

Rural round-up



Kerry Gillan
Hub Manager
(East)

It's a pleasure to welcome you to this month's edition of Paddock Press, filled with news and advice from our incredible vets. They genuinely love what they do, working alongside you to keep your animals happy and healthy.

As I write this, we're just wrapping up one of our biggest and most intense times of year – dairy dry-off. In just a few short weeks over May and June, our teams dried off over 66,000 cows across the Southland and South Otago regions. That number alone is staggering, but what's even more impressive is the commitment and spirit behind it.

This is my second dry-off with VetSouth and, once again, I'm in awe of our team. Everyone has pulled together with a shared purpose and energy that's hard to describe. It's tough work – early starts, long days, sore bodies – but there's something really special about marking the end of the dairy season out on-farm, side-by-side with you.

The vet and tech teams out on farm are supported by an equally impressive team back at base ensuring they have everything they need to get the job done right. From snacks to supplies, calendars rearranged to vehicles maintained. It truly takes a village.

To our farmers, thank you. This season has had its challenges, but your resilience, patience, and partnership never go unnoticed. We know it's not always easy, and we're grateful to be part of your support crew through it all.

As we take a breath and reset before spring, I hope you are able to take a well-earned break – and hopefully we'll see you in-clinic at our upcoming Spring Order days!



Friendly Milton local, Gina, is our Customer Services Rep in the new clinic. She's ready to welcome you!

Have you herd the news?

by Kellie Mulholland

The VetSouth team is growing in leaps and cows, with a brand new clinic opening in Milton this month!

This brings our family of clinics to nine across Southland and South Otago, expanding our reach in the South and making it even easier for local farmers to access trusted veterinary care.

The Milton bricks and mortar might be new on the map, but we've got years of gumboots-on-the-ground experience. Whether it's an on-farm call out or a quick dash in for production animal supplies, practical advice for improving

herd health, or a friendly yarn that brightens your day – we're here to help.

It's not our biggest clinic, but don't let the smaller size fool you. It's packed with all the gear and know-how you'd expect from the VetSouth name. From restricted veterinary medicines to animal health essentials and nutritional supplements, our Milton clinic can be your new local go-to for everything dairy, sheep, beef, and deer.

So why not drop by and say hello when you're in town next. We're excited to be part of the community and we're looking forward to working with you.

**Find us at 113 Union Street, Milton.
Open Monday – Friday, 9am-2.30pm.**

ON-FARM FOCUS



DAIRY



- Keep an eye out for sick cows on crop.
- BCS cows to check they are coming through winter well.
- Complete Rotavirus vaccination of your herd, and protect your calves from scours this spring.
- Schedule your pre-calving PP+ trace element tests for cows.
- Prep your cows to calve and return to milk, beginning their feed transition 3 weeks pre-calving.
- Get your calving supplies sorted with our Spring Order Deals!

BEEF



- Copper and selenium levels drop in cattle on crop – are yours ok? Book us to do some trace element tests.

SHEEP



- Scan and BCS, pull out any lights.
- Ensure selenium levels have been checked within the last 12 months.
- Order clostridial vaccinations for pre-lamb ewes, plus hoggets.
- Consider pre-lamb parasite management – talk with your vet.

DEER



- Copper is essential – is there enough on board for your stock?

WORKING DOGS



- Remember monthly tablets for Sheep Measles prevention.
- Consider a coat for your dogs to see them through the colder nights (especially your older or lighter ones).

Got collars, now what?

by Line Ferriman, CowSmart

It's been a few years now since wearable technology really took off – and plenty of you have taken the plunge.

But once the collars are on and the alerts start pinging, a new question crops up: What exactly are you meant to do with all this information? You're not alone if you've ever opened your app and thought, "Cool... now what?".

Here's the truth: the tech works. But without a way to connect the dots, it's easy to feel like you're drowning in data and still missing the point.

We want more farmers to know:

1. It's normal to feel overwhelmed.

Getting collars isn't like flipping a switch, it's more like installing a new set

of eyes. It takes time to learn what not to pay attention to, and where the real benefits lie.

2. Most of the benefit comes from what you do between alerts.

The sick cow notification is handy, but the real value comes from what happens next. The insights gained from stepping back, looking at things from a herd level, and asking, 'How many cows have actually been sick?' and 'Could we improve it?' can have a big impact on reproductive performance.

3. You don't have to figure it all out alone.

The most successful farms we've seen don't just use their collars – they use their support networks.

Having your vet team involved can make a huge difference, as issues may get picked up early, and they can

help train your team on what to treat, what to watch, and what needs vet involvement. Your KeyVet is well placed to tie it all together, knowing your farm, your animals, and working with your people on the ground.

I'm Line Ferriman, the vet, farmer and data analyst heading up CowSmart, a vet-led collar reporting service that supports practical, on-farm decision-making through data. CowSmart has recently partnered with VetSouth to offer this support across the southern region.

