

Rural round-up



Dan Cragg
Clinical Lead
(Balclutha)

Wet, wet and more wet!

As I write this, it's pouring down onto paddocks that are already at saturation point. To be fair, it had been a kind early spring for dairy farmers, but spare a thought for the poor sheep cocky who is still lambing!

This is the busiest time for a vet. We are well into most of our routine dairy work (disbudding and metrichecking) and yet still getting called out for calvings and sick cows. It's also one of the busiest times for you on-farm! I'm sure I could count on one hand the number of farmers who have had a day off since the start of calving or lambing.

It is important to prioritise some time away and catch up with your friends, family and neighbours. Focusing on the things you can control, like your wellbeing, will help you navigate the things that you cannot control, like this incessant rain!

With mating just around the corner, it's time to start thinking about getting cows back in calf. This will have a large impact on next year's profitability, so it is important to get it right! Focusing on improving animal health, identifying non-cycling cows and making a mating plan are critical for good results. Have a yarn to your KeyVet to create the best repro plan this year.

While you're talking to them, check in to see how they're managing their busiest period. We'll be checking in with you too – we are in it together and rely on the reciprocal support of each other.

Kia kaha and enjoy your time off-farm!

Are your boys up to the job?

by Christine Utting

As we head towards another repro season, it's vital to remember the other key players in your mating success – bulls!

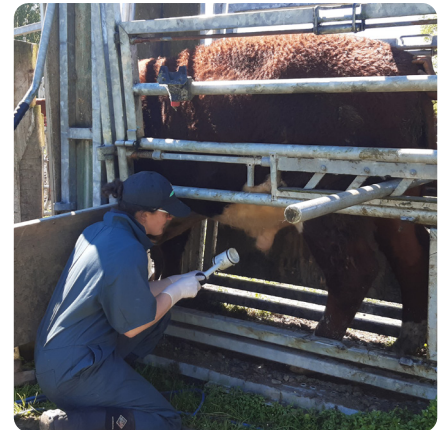
Their condition should be on target (BCS 5+ for dairy bulls and 6+ for beef bulls) and they should have good trace element levels. All bulls should also meet minimum scrotal circumference targets for their age and breed prior to mating and have sound sexual organs.

It's also a good idea to check they have healthy, high-quality sperm to avoid any disappointment come scanning time!

We can come out to do a breeding soundness exam on your bulls, which includes a physical inspection and taking a semen sample for testing. Your bull will then be allocated a fertility score based on his results.

Some other key points to consider for your bulls:

- Ensure they don't have any illnesses, injuries, or deviations in posture.



- Check they have sound eyes.
- Make sure they have had their annual leptovaccine and have had a BVD booster vaccine at least 4 weeks before mating starts.
- Treat injured bulls promptly and allow them plenty of time to recover.
- Have some spare bulls on-farm to swap in.

The recommended bull:cow ratios, for both dairy and beef herds, are 1:25 for yearlings/unproven bulls and up to 1:40 for mixed-age, fertility tested bulls. However, if you are aiming to synchronise your cows you may need to use more bulls.

Using subfertile or unfit bulls can be very costly, so make sure you select the right boys this season!

ON-FARM FOCUS



DAIRY



- Follow your vaccine and drench plan for calves.
- Ensure heifers, cows and bulls are in optimal condition for mating.
- Heat detect to identify non-cyclers and intervene.
- Keep an eye out for spring lameness and mastitis.
- Book a repro consult with us to create a mating plan.

BEEF



- Consider fertility testing your bulls to check they can perform.
- BVD booster shots for bulls, ideally 4 weeks before mating.
- BVD vaccination for heifers - 2 shots, 3-8 weeks apart, finishing ideally 4 weeks before mating.
- Priority feed your R2 heifers to promote cycling after calving.

SHEEP



- Have you ordered all your tailing supplies?
- Boost up your lambs with B12 to help them thrive.
- Drench check (FEC) on animals that had a long-acting drench before lambing.

