

PREGNANCY TESTING

We're a long way through scanning and our average empty rates to date for the season are 13% with an average mating length of 10.6 weeks. This compares to an average of 12% empty last season with average mating length stabilising at about 10.5 weeks after big drops in the last few years.

We always talk about empty rate, but it is hard to compare empty rates with your neighbours. Empty rate varies with how long you mated for. Anyone can improve their empty rate by leaving the bull out for ages, but as we know it's not an efficient way to farm. You could also improve your empty rate by culling some of those clearly bulling cows before scanning rolls around! We should be comparing 6-week-in-calf-rate (6WICR) instead. This is a fairer way to compare repro results farm to farm and get a good grip on how you're doing. You can find your herd's Fertility Focus Report (FFR) on Minda Live or Myherd. This year we're asking you to give us access to your herds data, so if you can't find your FFR we can look it up for you.

More widely, how do we measure up compared to the rest of the country? Taranaki has the smallest average herd numbers in NZ and has the best production per ha in the north island (gets beaten by Canterbury, Southland, Otago). How about reproduction? The national average not-in-calf rate is 15.6%. The Manawatu/Hawkes Bay/Wairarapa have the worst 6WICR in the country with an average of 65% and Taranaki is the best in the whole country with an average 70% 6WICR! That's something to be proud of!

Results pulled from our clients FFRs show a wide range of results. The top 25% of farmers in the country are achieving an average 6WICR of 75%. Our average was 71.4%. This is above the Taranaki average, with our best result a huge 84% and the lowest 55%.

We can also look at 3-week-submission-rate (3WSR) on the FFR. The target is for greater than 90% submitted in the first 3 weeks. Our average is 84%. The top end of the range was 97% and low end was 67%.

Finally, another good measure on the FFR is heat detection rates. The target is for more than 95% of cows older than 3, that have been calved more than 8 weeks before the start of mating to be put up for AB in the first 3 weeks of mating. If you're getting less than this there is a good chance you're missing cows on heat. The average for our clients was 87%, and the range was from 96%-75%.

As you can see there is a wide range in how people are doing. Perhaps you got your scanning results, and you'd like them to be a bit (or a lot) better. If you did want to improve things, where would you start? If you want help, we can sit down with you and look into your FFR and other reports from MINDA and try to pin-point where to spend your time and money. Is it the bulls that aren't performing? Are the cows cycling but not holding? Is it the AB period that is the problem? Are you getting early pregnancy loss? Without a careful look at your info all we can do is guess. If you want to book a repro consult call the clinic. Overall, though, well done team!

TRACE ELEMENTS TESTING

Now is the time to assess trace element reserves in our stock going into winter. That way if we find deficiency or marginal results, we can take action and correct it before we expect cows to perform in spring. This of course applies to both our beef and dairy herds. Testing also gives us the opportunity to assess if the supplements you are paying for, are working. Liver samples taken from cull cows at your abattoir, or liver biopsy in the standing cow, is the best way to assess COPPER, SELENIUM, VIT B12 and ZINC. To test cull cows, we can send a form to you via email, or you can pick one up at the clinic **which must accompany** your cows to the works. If you have already sent your culls but are still interested in assessing trace elements in your stock we can also do a liver biopsy at your farm. It is a simple, low risk procedure where we take a small sample of liver between the ribs in a standing cow. A head bail is required. The cost is approximately \$40/cow (we sample 5) excluding the lab fees. The benefit is that we are assessing the better performing animals in your business, as opposed to cull cows.

COLLARS in COWS

If you have collars or are thinking of getting collars, let us know!

We want to help you get the most value possible out of the technology.

By allowing your vet access to your monitoring system, we can offer:

- Assistance monitoring transition cow health
- Advice on screening cows on the health and distress reports
- Troubleshooting of herd health issues and poor repro performance

To discuss, contact Holly



Eltham Vet Services

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April 2022

I've just returned from a wonderful trip to the South Island where we did the West Coast Wilderness Trail (bikes) and then the Queen Charlotte Sound Walk. Fantastic! What a stunning country we live in. One good thing to come out of Covid is that more New Zealanders have spent time travelling around their own country rather than hopping on a plane. We may not agree on much, but I think we can all agree we are very lucky to be living where we do. Isn't it nice not to have to run back to your car to grab your phone to scan in every time you go

somewhere? One less thing to remember is always a bonus for me.