Some of you might know Elena Knupfer from her time as a VetSouth vet. She's now part of the CowSmart team and continues to help farmers in the South.

If you've got collars and feel like you're only scratching the surface of the data, ask your vet about CowSmart. Elena and I would love to help you get more out of the tech you already own.



Plan to prevent milk fever



by Kath Aplin

Milk fever: it's something everyone's familiar with, but something everyone could really do without.

Thankfully, most cases can be prevented with good planning. So, what can you do now, to reduce the risk of milk fever at calving time?

First, it helps to realise what a huge change cows undergo at calving. To start producing colostrum and milk, a cow needs a lot of calcium, fast. On the day of calving, she can't absorb calcium quickly enough from her food, so she needs to mobilise her own calcium reserves – mostly from her bones.

Being able to do that without too much issue requires good preparation, and that's where the transition ration comes in. **In the three weeks pre-calving, a diet with enough magnesium and a negative dietary cation-anion difference (DCAD) value helps cows prepare for mobilising calcium at calving.**

Second, it's important to understand what DCAD is. Essentially, it's the balance between certain minerals in the cow's diet. Some minerals have a negative DCAD value and some have a positive DCAD value.

In practical terms, **the mineral that has the most impact on DCAD is potassium. It drives DCAD up, increasing the risk of milk fever.** Hence, feeds low in potassium are a good option pre-calving. Mature, stemmy grass or baleage that hasn't been cut from an effluent paddock are often low in potassium, so can be particularly useful as pre-calving feed.

Brassicacae, leafy grass or silage (especially if they've had effluent applied) tend to have higher potassium levels. **However, the only way to really know the DCAD value of forages is to get samples tested.** This is easy to do, and not expensive. Simply bring a sample into the clinic and we can get a full nutritional analysis done for you, including DCAD value.

Knowing the DCAD and overall nutritional value of your forages means you can plan ahead to make a good, balanced transition diet for your cows, with the right pre-calving minerals – including low DCAD salts if necessary. Planning now for an easier life in the spring has got to be a good investment!

Talk to your KeyVet if you'd like to know more about feed testing and transition minerals.



Calving kit checklist

Calving is just around the corner – do you have everything you need?

- ☐ Calving chains or ropes
- ☐ Calving jack
- ☐ Lubricant
- ☐ Calcium boluses + applicator
- ☐ Metabolic bags
- ☐ Fluid therapies + pump
- ☐ Minerals
- ☐ Electrolytes
- ☐ Iodine
- ☐ Disinfectant
- ☐ Gloves
- ☐ Paint or leg bands

Stock up and save on quality supplies during our calving Spring Order Deals!

Scan between 4-13 July to order online.



Sheep vaccination

Minimising mistakes and maximising results.

by Heather Busby

Every year, farmers spend hundreds of dollars on vaccines to protect their livestock from infection and disease.

With the amount spent on vaccines, it's worth taking a moment to reflect on how we use them, to get more 'bang for our buck'. Avoiding easy mistakes can go a long way in getting the best results from your vaccination programme.

Read the label

This seems simple enough, but it's often overlooked. Along with confirming the timing of administration, check that you're using the correct dosage, route, and storage of the vaccine to reduce the risk of spoilage.

Get the timing right

Vaccination at the correct time can save you from having to use repeated doses for certain groups of animals. Optimise the timing of administration to the expected time of challenge, to ensure the vaccine generates the maximum immune response.

For example, timing of clostridial vaccination for lambs depends on the vaccination status of the ewes and how much colostrum the lambs have consumed. Orphan lambs, triplets, or lambs born to light ewes (where colostrum quality may be poorer) will often have a lower level of protection and can benefit from earlier vaccination.

Vaccines used for the prevention of abortion (i.e. Toxovax and Campyvax 4) should be administered well ahead of mating and ordered in advance.

Vaccination for Salmonella may be needed prior to the risk period for enteric Salmonella (early summer), followed by a booster dose during mid-gestation to protect against abortive Salmonella.

Store vaccines appropriately

Vaccines need to be stored chilled – not frozen or warm. But while putting them in the beer fridge in the shearing shed may seem convenient, there's a risk they'll freeze if the fridge is turned up to keep beer nice and cold.

At the other extreme, make sure they don't get 'cooked' either. Use a chilly bin/bag to transport vaccines from where you bought them to the farm, and keep them in this while you're out in the yards. Many vaccines are heat-sensitive and can be destroyed if left sitting in the sun or a warm vehicle.

There's no point spending all your money and time vaccinating, only for the vaccine to be compromised and not do its job. Unfortunately, vaccines that have been frozen or excessively warmed will no longer be effective and need to be disposed of.

Prevent vaccination wounds

The location of the injection is important. Most sheep vaccines are advised to be administered in the anterior half of the neck on the top side (so close behind the back of the ear, not near the shoulder). Vaccines designed for subcutaneous use (under the skin), but injected intramuscularly can cause lesions.

