

## Mamyzin Milk Quality Award Winners Announced

You may remember last year we announced our 1st Mamyzin Milk Quality Award winners—Gary & Kathy Rowlands. The award was open to anyone who granted us 3<sup>rd</sup> party access to their Fencepost account (just the SCC & Production & Quality data) and the award was made available by the good people at Boehringer, producers of Mamyzin. Well we've done it again this season. We followed the bulk counts of all the people who granted us 3<sup>rd</sup> party access from the start of the season to the end of November and then found the farms with the lowest bulk count average for that period. This season we have two winners: one for herds below 300 cows and one for larger herds. The winners of the small herd category were once again **Gary & Kathy Rowlands** with an average bulk count of a staggering 41,000 while the winners of the larger herd award with an equally impressive average of 56,000 were **Colin & Caroline Koch**.

Congratulations to both couples. \$500 has been credited to each of their accounts.

If you had a better season average than those then you only have yourself to blame for not granting us access so we could give you the credit instead.

Remember if you want to be eligible for the award next season you need to grant us 3<sup>rd</sup> party access. Go to your fencepost account, find the bit that allows you to grant 3<sup>rd</sup> party access and assign it to us. Our user name is "Elthamvets"

## BVD Testing 2013

We had a great response last year with the BVD bulk tank testing. Well over half of our clients booked testing through us. Hopefully most of you know why annual BVD monitoring is a good idea by now so I won't go into that again except to say we did find some actively infected herds this season and about 20% of herds tested had the highest level of antibodies (indicating current or recent exposure) so there's still plenty of BVD infection out there.

This is just a reminder that the LIC reps will be booking in testing for next season soon so we'll be trying to get in first! If you book with us, the reporting is free, but if you book with LIC direct, you'll have to pay a \$45 reporting fee to cover our costs (but you will get an excellent report). If you don't want a report (+ charge) you need to let us know (if you haven't already) and we'll mark you down as opting out of any BVD stuff (also ensure LIC send you the results instead of us if you ever order testing).

**If you'd like bulk tank BVD testing this year, please ring and tell us ASAP & we'll order it for you – just make sure you don't double book it with LIC when they come calling.** Currently listed prices for the LIC testing are \$374<sup>1</sup> for the full package (best option for most herds), or \$45<sup>1</sup> for antibody only testing (reasonable for low risk, low antibody herds).

<sup>1</sup> Prices include GST and are set by LIC so may be subject to change.

## The Mars Bar Method

*The only way to pull off a Sunday afternoon "quickie" with their 8-year old son in the flat was to send him out on the balcony with a Mars Bar and tell him to report on all the street activities. Their 8-year old began his commentary as his parents put their plan into operation: 'There's a car being towed from the car park,' he shouted. 'An ambulance just drove past.' 'Looks like the Anderson's have visitors,' he called out. 'Matt's riding a new bike!' 'Looks like the Sanders are moving!' 'Jason is on his skateboard!' After a few moments he announced, 'The Coopers are having a shag!' Startled, his mum and dad shot up in bed! Dad cautiously called out, 'How do you know that?' 'Jimmy Cooper is standing on his balcony with a Mars Bar.'*

## Calf vaccinations due now!!

Give Nicola a call to book 1st and 2nd Lepto & BVD vaccinations.



Remember if there's any chance of these calves being exported in the future please request Bovillis BVD vaccine as opposed to Hiprabovis (Viracare). Your herd can be vaccinated at scanning; heifers out grazing or upon return.



## New Drench Pricing Policy for 2013

**We start the New Year with an aggressive new pricing policy for all our cattle & sheep drenches.**

**If you have been buying your drenches from us regularly then you are in for a pleasant surprise the next time you come in to pick up your favourite anthelmintic.**

**If you have drifted away from us on the assumption that we were too expensive and you would get a sharper deal from OTC outlets, think again.**

**Come in and talk to our Trading Manager, John Larkin, or give him a call. He's got some fabulous deals available and is champing at the bit to help you out (that is once he gets over the initial shock of brutally slashing those margins on all our drenches).**

**Give him a call; I think you will be pleased you did.**

**See in store Merial Ancare's new promotion  
The Reel Deal  
Fishing Rod & Reel or Rapala Knife**



## FEBRUARY 2013

I'm sitting in my office writing this while I watch a lovely soft, soaking rain fall outside. For us townies the last 2-3 weeks have been spectacular and in my case fine weather puts my South African wife in a very good mood so long may it last. However I imagine all of you out there on farms had been hoping for some significant rain and it looks like this week you may get it.