DEER



- Supervisory visits for accredited farmers.
- Remove velvet from stags.
- Set stock fawning mobs onto high quality pasture.
- Prioritise growth of yearlings to send to the works as soon as possible.

WORKING DOGS



- Does your heading dog need a WOOF WOF post-lambing?
- Monthly tablets for Sheep Measles prevention.

Good mating management

by Bianca MacKintosh

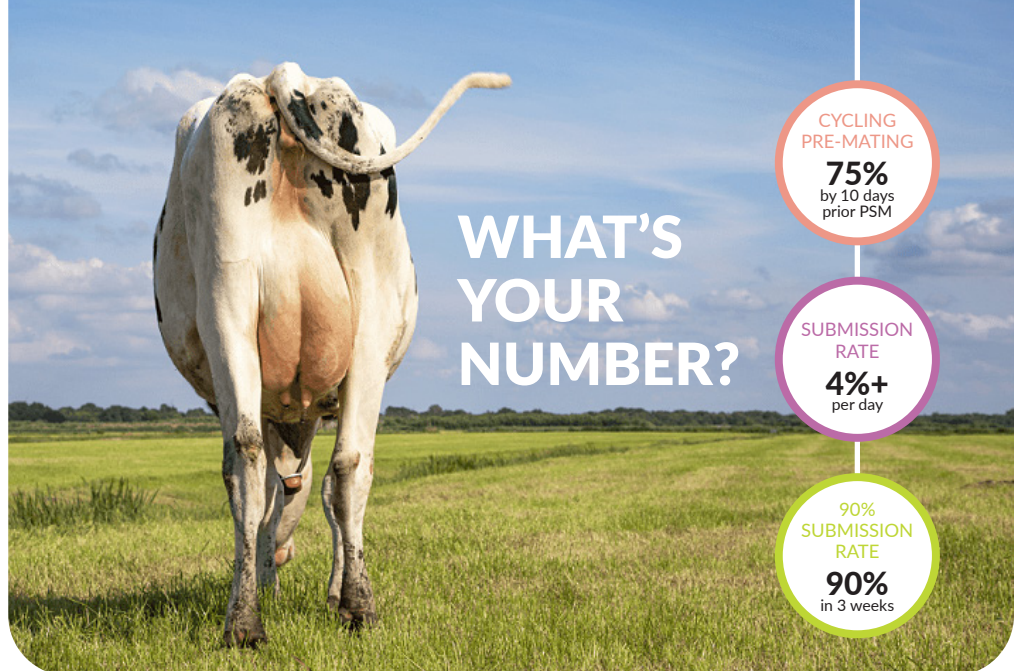
A well-managed mating can result in significant improvements in farm efficiency, which is a hot topic at the moment. Reproductive success requires a year-round focus but, with mating imminent, it's now time to ensure that your hard work pays off and you hit repro targets.

Aim for these numbers:

- >75% cycling 10 days before planned start of mating (PSM).
- At least 4.3% being submitted each day.
- A 3-week submission rate of 90%.

Having 90% of your herd submitted at three weeks should have you on track to achieve a good 6-week in-calf rate of 78% or more. To achieve this, you need to be **submitting at least 4.3% of the herd for insemination every day** and, ideally, have all cows cycling within this period.

If you have an issue with non-cyclers, they need to be identified and treated



before PSM to be cycling again in time for this window. **Heat detecting for at least four weeks prior to mating** is the simplest way to identify non-cycling cows. You might do this with technology, such as collars or tags, or with other aids, such as tail paint or scratchies.

Ten days out from PSM, you can calculate the percentage of cows in your herd that have shown a heat during this detection stage. **If less than 75%, you may have a high level of non-cyclers** and, if left untreated, they will negatively impact your in-calf rates.

Treating non-cyclers is only profitable with early intervention, so ensure this treatment starts **10 days before your PSM** for best return on investment.

