows on the 5th and 6th of May).

We are committed to working with our members and delivering value. Animal health is core to the success of any farming operation and is at the heart of our business as we turn research and science into profits for our members. Let's work together to drive the best outcome we can for your business over the coming season and finally thanks very much for your ongoing support; we really appreciate it.



5 reasons to attend Anexa FVC's calf rearing training day in June

- ✓ Anexa FVC have been involved with some pioneering new research on calf rearing with particular respect to colostrum management and we want to share it with you
- ✓ Colostrum preservation has been under scrutiny and we have some new innovations in this space
- ✓ New calf-side testing is available to farmers which will help you decide whether you have a problem with colostrum management or calves with poor immunity; find out how to use this exciting new tool on your farm
- ✓ Discuss risk factors for calf hood disease and decide which management strategies are most likely to improve calf health and well-being on your farm
- ✓ Share your ideas and discover what other farmers are doing to harness the potential of their calves



Copper Supplementation.

Are you sure?

By Michael Shallcrass, Anexa FVC Gordonton Veterinarian

Testing the trace element status of your cows in autumn is a useful way of identifying any issues that could lead to problems during calving or mating. Selenium, Copper, and Cobalt are all necessary for the formation, repair and ongoing functioning of many organ systems. It is important to get their trace element levels right if you want to keep your cows nice and healthy through the most demanding part of the season.

Blood samples are the most common method used to check trace element levels. The levels of Selenium and Cobalt in blood closely correlates with the levels in the animal as a whole. However, because Copper is stored in the liver and only drip fed out into the blood as needed, levels of Copper in the blood will only drop once all the Copper in the liver is exhausted.

This is why we recommend liver biopsies to check liver reserves, as they give you so much more information than a blood test.

One of our farmers was wondering recently if low copper levels might be decreasing his cows' reproductive performance, so we took some liver biopsies from a cross section of his herd.

Ideally we want liver levels of copper to be at least 300µmol/kg, but when levels get over 2500 you can start to get issues with toxicity. As you can see from the results below, these cows have all got dangerously high levels of copper!

If we just took blood samples we wouldn't have known that the Copper levels were so high, and there would be a real risk of toxicity if we had just carried on as normal. We will be closely monitoring

Animal ID	Liver Cu (µmol/kg) 23/02/16	Liver Se (nmol/kg) 23/02/16
2	2500 H	
45	4400 H	
97	3700 H	1300
140	3600 H	1500
253	2100 H	2300
257	2500 H	2500
Means	3133	1900
Adequate range	(95 - 2000)	(650 - 10000)

the Copper levels of these cows, but they won't need any Copper supplementation for the next few years. We've put together a customised mineral mix for this farm that has no copper in it, and is half the price!

It's easy to be complacent and just jab the cows with Copper every season because that's what you've always done, but with cows being fed more supplements especially PKE, we are seeing more cases like this where additional Copper supplementation is an un-needed and potentially dangerous expense.

If you would like to discuss your mineral supplementation program or testing options, please contact your local vet.



Lepto - The facts

Leptospirosis (lepto) is a very serious disease that can be contracted by all mammals; humans, domestic, farm and wild animals. It is caused by bacteria called Leptospire.

Exposure: Leptospirosis remains the most common occupational infectious disease in New Zealand. A 2011 study showed evidence of leptospiral shedding in 30% of herds in New Zealand. This means it is definitely still out there and exposure is a real possibility.

People: The reason we vaccinate cattle for lepto is to protect HUMANS. Affected cows usually do not show any signs. However, if humans contract the disease, it can take months to years to recover from. It is your responsibility to protect yourselves, your workers, and anyone coming onto your farm such as Vets and Technicians.

Transmission: Leptospire are shed in the urine of affected cows. Humans contract the disease from contact with this urine or water contaminated with urine such as wash down water. This can be from a splash or fine spray that contacts the eye, nose or mouth. Transmission can occur from licking lips, smoking or eating without washing hands after contact with contaminated urine. Infection can also enter through any cracks or cuts in the skin.