Animals need to be clean and dry. Vaccinating sheep that are wet or

have just been dipped is a recipe for abscesses. It creates the perfect storm: a soup of bacteria on the skin combined with a tiny injection hole. That risk is increased if you use a blunt needle.

Ensure needles are changed frequently (every 20-50 animals is recommended). Reusing old needles or ones with blunt tips, or resterilising these old blunt needles and storing them in meths, is not advised. Yes, swapping needles takes time, but it's worth it. You will get fewer lesions if the needles are clean and sharp. The correct needle size for the job also matters.

Ensure those administering the vaccine are correctly trained to perform vaccinations to avoid unnecessary abscesses or lesions. For subcutaneous injections: slow down, tent the skin, and take the time to inject the vaccine in the correct place. This reduces the risk of injuring the animal – or getting stabbed in the finger!

If you have any questions about vaccinations for your sheep, or diseases that can be prevented by the use of vaccines, get in touch with us.

Scanning time for deer

by Lisa Roberts



Scanning hinds is a useful way to gather information to help you make decisions to improve overall productivity on your deer farm.

It provides insight into R2, MA and stag performance, with pregnancy targets of >90% for R2 hinds and >94% for MA hinds.

Venison prices are strong right now, so dry hinds could be sent to the works to free up feed. A trace element test on these animals can help identify if the wider mob needs copper supplementation ahead of fawning.

If copper status is known, a copper injection/bolus or Multimin injection can be administered while they're in the shed for scanning – ideally post-scan!

Body condition scoring a sample is also worthwhile while they're in the shed, giving you more information for decision making around splitting mobs or feed allocations for the months leading to fawning.



Some of our team nipped up to Wellington at the start of June to soak up learnings and make connections at the annual NZ Veterinary Association and NZ Veterinary Nursing Association conferences. These events are great for inspiring and developing our team, and keeping our finger on the pulse of veterinary science.

While at the conferences' awards dinner, our Director of Clinical Strategy, Mark Bryan, was presented with the prestigious NZVA President's Award. He reckons that this photo is a great metaphor for his win:

"I couldn't have done any of what I did for the NZVA without the support of everyone at VetSouth – and here they are during conference, at it again!"



Working dogs in winter

by Hugh Hasselman

Most working dog breeds in New Zealand have short-haired coats and low levels of subcutaneous fat for insulation against bitter winter temperatures.

It's very important to **maintain high-quality nutrition** through the winter

because there are higher energy requirements in cold weather to maintain body temperature and still meet the demands for work performance. High-protein diets also reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injury in dogs working in cold, slippery conditions.

Provide warm, draught-free winter housing to enable more efficient use of the dog's food. They will waste less energy trying to keep warm (shivering requires muscle activity), they will lose less body heat to the cold air or by conduction to the kennel floor, and they will have improved sleep and recovery.

However, the provision of bedding can be difficult, with some dogs happily destroying whatever is provided. While many working dogs now enjoy the benefits of a warm dog jacket at night (we have a variety available in-clinic), for some the best solution is to build insulation into the kennel structure.

Also, **be aware of wind-chill on the job during winter weather**, and when

transporting the team home on open deck vehicles.

Dogs suffering the onset of hypothermia may shiver, be listless and reluctant to work. They will likely have pale membranes and cold skin. As the body temperature falls further, symptoms can deteriorate to shaking, disorientation, collapse and coma.

If you suspect hypothermia, take the dog to shelter and wrap it in warm layers, then call your vet to arrange veterinary care. Transport the dog inside a warm vehicle. Don't feed a hypothermic dog, as its ability to swallow safely may be impaired.

Winter can be a good time to see us for any veterinary care that your dogs may need, such as for chronic lameness, osteoarthritis, mammary gland lumps, dental pain and injuries, or skin, ear and eye conditions. We can help get your team in top condition ahead of spring.

Clinic corner



Who gives a FEC?

We do. By doing faecal egg count (FEC) tests, you can make informed decisions to target an effective parasite treatment plan. Our efficient in-clinic Parasight machines can detect FECs as low as 4 eggs per gram. So, have a chat with your local team and bring in your stock poo samples! We've got a range of testing options for great prices.

Freezing our bits off

We've come to the end of another dry-off and teat sealing season, but our vets and techs didn't make it through without some terribly cold mornings on farm, and even a snowy day or two. Shout out to hard-working farmers who are out in it every day taking care of stock – keep warm this winter!



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CALVING DEALS: 4-13 JULY
LAMBING DEALS: 1-10 AUGUST

Stock up for spring with our deals on quality supplies for calving and lambing.

This includes selected: metabolics, energy and fluid therapies, drenches, minerals, injectables, disinfectants, animal markers, and more.

Pop into your local clinic or conveniently order online, and be in to WIN a \$500 VetSouth voucher!*

Scan while deals are on to order online →



*T&Cs apply.

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