Of course with this rain following all the heat we've had (and can expect to return), will come a rise in facial eczema spores so if you haven't got yourself sorted yet, it's time you did. Read on in this newsletter for a basic eczema refresher.

The front office team have been busy recently. Nicola got married last weekend and is now officially Mrs Childs. Congratulations to Nicola & Blair; as expected she was a stunningly beautiful bride and Blair should consider himself a very lucky young man. Joan became a grandmother to little Olivia (she's very proud & excited). Our much loved nurse, Jill, won a trip to the Wellington 7's which she thoroughly enjoyed. Frank finally received the fancy ladder he's been waiting for to make life safer in the warehouse so he's now happy too.

It's about this time of year that the season begins to take its toll on some of the herd and as a result your bulk count can start to rise. Unless you have clinical mastitis to deal with, those cows are generally telling you it's time to either go once a day, dry her off and take a holiday until next season or send her to the works if she's a problem cow who up until now has got away with it because there has been more milk in the vat to dilute her contribution.

If you are about to dry cows off early, don't forget to treat them with an appropriate dry cow therapy before you do and, given the length of time between now & the next season, following up with a tube of Teatseal would seem a very wise decision to keep her protected until next season. Your **dry cow consultation forms are included with this newsletter** so please put them somewhere safe and fill them out & **return to us well before you come in to purchase this season's requirements.** Enjoy the rest of the summer.

## High Somatic Cell Counts

We have had a number of clients coming in recently to purchase large amounts of mastitis drugs to treat high cell count cows, after having a herd test done and wanting to treat all the cows that tested over 1,000,000.

When you are faced with a large group of high cell count cows you have a number of options and treating them all is not necessarily the best or most cost effective one. Take some time to consider what the best option is for each of those cows. Do a rapid mastitis test (RMT with paddle) to try and isolate which quarter/quarters are infected. Look through their records taking note of their age, the historic SCC, whether or not they had DCT last season, and how many times they have had clinical mastitis in that quarter. Sure, some of them will be worth treating, especially if they are young, haven't been treated regularly for mastitis or been high in previous seasons; even more so if you can isolate the problem to a single quarter. Generally speaking, younger high cell count cows are always worth one attempt at treating during lactation. So by all means give them a go; talk to one of us first for advice on what might be the best treatment.

What if they are older cows, which have had dry cow therapy before (maybe for a number of years) and remain consistently high? There is an extremely poor chance of being able to cure them now. So don't waste time, money and stress attempting to cure them when we know they probably have a chronic Staph infection and there is very little chance of a cure. She should be culled now so she can no longer infect young vulnerable cows during milking. We know the best chance of curing high SCC cows is by using long acting DCT. So if you are looking at a number of younger cows that you think will be worth treating and are maybe struggling with condition, drying them off early can serve two purposes.

Dry Cow Therapy is a wonderful product and cleans up a lot of cows and herds each year. However it isn't a miracle product, even if you do the whole herd each year. Some cows are past curing and need to be culled. That's what your treatment and herd testing records are for. And if you've allowed this problem to develop by either not treating cows with DCT in the past, ignoring advice to do the whole herd, or chosen to only treat the worst high cell count cows year after year (including those cows that have been high in previous seasons despite DCT) you have created a situation now where whole herd therapy alone just isn't going to fix the problem. You need to use a co-ordinated program of culling alongside whole herd DCT of cows that remain; possibly for a number of seasons before you begin to see real progress.

