

Rural round-up



Lisa Roberts
Large Animal Vet
(East)

“Saying you don’t have time to spend on yourself is like saying you don’t have time to stop for gas because you’re too busy driving.”

It is the hardest thing for many of us to do... stop.

I realise that taking a week-long holiday is not possible at the moment, but just stopping for a cuppa, or a chat to the neighbour; getting off the farm for a few hours each week; or spending time doing a hobby to give yourself something else to think about, all do wonders, especially in challenging times!

Investing to improve your overall stock health also comes into play significantly this season. In particular, increasing your feed supply or decreasing your feed demand may be the only options.

Reducing the number of mouths to feed earlier rather than later can improve the health and condition of those remaining, and therefore limit long-term repercussions.

Body condition scoring will be a great tool in your belt. Monitoring, maintaining and making decisions based on this will allow good flow-on effects into next season.

You are never expected to know everything, however there is always someone out there, knowledgeable in their field and usually more than willing to help.

Get the right people around you to chat, discuss options and bounce ideas off. It can be a good excuse for a scone and coffee in town too!

Salmonella surge in the south

by Sunita McGrath

Amongst the raft of negative effects of the recent extreme wet weather, there have been increased outbreaks of salmonella on southern farms. A real kick in the guts for farmers that are already having a tough time!

Salmonella is stress-related and the continued cold, rainy conditions this spring have contributed to the unusual surge of the disease we’ve seen on dairy farms.

Highly infectious, salmonella is transferred through faeces. Symptoms include a sudden drop in milk production in cows, diarrhoea, high temperature and rapid loss of condition. I find affected animals get a particular ‘look’ with a tucked-up belly and a sadness in their eyes.

Animals get very sick, very quickly and death is likely. Early identification and fast treatment is necessary to save affected animals and stop an outbreak from escalating.

Preventative vaccination is key to reducing the likelihood of a severe and



expensive outbreak. The cost of the vaccine is a small amount compared to having the disease.

The salmonella vaccine, Salvexin+B, can be given to cows at any time. However, if vaccinating during an outbreak, it can take 7-10 days to see a slowing down in case numbers.

Salvexin+B is also effective for sheep, protecting them against Salmonella Brandenburg in spring and Salmonella Hindmarsh in summer and autumn.

The risk of a salmonella outbreak is real and this season may change the way we look at vaccination for diseases like this. I’m sure those who have experienced it never want to deal with it ever again! Talk to your vet about vaccinating your herd or flock.

ON-FARM FOCUS



DAIRY



- Check calves are the right weight before weaning.
- Drench calves appropriately and look out for coccidiosis.
- Follow your mating plan to meet targets and continue any hormone interventions to get cows cycling at the right time.
- Look out for lameness and review farm systems to aid prevention.

BEEF



- Consider fertility testing your bulls to check they can perform.
- BVD booster shots for bulls, heifers and cows, ideally 4 weeks pre-mating.
- Have you booked us in for disbudding your calves?

SHEEP



- FEC check before deciding on pre-wean drenching.
- Keep an eye out for mastitis.
- Consider offloading more lambs at weaning to free up some feed.
- Order in some fly prevention.

DEER



- Get your velvet supervisory visit done as early as possible.
- Book us in to velvet sire stags when they are almost ready.
- Set stock fawning mobs onto high quality pasture.

WORKING DOGS



- Does your heading dog need a WOOF WOF post-lambing?



Preventing lameness

by Lily Chin

As a consequence of the unrelenting rain over the last couple of months, cows' feet will be soft and susceptible to damage and infection.

As we all know, lame cows are time-draining, costly and a welfare issue. While you can't control the weather, here are a few things you can do to lessen the impact and prevent a high number of lameness cases:

- **Ensure that the shed, yards and feed pad surfaces are clean between each milking.** Stones on concrete are particularly bad as they put cows at risk of sole injuries.
- **Allow the cows to walk at their own pace to the shed.** Putting too much pressure behind them will increase their chance of misplacing their feet.
- **Give them room in yards and use backing gates appropriately.** The backing gate is designed for taking up space, not for pushing up cows. Cows bunched tightly together are more likely to slip or hurt their legs.
- **Have a consistent milking routine.**
- **Keep lame cows in a separate mob close to the shed** to reduce their walking distance and only bring them in for milking once a day.

Early identification and treatment of lame cows will give them the best chance of a quick recovery and will also reduce the chance of lameness reoccurring in the future, so remain vigilant for signs of lameness.

The majority of cases won't require antibiotics, however, most will benefit from anti-inflammatory pain relief and a block on the sound claw to take pressure off the painful side. This treatment can make a big difference to how severe cases become and the run-on effort and costs.

We understand you'll be under the pump with mating, so give us a ring if you would like a hand treating lame cows or ask your KeyVet for further prevention advice specific to your farming system.

SAVE on your hoof knife needs!