Outcome: Leptospirosis in humans, if contracted, causes severe headaches, extreme tiredness, muscle pain, nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea, skin rashes, breathing problems, chest pain. In serious cases, it causes jaundice, miscarriage, renal failure, hemorrhage, and rarely, death. Severe cases can result in permanent complications and months to years in hospital.



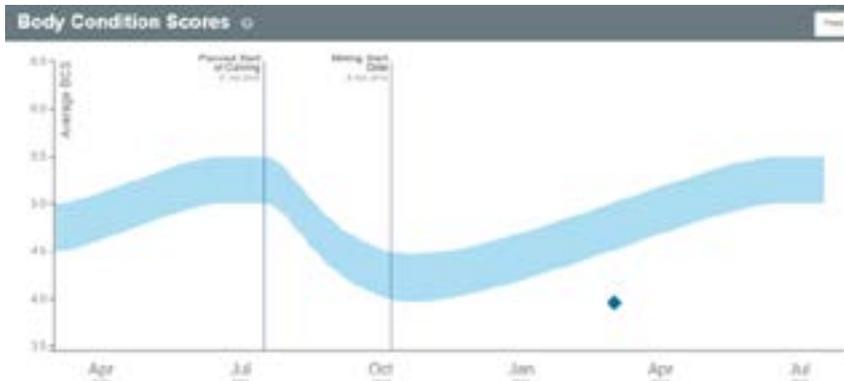
Feeding cows in the dry period for BCS gain.

By Hamish Clare, Anexa FVC Morrinsville Veterinarian

You all know the body condition score (BCS) targets for calving of 5.0 for mature cows and 5.5 for heifers and rising 3 year olds. These have been well proven for getting the most out of your herd in terms of milk production, reproduction, health and welfare.

Achieving these targets is not easy. As even well fed dry cows will struggle to gain more than 0.5 BCS in a month and won't gain BCS straight after drying off and gain little or no BCS in the month before calving. This means the only way to get lighter cows up to these targets is by giving them enough time. Even cows with a BCS of 4.0 which are due to calve in 60 days will struggle to reach targets but any improvement is still worth chasing.

Ideally your herds average BCS would be 4.5 or more 2 months out from calving. The range of BCS in your herd is also important. The graph below shows the seasonal pattern for BCS in a spring calving herd.



Some points to consider:

- A 450kg crossbred cow, 8 weeks out from calving being “well fed” means eating 10.5kgDM/cow/day. This is a lot and around the limit of what a cow can eat at this time.
- Not all feeds are equal in terms of putting on condition and unfortunately autumn pasture comes in near the bottom. For a 450kg crossbred cow, 1.0 BCS could be gained by eating 185kgDM of Autumn pasture, 145kgDM of grass or maize silage, or only 110kgDM PKE. That's only 60% as much PKE compared to autumn pasture on a dry matter basis to do the same job.
- Cows in cold and wet conditions require more energy just for maintenance so will struggle to eat enough to gain BCS. A cow on a wet and windy 2°C day would need about 1.5kgDM more silage just to maintain normal body temperature. This affects thin cows even worse than well-conditioned cows.
- The speed at which a cow gains BCS during the dry period does not affect the rate of BCS loss, the health or the production of the cow during the following lactation.
- Low BCS cows at calving (mature cows BCS < 4.5 and younger cows < 5) are at an increased risk of mastitis and metritis which can have flow on effects for reproduction.
- If you are serious about reaching BCS targets at calving and have dried off the majority of cows at the same time this will usually require you to split the herd based on condition and calving dates to preferentially feed those thinner, earlier calving cows.

If you would like to know the BCS of your herd then contact us and ask for one of our BCS accredited vets. We can also discuss some practical strategies to improve the BCS of your herd.

How are your heifers REALLY performing?

By Michael Shallcross, Anexa FVC Gordonton Vet

By now most dairy farmers will have sent their young stock off grazing, either to a runoff block or to a grazier. How well those animals are cared for is going to have consequences that affect their productivity and reproductive performance for years after they enter the milking herd.