You no longer have to scan in when you come into the clinic either, but given the prevalence of Covid around the province (we've had 2 cases here plus others have had to isolate due to positive family members) we do ask that you respect the mask rules still in place and continue to put on a mask when you come in (and make use of the hand sanitiser available). We really can't afford to have 3 or 4 staff members out of action all at once, so I don't think it's too much to ask if it helps us to continue to provide a service.

Not surprisingly this newsletter has quite a lot in it about drying off and the compliance issues related to that. You'll see a plea for 3rd party access to you Minda and/or Myherd information. While it's not yet compulsory to do so, it's only a matter of time before it will be; so why not do it now? Granting 3rd party access gives us far more information on your herd and the ability to make a more informed recommendation with regard to your DCT requirements and the best types of treatments you should use during the season (which will also help with RVM consults). We're only after the production & quality stuff related to somatic cells and so on. We don't want, or need, to have access to any sensitive financial data. If you've got a farm adviser you grant them 3rd party access without thinking. So, if you're reading this and you haven't got around to granting us access please go to your PC or iPad and give us access as soon as you've finished your coffee, or even easier fill out the attached forms and return to us.

Speaking of RVM consults, we're getting to that time of year where we need to set you up for the new season. So, feel free to get in early and book in a consult with your vet to sort your restricted veterinary medicines for the 22/23 season.

We can do it at the clinic, or we can tack on an extra 30 minutes after a call on farm and do it there. We'll fit in with what works best for you. The main thing is to try and get them all done by the end of this season.

And finally, Polly is now in her final year as a practising veterinarian. She'll be pulling the pin at the end of March next year. As she transitions towards retirement, she has dropped her working days to 3 a week. So, if you want to see your favourite vet in clinic or on farm in the next 12 months please remember she doesn't work Wednesdays or Thursdays. Boy oh boy she's going to be a big loss when she hangs up her stethoscope next year so make the most of her while you still can.

Hi all. I'm Ryan. I've been working in the Manawatu since graduating from vet school, though I'm originally from Northland. I've been hearing for years that the grass is greener in Taranaki and I've finally headed up to find out. I can't wait to meet new clients, check out new farms, new country and get out to all the beaches and walks the place has to offer. Here's a picture of the girls and I at a party recently, dressed up as a family taco. Since the party we have welcomed a third daughter, Gwen. Wish me luck for the teenage years!



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Farmers Golf Day Thursday 9th June

Join us at
Eltham Golf Course
for a fun day of golf,
food, drink & great
prizes as we say
goodbye to one
season and hello to the new one.
Entry Fee \$10.00. Entries limited.
**Entries to the clinic
by 3rd June
Ambrose format**



Purchase 7.5Ls of
TURBO PourOn and
receive an
Ole Mac Pole Saw



Purchase qualifying cattle
drench products this season
and you'll receive either a
**FREE* DeWalt 18V
Cordless Drill Set,
Lockable Tool Box or a
35-piece Screwdriver Set.**



Save the Date! 7 pm Monday May 2nd

This is a meeting at the clinic to share information about **Johne's Disease**. Vets and farmers will be talking about their experience using herd test milk samples to control this disease. We expect to finish about 8 pm. There will be light refreshments afterwards. To ensure social distancing *numbers are limited*. Please phone the clinic to book your spot.

DRY COW SEASON IS NEARLY HERE

To ensure you can pick up your dry cow therapy treatments (DCT) when you require them **please remember to fill in and return your dry cow form well ahead of drying off.** We cannot dispense dry cow treatments before a vet has looked at your form and made a recommendation on the information you have provided. Please try to answer the questions fully. The more information we have the better.

This year we are adding a dry cow treatment release form which you will receive when you get your recommendation form. **This release form must be signed and returned before you can collect any dry cow treatments.**

If you or your workers require more training around dry cow therapy treatment administration please contact the clinic to register your interest. There is also an excellent website with loads of useful information on drying off and administration of DCT and Teatseal. You'll find it at www.zoetis.co.nz/dairywellness

If you then click on the "preventing mastitis" tab, then "best practice administration" you'll find a whole bunch of short videos reminding you of the correct technique for putting in DCT and Teatseal.