Get 2 for 1 on hoof knife sharpening and 10% off all hoof knives this November. Drop your hoof knives into our Winton or Gore clinics for sharpening, or ask our delivery driver to collect them from your farm!

Observing cow health with tech



by Christine Utting & Penny Wallace

Wearable tech gives users a great insight into what is happening inside their cows.

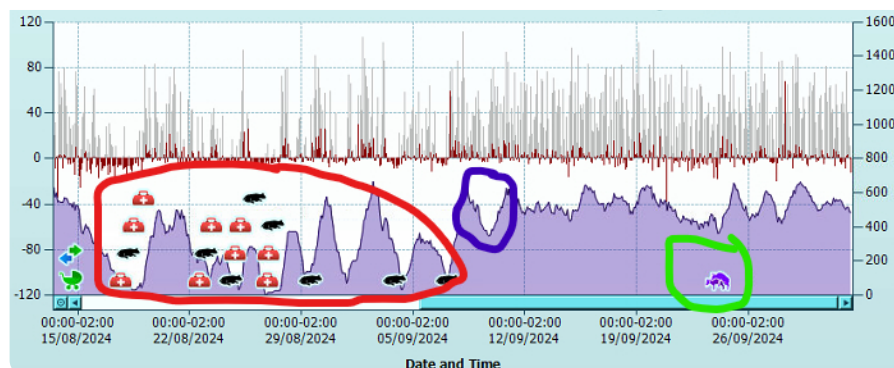
A serious disease process was recently seen by vets Dan and Penny. The cow had a history of recurrent health alerts corresponding with drops in rumination post-calving and had been unsuccessfully treated with several different antibiotics.

During the clinical exam, she had a 'ping' on the left side of her abdomen, which is a classic sign for a left displacement of the abomasum (LDA). The LDA was surgically corrected and the cow responded well.

Looking at her rumination graph (pictured below), you can see the period of recurrent rumination drops (indicated in red). She had surgery (on the day circled in blue) and since then her rumination has stabilised, and she even had her first heat recently (highlighted in green).

This case highlights the value of getting a vet to check over sick cows, especially if they have not responded to multiple rounds of treatment.

We can provide flowcharts for farmers using wearable tech to help you decide what actions to take with cows on the health alert list.



Calf care

Keep an eye out for coccidiosis

We have seen quite a few cases of coccidiosis in calves as some farms had to house them undercover for longer than normal due to the weather. These intense conditions allow coccidia parasite levels to build and they will also be thriving in pastures.

More commonly seen in calves from 3-8 months old, coccidiosis tends to present as a sudden onset of diarrhoea, which may contain blood and mucus. Impacts can vary from decreased growth rates right through to death. To confirm a diagnosis, we collect a faecal sample for testing and then treat affected calves.

Use the right drench

Following the prolonged wet weather, ensuring calves are drenched appropriately is even more important, as they will have increased exposure to worm eggs and larvae which thrive in these conditions. Young animals are most at risk as they don't yet have a well-developed immunity to the different worm species. As calves grow, FEC testing is recommended.

Scan for further advice and the calf drenches we have available.



The recovery phase

by Donna Hamilton

Hopefully, when you read this, we have had a good stretch of weather that is a significant improvement on the hideous weeks we had during early spring. Even if this is the case, there is still some recovery work to do with our stock. A big effort is needed to keep the effects of a very wet spring within the current season.

We all know that effective reproduction drives our productivity. Most of the capital stock in our regions have lost significant weight and regaining this is key to effective repro. At least sheep farmers have more time for this than cattle owners, where mating is well under way. We hope you have been successful with all the stressful decisions you have been making with this in mind.

It is essential to **put high priority on capital stock** - which includes ewe lambs - throughout the season. Have a discussion with your bankers to ensure their understanding of future gain, not just short-term bank balance!

Here are some key points for animal health management through this season:

Parasites – avoiding parasites for best production means 'high' covers, and non-grass species. Testing before and after drenching is essential to give confidence in what you're doing.

Vitamin B12 – don't be caught with low B12 for any days this season as this will reduce energy conversion efficiency. You need to extract maximum energy from every mouthful! Ask us about testing, and supplement plans.

Body condition score – prepare yourself for shuffling stock among groups fairly regularly to make the essential gains as efficiently as possible.

Demand and supply of feed – keep



questioning how you can manipulate these and bring in the experts to help you find the best fit for your farm.

We are keen to help you navigate this tricky season, so please get in touch with us for support.

Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) biosecurity



by Donna Hamilton

Stock affected: ALL cattle (dairy AND beef).

Spread by: Nose-to-nose contact between animals.

Infection and effect:

0-40 days gestation – embryo death.

40-120 days gestation – mummified fetus, abortion and Persistently Infected (PI) animals to be born. PI's are a huge cause of disease spread and poor growth.

120-282 days gestation – stillbirth, weak/stunted calves and defects.