There are also other interventions that can increase the rate of submission of your herd and improve your reproductive efficiency, such as 'Why Wait' PG injections, to prompt all cows to have a heat at the start of mating, and heifer synchrony programmes.

Book a repro consult with your KeyVet to make a plan ahead of mating. Good mating begins with good management!

A smarter way of diagnosing mastitis bugs



by Sunita McGrath

A wet spring won't be helping how many cases of mastitis you're seeing, which impact both production and upcoming reproduction, as well as being costly. We can help diagnose what bacteria is causing mastitis in your cows using our new Jupiter testing machines from DairySmart, which are now in the Winton and Gore clinics.

With unique culture plates, these advanced machines test milk samples for different pathogens and deliver accurate results, usually within 24 hours. We're excited to be able to offer this easy and affordable testing process, as understanding which bacteria is causing your mastitis cases will enable the right treatment to be prescribed straight away.

Plus, it will help you figure out what you can do to prevent more cases, depending on what bug it is. This new testing method is also capable of

diagnosing what bacteria is affecting cows with subclinical mastitis, or high cell counts (which you might find after a herd test).

If you are interested in taking better control of mastitis on your farm, talk to your KeyVet about utilising DairySmart Jupiter testing.



Time to wean

- Ensure each calf is meeting weight targets for its breed. Continuing to feed meal after weaning helps limit a 'check' in growth.
- Transition them slowly, reducing milk over a couple of weeks so they adjust and eat enough solid feed (at least 2kg of pasture and 1kg of meal each per day before weaning).
- Drench for the first time at weaning, then every 28 days (oral drenches) or 42 days (pour-on or injectable drenches).



Minimising losses over fawning



by Lisa Roberts

Perinatal and postnatal fawn death is one of the most significant sources of reproductive wastage on NZ deer farms. Here are some of the main causes, and management options to reduce these problems:

- **Dystocia** - most likely related to disturbances around fawning that disrupt the birthing process. By reducing hind stocking rate, you can reduce stress on the hinds to find a suitable fawning site and it means they can have an undisturbed birth.
- **Starvation** - usually an issue with bonding between mother and fawn in the first few hours of birth, it can indicate issues with the fawning environment and disturbances to the hind. Maintain hind stocking rates at <8 per ha during fawning to minimise competition between hinds for fawning sites, and avoid unnecessary disturbances.
- **Misadventure** - ensure fences surrounding fawning paddocks do not have holes big enough for fawns to crawl through. Also, provide shelter for the fawns away from the fence lines. If possible, separating fawning groups by at least one empty paddock can help reduce confusion for the fawn.
- **Disease** - seek veterinary advice if you are seeing perinatal fawn mortality due to disease.



but there are practical steps you can take to mitigate the risk, including spore counting, zinc supplementation, changing grazing strategies and planting alternative grass species or crops.

We will be following the study and will keep you updated with any new developments.

Pre-weaning drenching

by Caitlyn Bell

To do or not to do? As always, it will depend on your farm system, pasture management and stock numbers. A quick chat with your KeyVet could help with deciding what will be best for your farm.

Many farmers will agree that giving lambs a pre-weaning drench will help boost their growth rates and lower their dag score, but, as drench resistance becomes an ever-pressing matter, we must constantly ask ourselves if every drench is necessary.

WormBoss in Australia has completed studies which show that lambs develop resistance to infections and can more quickly reject worm infections when fed high-protein diets. As such, providing

them with access to higher quality pastures should greatly reduce the impact of worms on their production.

The study also shows that **increasing protein supply to ewes in late pregnancy and early lactation can reduce worm burdens by 30-80%**, thus decreasing the loads around the more susceptible lambs. Therefore, having high-protein diet sources might be a way around giving that pre-wean drench.

Equally, it is important to note that a 2010 Beef and Lamb NZ study proved that lambs given a roundworm and tape drench were then 1kg heavier than the control group at weaning, which does support pre-wean drench for positive production gains.