DRYING OFF RECOMMENDATIONS

The benefit of dry cow therapy can be undermined by other factors that increase the risk of mastitis. Management practices around drying off should aim to minimise milk leakage and exposure to environmental risk factors (e.g. wet/soiled pasture) in the early dry period. This is important whatever dry cow therapy product you use.

Cows producing <10L/day can be dried off immediately without reducing feed. For cows producing ≥ 10 L/day, restrict feed to maintenance for 3-5 days before planned dry off and remove any meal or PKE from the diet.

Include high levels of hay as part of maintenance and make water freely available. Milk once daily. The message you are giving the cows by taking these steps is that it's time to slow down. Avoid the temptation to skip a day. The cows may look tight but they will develop a plug faster if left. If you bring them in and milk them again the initial plug will disappear and you are telling the cows to start milking again. Drycow therapy is made to go into an udder that is milking, not an udder that is starting to involute or dry off. Incorrect use of Drycow therapy increases the chance of inhibitory substance grades at the start of the next season.

Plan drying off dates well in advance. Allow for bad weather and the recommended stand-down time of 14 days between drying off and transportation of cows.

Dry cows off in small enough groups to ensure the process is methodical and not rushed

Cows that leak milk after drying off have a 4x higher risk of dry period clinical mastitis. Manage feed intake pre and post dryoff to minimise leaky cows. Keep the dried off cows on maintenance feed for 5-7 days including plenty of hay. The less mud and poo in the area they are grazing the better, so larger areas of short pasture are better than small areas with long grass. This may play havoc with your round but it's only for a short time. Avoid the cowshed for at least 14 days as many cows will let their milk down even if they come into the yard. Check udders after 14 days, feel the udder for hardness, lumps but avoid stripping milk out unless you are sure an infection is present, otherwise you will strip out the teat plug.

TEATSEAL IN HEIFERS



Heifers have been shown to have a higher risk of clinical mastitis in early lactation than older cows. This leaves them at increased risk of having light quarters, teat canal thickening or being culled.

With heifer mastitis rates over 25% on many New Zealand farms, the magnitude of the problem and the associated costs become very clear.

Teatseal administered to maiden heifers approximately 4-12 weeks pre-calving dramatically reduces clinical mastitis around calving, thereby reducing the cost and frustration associated with heifer mastitis. If necessary, Teatseal can be administered closer to calving (1-4 weeks prior to planned start of calving).

New Zealand research showed that administering Teatseal approximately 4-12 weeks pre-calving resulted in:

- 84% reduction in *Strep uberis* infections at calving
- 68% reduction in clinical mastitis in the first two weeks of lactation

Teatsealing heifers pre-calving is a surprisingly achievable job, especially when performed by our experienced team. Farms that have already tried Teatsealing heifers are repeating the treatment year after year in their first calvers.

Call the clinic **now** to discuss heifer Teatsealing with your vet, or to book in our heifer Teatsealing team.

No DCT Returns Reminder

A reminder that we no longer accept returns of unused dry cow therapy tubes. Once a product has left the clinic we have no control over how it is looked after or where it has been stored so can't guarantee that it is still fit for use if it is returned.

Over the years our relaxed approach to returns has been abused by the few at the expense of many. When we get tubes returned that are wet, dirty and in some cases contaminated by cow shit we are left having to throw them away. I don't imagine any of you would be keen to receive tubes from us that have clearly been elsewhere. And you certainly wouldn't be happy to be charged the same amount as a fresh, unadulterated tube. The days of taking back unused dry cow therapy tubes are over.