## Clinic & Farm Supplies

Railway Street, Eltham  
Ph. (06) 764 8196  
[www.elthamvetservice.co.nz](http://www.elthamvetservice.co.nz)

## Trading Depot

Hollard Engineering,  
Victoria Street, Kaponga  
Ph. (06) 764 6686  
J Larkin 0274 482 585

## Veterinarians

Alistair McDougall BVSc - CEO  
Giles Gilling BVSc BSc MRCVS  
Andrew Weir BVSc, PGDip (Epi)  
Jim Robins BVSc, BSc, DipPharm  
Polly Otterson BVSc, MSc,  
Teresa Carr BVSc  
Adrian Clark BVSc  
Linley Gilling BVSc  
Lindsay Lash BVSc  
James Bruce BVSc  
Leon Christensen BVSc

## Office

Joan Hughes John Larkin BBS  
Jill Watson Sue Morresey  
Nicola Duthie Frank Suter



## Pregnancy Testing

Scanning is upon us once again and by the time this article goes to print some of you would already have had your 6 week scan done and be patting yourself on the back for your 90+% 6 week in calf rate! This article is just a quick review on the ins and outs of scanning time so everyone is up to scratch on 'D' day so the process can run as smooth as possible and both parties can get what they want from the day.

### When to Scan

Timing of the scan is important depending on what information you want in the way of calving dates, Fertility Focus Reports, in calf/ late/empty or just pregnant/empty. If a Fertility Focus Report is wanted or all calving dates known then we recommend scanning around 12 weeks after start of mating and then scan the rechecks 7 weeks after bull goes out. This is because when a foetus is over 13 weeks old it is very hard to age accurately and once it goes over the brim of the pelvis it is impossible to age, so we can provide educated guesses on these older pregnancies but that is all they will be. If you want just yes/no and/or late calvers for inductions then usually just one scanning about 6 weeks after the bull is out will do.

	Times to Scan
<b>Fertility Focus Report</b>	12weeks after PSM + Rechecks 7 weeks after bulls out
<b>All Calving Dates</b>	12 weeks after PSM + Rechecks 7 weeks after bulls out
<b>Induction Dates</b>	At 6 weeks after bulls out
<b>Yes/No</b>	> 6 weeks after bulls out.

### Scanning Accuracy

Last season we scanned over 72,000 cows and I would hate to think what the lifetime numbers of some of our wiser vets would be! As in any job, with fatigue, difficult working conditions, uncooperative cows and time constraints comes mistakes. Even if we were 99.9% accurate that still means that nearly 75 cows could have been misdiagnosed last season. Not only could it be operator error but mistakes made due to poor eartags, mistakes when reading and recording numbers and double ups with eartag numbers can cause the wrong cow to be called empty or pregnant. The chance of the proper diagnosis being reached can be greatly increased by providing us with as much information as possible including definite bull in and out dates and mating dates if possible as well as clear, readable eartags and making sure all numbers are recorded correctly.

When it comes to dating pregnancies mistakes can be made but there is also some individual cow variation on how long her actual gestation will be and how big her foetus will be at a certain age. We take a cow's gestation length to be 282 days long but that is in fact an average and majority of cows will be longer or shorter than this date. Most cows will calve within 10 days either side of their calving date but there are still about 5% of cows that will be outside of this and even over 2 weeks earlier or later than the date given. It is just something to think about next time a cow is late and you go to blame the scanner.

### Rectal Perforation

This is another unfortunate risk of scanning cows and occurs when a cow decides to strain at the wrong time and then we cause damage to the lining of the rectum; we try our best to avoid this but it can and does happen (fortunately very rarely). Many dairy practices now get their clients to sign a waiver accepting that occasional mistakes are made in diagnosis and injury to the cow is an occasional and unavoidable outcome and they will not be held liable if they do. I would like to think that with another scanning season just around the corner we won't have to ask the same of you.

## Body Condition Scoring

According to LIC, 90% of fertility is determined by feeding and 10% by genetics. I thought it was 80% feeding and 20% genetics but, either way, feeding is more important than breeding. An important part of good feeding is monitoring your cows' weight gains and losses throughout the season. The ideal would be regular weighing but that requires expensive equipment. So Dairy NZ developed a system called Body Condition Scoring to measure the stored reserves a cow can call on to meet her energy needs if her diet is not providing enough. It is quick and cheap and requires only eyeballs, pencil and paper.

Six of our vets are now qualified in Body Condition Scoring and last year we ran a short course teaching farmers how to do it too. After only 5 sessions our 'students' were condition scoring very accurately. There was only a 0.2 of a BCS difference between the highest and lowest results. One BCS for a Friesian cow is about 33kgs so I hope you are as impressed as I was!

If you would like to **learn how to Body Condition Score** too, we will be running a beginners course of six 1.5 hour sessions on Mondays, starting at 1pm. Phone the clinic to put your name down and give us your email address so we can let you know when and where we will start. The cost will be \$50 per session or \$200 for all six, chargeable to your account.