So, there is no right or wrong, but drenching should be well considered and now, thanks to our in-clinic Parasight machines, we can complete quick faecal egg counts which can help guide your decision on whether or not to drench pre-weaning.

Signs of facial eczema moving south

by Donna Hamilton

Facial eczema (FE) is a disease causing liver damage in pasture-grazing livestock that can result in reduced fertility, weight loss, lower milk production, photosensitivity, sunburn and, in severe cases, death.

Stock can contract FE when they ingest toxic fungal spores found in pasture. Typically, FE has been a problem for warmer, wetter parts of New Zealand and has yet to cause any issues in the lower south.

Beef and Lamb NZ is part-way through a study looking into the prevalence of

FE in New Zealand through analysis of fungal spores, associated with FE, found in sheep poo samples, which would indicate that sheep have eaten the fungus in the pasture.

Its latest findings show that FE spores were detected on several of the 65 farms monitored in the South Island between January and April 2024 – including in Otago and Southland. They are currently asking for more farmers to sign up to their 'Sheep Poo Study' to inform future results.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for FE,



Eye disease in working dogs

by Tayla Kingsbury

We all know how vital working dogs are on farms. However, just like humans, these hardworking canines are susceptible to eye diseases. Here are a few common ones to watch out for:

- 1. Conjunctivitis:** Often referred to as "pink eye," conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the lining of the eye and eyelid. When a dog has pink eye we can see redness, squinting, and discharge. Like in humans, conjunctivitis can be caused by bacteria or viral infection, allergies, or getting irritating things (like dust) in their eyes.
- 2. Corneal ulcers:** These are painful sores on the surface of the eye, often resulting from scratches or infections. Look for signs like squinting, weepy eyes and a cloudy or blue cornea. We can diagnose these by staining their eyes with a fluorescent yellow stain that sticks to scratches in the cornea. We also assess how deep the ulcer is. **Catching these early is key to preventing permanent damage**, so if you have a dog with a squinting, sore eye, bring them in as soon as you can!
- 3. Foreign bodies:** Grass seeds are the classic! These objects can rub against the eye causing a corneal ulcer and they need to be removed to prevent further damage.

Prompt treatment is key to ensuring dogs maintain their vision and continue to do the job they do so well!

Staff farm focus: Breeding 'Minis'

Donna Robinson, our customer services rep in Clydevale, shares her experience of breeding Miniature Galloway calves to monetise 'lower breeding worth' dairy cows (and produce some adorable pets).

"By crikey did we have high hopes for these wee guys! We had obtained 20 straws of a Miniature Galloway bull, named Boris, to put to some dairy cows with lower breeding worth (BW) values. The photos of his offspring were so Instagrammable, it was ridiculous!

The lucky recipients got the royal treatment and stayed on grass most of the winter, and then had a calving pad basically to themselves.

The first few calves born, although still lovely, resembled more of a small Speckle Park, but we soon got our first textbook 'Mini'. She was knee height and as wide as she was tall.

We got 13 of these gorgeous calves in total and I sold four as pets and have kept the rest. One is en-route to Pet Day at the end of October!

Apart from this being a passion project, it also serves our wider plan for the dairy herd, where we are striving to have a 0% Bobby calf rate. This year,



Proud 'Mini' calf owner Declan Moore with "Rosie", his first ever pet.

we calved 840 cows and sent away 30 bobby calves in total. By using bulls such as Boris, it gives those lower BW cows an opportunity to provide us with a saleable calf. These ladies are, in my eyes, the money makers!

At this point in South Otago, the market is not flooded with such boutique breeds, so any surplus calves got snapped up very quickly with a waiting list for next season. While the end game with these guys is unknown, we see them as the perfect lifestyle block accessory that does not require shearing or dagging and they have personality to boot!"

Scan here to read more



Clinic corner



Getting behind worthy causes!

We love supporting important fundraising efforts and local events.

Our clinics recently celebrated Red, Black and White Day for Southland Charity Hospital; sporting some great outfits and raising funds for a great cause. 😊



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