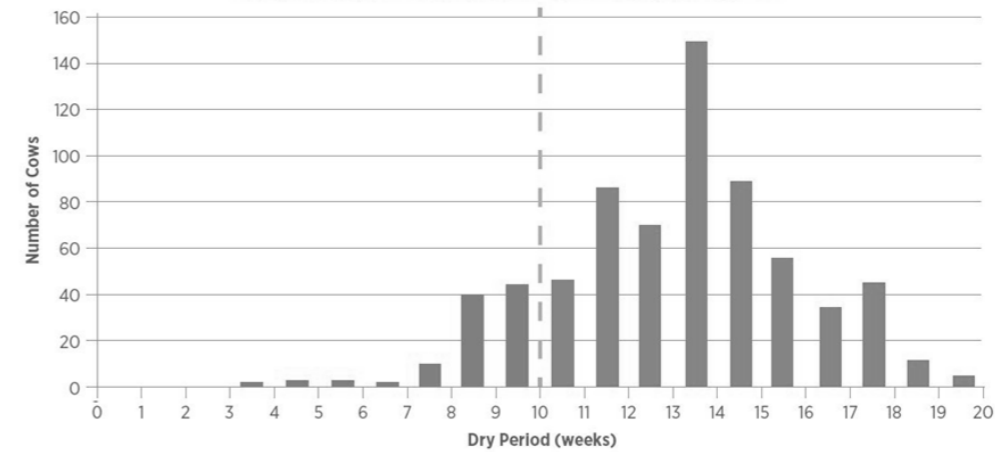
Make sure you know how many tubes you need when purchasing your DCT because once it's left the clinic it's not coming back.

Teatsealants - A Great Mastitis Prevention Tool

Does your herd have a problem with mastitis around calving or do you graze off farm or have a crop for winter grazing? For these herds with increased risks of mastitis, teatsealants are a great option. Teatsealants are non-antibiotic and form a physical barrier immediately on insertion, blocking the entry of bacteria into the udder throughout the dry period. Teatseal is the only sealant that is proven to last for at least 20 weeks. Because they last so long in the teat teatsealants are the best product we can use to help combat a herd mastitis problem that occurs at calving. Teatsealants can be used alone or in combination with antibiotic DCT.

Are you drying cows off early? Large numbers of cows in New Zealand have dry periods that are longer than the protective period of any dry cow antibiotic. The graph below shows an example distribution of dry period lengths on a New Zealand farm. New Zealand studies have shown an average dry period length of approximately 13 weeks. The dotted line shows the protective period of the longest acting dry cow antibiotic. Teatsealants are perfect for use in cows dried off early, late calving cows or holdovers.

EXAMPLE DISTRIBUTION OF DRY PERIOD LENGTHS
IN SEASONALLY FARMED NEW ZEALAND DAIRY COWS



If you think that teatsealants would be appropriate in your herd please contact the clinic to talk to a vet or arrange to have a chat about it with your DCT consult.

Leptospirosis Vaccination in Calves. We need to talk.



It's come as some surprise when ringing you up to book your calves in for lepto vaccination that more than a few of you have said "why do we need to vaccinate our calves for lepto?"

We've been doing this so long now we kind of take for granted that you all realise how important lepto vaccination is. However, we forget that some of you "younger ones" have probably never seen lepto, had lepto yourself or ever really paid it much attention. So, here's a refresher:

Leptospirosis is a significant bacterial disease in cattle and poses a zoonotic risk to people working with livestock too. In other words, you can catch it yourself, and it's not nice. You think Covid is bad? Try getting lepto.

Thanks to routine vaccination, clinical disease in cattle is now an uncommon occurrence. It's still important not to get complacent with leptospirosis control. Vaccination is a key area of prevention, so protocols recommended by your vet should be strictly followed.

Calves are particularly susceptible to severe disease if infected. Some of the signs of disease include depression, fever, yellow mucous membranes (jaundice) and red coloured urine (red water). Deaths are common in infected calves, especially when the Pomona serovar is involved.

In adult cattle infection normally causes temporary inappetence, fever, reduced milk production and occasionally abortions. The bacteria are shed in the urine of infected animals.

Calves normally get 2 shots. Traditionally we start vaccinating from 4-6 months of age followed by a second dose (the booster dose) 4 to 6 weeks later to stimulate a more significant and longer lasting immune response.

Unvaccinated calves exposed to leptospirosis are at risk of developing a chronic infection and shedding the bacteria for a prolonged period. We try to time the second shot around the period the herd get their annual booster (often done while we're scanning) so there won't be a period of more than a year between their subsequent vaccinations. If that's not possible, then sometimes calves may need a 3rd booster to bring them in line with the herd.

All other dairy cattle still need to receive their annual booster to maintain immunity and help prevent shedding in urine.