All too commonly we see poorly grown heifers coming into a herd and then struggling to get in calf. Often the grazier is blamed, but by now it is too late to do anything about it. It is critical that young stock meet and maintain live weight targets as they grow in order to ensure that they can cope with calving, entering the herd, and getting back in calf.

Age Group	Not in-calf rate
Two year olds	15%
Three year olds	10%
Four to eight year olds	18%

Your heifers are the animals in your herd with the highest genetic potential, they have had less time to suffer from disease, they calved early, and so they should have the best reproductive performance of any age group. Situations like the one above happen when poorly grown heifers enter a herd and struggle because they are still trying to grow, as well as lactate and get back in calf.

It isn't enough to simply cast your eye over a mob of young stock and think 'they look pretty good.' Underweight animals can still be shiny and in good condition, which is why weighing them is so important. Heifers should be almost 50% of their mature weight now, and 90% when they come back from grazing. They need to have finished most of their growing so they can put their energy into production and reproduction.

More and more graziers are installing weigh scales on their properties. Take advantage of these to monitor the growth of your animals, and intervene as soon as you see they are falling behind target. The new MINDA website is an excellent way to monitor your young stock, as it will automatically generate a list of animals that are failing to meet targets.

It's important to keep communicating with your grazier and work together to ensure animals are healthy and growing well. You don't want poor performing heifers, and they don't want to lose you as a customer, so it's in everyone's interest to strive for well grown animals.

If you have any questions about young stock management, live weight targets, or you would like to develop a management plan to use with your grazier, please contact your local Anexa FVC clinic.

Reducing lameness through farm maintenance

By Hanneke Officer, Anexa FVC Gordonton Veterinarian

Have you ever thought about the impact of twice daily cow traffic on the tracks, the yard and the shed? The resulting wear and tear will affect cow hooves and increase the chances of lameness.

Track maintenance, though potentially costly, is vital. Not only will well-made and maintained tracks reduce lameness, they will also improve cow flow to and from the shed.

Identifying the sections of the tracks that are the highest priority to fix and looking at ways of making do with what you have, as well as understanding the potential consequences of not doing any track maintenance are key.

What can be done to prepare your farm for the new season ahead?

Some broken down sections of tracks a long distance from the cowshed may be postponed until the pay-out improves but in the short-term all staff on-farm need to be educated about this high risk section of track, and what impact it may have on the cow flow and lameness.

The most significant aspects of the tracks are track width, surface material, crowning and length (walking distance). Naturally not all are easily addressed, but we can help you to make a plan that will improve lameness and not cost an arm and a leg.

As an example, why do we see so much lameness after rainfall? With the softening of the surface material, so too do the claws of your cows. This makes them more vulnerable to penetration by sharp objects on the track or the yard. This is why hosing down is so important as well as the presence of a nib wall between all concrete and track junctions.

Also, soft surface material (mud) makes it harder for a cow to see if she's putting her foot on something sharp. The clay content of the surface material will have an impact here. This can be addressed by topping the surface with more absorbent material that doesn't alter significantly following rainfall.

To start reducing lameness prevalence in your herd, identify potential risk areas, prioritise the important sections to deal with and make a plan to address or manage these issues. This doesn't have to cost much, but can save a lot of money in reduced treatment cost, reduced loss of milk and less time spent treating animals. If you would like some help prioritising and understanding which sections are the biggest issues and how you can manage them, one of our Healthy Hoof providers can help you on your way.



Facial eczema season must be coming to an end, surely!

Autumn is here with a few cold mornings in the last few weeks. This can only mean one thing – facial eczema season must be coming to an end, surely! It's easy to think that as soon as the worst affected cows have been culled at drying off, and the rest are looking better that it's over. And the good news is, it is! However cows that have been affected by FE during the season (whether or not they showed symptoms) are not completely out of the woods yet. The liver will be working away recovering, (you might have even detected some of these cows at mineral sampling) trying to get back in shape for the rigorous demands of calving. The key thing is here to optimise condition and care approaching calving, and be extra vigilant once calves start hitting the ground – FE damaged livers make the cow more prone to other metabolic problems such as milk fever, ketosis, and the dreaded down cow. Think prevention: forewarned is forearmed.



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