## FACIAL ECZEMA BASICS

Prevention is the key to minimising production loss as a result of Facial Eczema (FE). Facial eczema is caused by the ingestion of sporidesmin (a toxin) which is found at the base of the grass sward in dead material. Sporidesmin in the animal leads to liver damage which then prevents the normal removal of a plant pigment, phylloerythrin. When the plant pigment is in superficial blood vessels, it reacts with UV light from the sun and causes skin lesions. While the skin lesions are most visible, don't forget about the underlying liver damage.

### Signs that facial eczema may be on your farm:

- Decreased milk production (as much as 50%!)
- Skin changes, restlessness, shade seeking
- Head shaking, weight loss
- Decreased growth rates
- Reduced lifetime production and reproductive performance

### How to confirm you have a problem?

- Skin lesions in conjunction with high spore counts
- Blood test or post mortem to check for liver damage

### Treating facial eczema:

- Provide shade
- Remove from pasture with likely high spore counts
- Provide clean water and safe feed
- Application of UV light protectant
- B vitamins
- Drenching with Manderson's Mix or Eczema Oil seems to aid recovery in affected cows

Animals may need a vet visit for secondary bacterial infections and other supportive treatment.

### Risky time periods:

The toxin tends to be present in late summer and autumn, and during periods of warm, light rain. Temperatures ideal for toxin production are hot days (10-30°C) and soil temperatures greater than 12°C at night.

### Prevention is key:

- Southern facing hills are safer during risky times as they tend to dry out in the wind.
- Monitor spore counts in your area.
- Pasture management: lower stocking rates, high pre and post grazing levels (since spores at grass base). Do not top paddocks.
- In high risk paddocks, cultivars can be changed to lower risk species such as chicory and red clover.
- Fungicides (Mycotak, Benlate or Topsin) can reduce spore counts for 4-6 weeks, but must be applied before the anticipated risk period (which can be extremely variable in Taranaki)
- Breeding cows for resistance to toxin (more theoretical than practical at this stage; definitely 'doable' in sheep)
- Zinc prevention should begin at least **2-3 weeks before** spore counts become dangerous. Options for zinc provision include:
  - Zn oxide drench daily for milkers
  - Weekly Zn oxide pasture spray
  - Zn sulphate in drinking water (it is not palatable so introduce gradually at low doses)
  - Intraruminal slow release Zn capsules given about 7-10 days before anticipated rise in spore counts and repeated every 4-6 weeks as needed while risk remains high (timing depends on which product you use)

Although spore counts are low at present they could change quickly now we have had some rain. You should be treating with zinc at a quarter or half dosage to get cattle used to the taste so that, if you need to go to full dose quickly, you can do so without putting them off drinking altogether.

I know that many of you control facial eczema really well with what you are doing already but those of you who find it more problematic may find something useful here.

The traditional way to assess facial eczema risk is by counting the spores in samples of grass from the cows' next paddock. We recommend that you give your cows a full dose of zinc when spore counts reach 40,000 per gram of pasture. If counts go over 250,000 zinc alone is not enough to protect cows, you need to be giving them other feed or spraying pasture with fungicides as well. We charge \$20 (incl.) for pasture spore counts and results are available the same day. Another way to assess facial eczema risk is by counting the spores in a dung sample. This measures how many spores the cows are actually eating, not just how many spores are in the paddock. We recommend you give your cows a full dose of zinc when faecal spore counts reach 75,000 – 100,000/gm of wet dung. A well mixed sample from as many cows as possible will give the best result. Dung samples are sent to the lab, turnaround time is three days and the cost is \$52.

What about measuring how much zinc the cows are consuming? The concentration of zinc in trough water measures how much zinc you are giving them. Trough water should contain between 60 and 230mg zinc per litre depending on the degree of protection required. The concentration of zinc in the dung measures how much they are actually drinking. Faecal zinc should be above 200mg per kg of wet dung. We send these samples away so turn around time is about 3 days and the charge is \$26.

Finally, high levels of dietary copper may increase the damage done by facial eczema spores. So it is probably NOT a good idea to supplement copper during the FE season. We know that high levels of zinc can deplete cows' copper reserves but it is better to measure liver copper levels in cull cows at the end of the season and then give the herd whatever copper they need.