Prevention:

AVOID NOSE-TO-NOSE CONTACT with unknown stock during gestation (for all cows, vaccinated or not)!

Take care with over the fence contact, crossing a river, grazing/purchase of stock of unknown status.

Contact us for more information and see www.bvdfree.org.nz.



Reducing stress at weaning



by Holly Hender

One of the most common issues we see around weaning is chronic, non-progressive pneumonia. This can be caused by bacteria, mycobacteria and certain viruses. Symptoms are often subclinical, but lambs may pant, have trouble breathing and cough with exercise.

Lambs with pneumonia are more likely to develop pleurisy, where their lungs stick to their chest wall. **Where more than 20% of the lung surface is affected, growth rates are halved.** These carcasses are downgraded or condemned at processing plants.

Studies show that **an average of 24% of lambs on any farm are affected by pneumonia.** A number of activities at weaning influence its development, including, but not limited to:

- Shearing
- Drenching
- High temperatures and humidity
- Dust
- Excessive exercise
- Crowding
- Poor ventilation
- Low immunity
- High parasite burdens.

A healthy, well-fed lamb, under minimal stress, is much less likely to develop pneumonia at weaning. There are also a number of preventative steps you can take to minimise the development of pneumonia and pleurisy, including:

- Drenching and/or shearing lambs pre or post-weaning, not on the same day.
- Utilising your satellite yards to keep yarding time to a minimum, reduce overcrowding in the shed and to enable you to bring smaller groups into the yards.
- Mustering early morning and in the evening when it is cooler and less humid.
- Watering the yards to reduce dust.
- Minimising yarding and mustering post-weaning (e.g. if you are doing regular weighing).
- Minimising the use of dogs in yards.
- Minimising the use of vehicles and dogs when moving lambs and letting them go at their own pace. By moving them slowly, you reduce the extent and duration of open mouth panting.



To spay or not to spay?

by Hugh Hasselman

Most female farm working dogs are not spayed until working performance has been proven, to determine if she has good breeding potential.

However, many of the most common health problems with working bitches are associated with their reproductive

functions, with Huntaways more susceptible to the below conditions than Heading dogs:

- Mis-mating
- Dystocia (whelping difficulties)
- Mammary gland neoplasia (cancer)
- Pyometra (severe uterine infection)
- Vaginal fold hyperplasia and vaginal prolapse.

Health benefits of spaying:

- Reduced risk of cancer. Spaying while young significantly lowers the risk to the bitch of developing mammary tumours later in life, as well as removing the risk of ovarian and uterine cancer.
- Prevention of pyometra.
- Treatment and prevention of vaginal hyperplasia and vaginal fold prolapse. The median age for vaginal hyperplasia is two years old. There is also a genetic component to the prevalence of this condition. Once present, the problem will recur in successive heats unless they are spayed as a preventative measure.

Behavioural benefits of spaying:

- No heat cycles and confined time out.
- More focused on their work, reduced

problems with roaming, team disruptions and fights.

- Prevents unplanned matings and pregnancies, with their loss from the dog team at busy times.

Potential health risks of spaying:

- If spayed while immature, there may be less than optimal hip and elbow joint development and cruciate ligament strength in some large breed dogs. While this has not been confirmed in NZ working dogs, it would be a factor for consideration in large, still growing, Huntaways.
- Weight gain due to increased appetite and decreased metabolic rate. This can be managed by adjusting feeding levels.
- Hypothyroidism is a very rare disease in dogs, with spayed large breed dogs being at an increased risk.
- Urinary incontinence due to a weakened bladder sphincter can occasionally happen in any breed of dog due to reduced oestrogen levels after being spayed.

Deciding whether or not to spay can be complex, so it is worthwhile discussing the benefits and risks with your vet.

Clinic corner



You can't rain on our parade

Pie shout

We can all agree that the last couple of months have been ones to forget weather-wise, but one good thing to come out of all the rain was the awesome southern community spirit.

We were stoked to be able to reach out to our farmers with pies and savouries across the region, thanks to FMG and Southland Federated Farmers!

A Ceilidh to remember

The Winton crew had a blast dancing the rain away with over 120 locals at their 'Scottish Sun Shout' Ceilidh! It seems some bad moves can chase off anything... 🤪



Save the date

Invercargill clinic Gala Day

10am-2pm, Saturday 9th November

Bring the whole family along to celebrate the opening of our newly extended Invercargill small animal clinic and stables on Findlay Road. There'll be a BBQ, face painting, a best dressed pet photo competition and more! Keep an eye on our Facebook page for more details.

Sheep and beef Local Vet Yarns

11am-1pm, 28th November at Jeff Farm and 5th December in Owaka

Lunch is on us! Have a yarn with our vets about hot topics on-farm, like weaning, condition scoring and parasite and trace element management. More events to come in the New Year.

Our clinics

Balclutha
Gore
Winton
Otautau

Tapanui
Invercargill
Lumsden
Clydevale

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0800 VETSOUTH

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