

DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH BULLS? *Do the maths*

This year three-week submission rates in Taranaki are down by 5% from last year in spite of a 15% increase in CIDR usage. Empty rates last year were higher than usual, and it is looking as if they may be even worse this year. So, I urge you to carefully assess how mating has gone in your herd. You may need to extend your AB period and/or get more bulls.

The national average conception rate for dairy cows is 55%.

So: If Farmer Brown has a 300 cow herd with a 75% submission rate and a 55% conception rate, after 3 weeks of AB 124 cows will be pregnant and 176 still empty.

$$300 \times 0.75 \times 0.55 = 124 \text{ pregnant} \quad 300 - 124 = 176 \text{ empty}$$

After 6 weeks AB 73 more cows will be pregnant and 103 still empty.

$$176 \times 0.75 \times 0.55 = 73 \text{ pregnant} \quad 176 - 73 = 103 \text{ empty}$$

If they are to get in calf quickly those 103 cows need 6 bulls. The recommended rate for bulls is 1 bull to 30 cows with the herd and the same number resting.

If Farmer Brown chooses to do less than 6 weeks of AB, for every week less he will have about 25 more empty cows, and he needs about another 2 bulls.

The sums on your herd may be different from Farmer Brown's. 75% is a pretty average submission rate, yours may be higher. Your conception rate may be higher too. The conception rate for your herd last year can be found in your Fertility Focus Report - but only if pregnancy testing was done less than 17 weeks after mating start date.

Polly



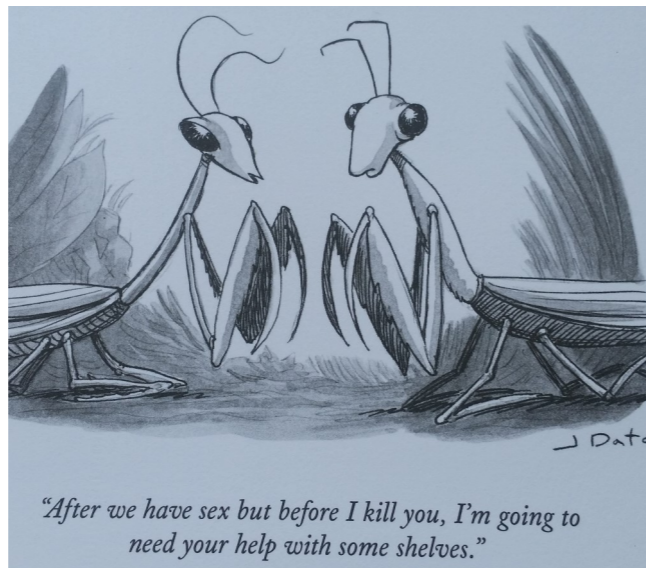
BULL MANAGEMENT

- ◆ Check bulls look ready for the job when they first arrive, look at body condition, leg conformation and shape, any signs of disease, testicle size - the bigger the balls, the better the bull!
- ◆ Socialise bulls and let them mix together for a few days before they are introduced to the herd
- ◆ Keep bulls off the concrete. Their feet wear down quickly leading to lameness. They can easily be trained to be cut out of the herd before going onto the yards.
- ◆ Use bulls for mating for a few days, then rest them for a few days
- ◆ Monitor bulls for signs of lameness/disease. If they get sick or lose excessive weight their fertility drops dramatically and they should be replaced

Calf vaccinations start Dec/Jan



**Give Nicola a call to book
Lepto & BVD vaccinations**



Who Needs the Russians to destroy your network?

Who needs trojan computer viruses or Russian operatives when you can bring the whole network down just by pulling out a plug?

The other day our whole network suddenly crashed & despite the best efforts of Joan & the team, we couldn't for the life of us work out what had happened. Eventually the IT man was called & we discovered we didn't have a virus or some outside influence hacking into our network. No, one of our own (who shall remain nameless) had needed a multi-plug for a job so had simply pulled one out of the wall at the clinic. What he had failed to notice however, was that the multi-plug in question was the one we plug the server into.

So that sounds like a decent morning tea shout to me. I've looked up names of major computer viruses & from now on we are thinking of calling the culprit "Melissa" after one of the original viruses that destroyed computers & networks in the 90's. Feel free to give "Melissa" a call if you are in need of anything for your farm. Just keep him away from your computer ...



DECEMBER 2017

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Loyalty. That was the word used more than once at a meeting I attended at the Eltham Golf Club a week or so ago to discuss Fonterra's proposal to close the RD1 store in Eltham & build a flash new Farmsource Hub on the outskirts of Stratford.

More specifically the use of the word loyalty was referring to the staff at the Eltham store, not the company. I agree. I still often mistakenly call the shop next door Taranaki Farmers (that shows how old I'm getting) because I'm thinking of the folks that work there, not the company that employs them. Loyalty tends to be towards people, not companies. And it is amazing how many large companies fail to understand that concept. I have lost count of the times I have had a new CEO or GM from a big drug company turn up with the local rep to "meet the people" who has been shocked when I have told him or her to their face that my loyalty is to the person representing them and not the company itself. The truth is that most of our suppliers can supply pretty much the same drug or product at much the same price & often the deciding factor is the person representing the company. It almost always comes down to relationships and loyalty.

Eltham can ill-afford to lose another significant business from its town centre. I came away from that meeting heartened at the fantastic turnout from concerned locals who are very keen for the store to stay. That turnout bore testament to the relationships that have been built by the people in that store, the loyalty generated, & how much we appreciate them. Fonterra say they haven't closed the door & are willing to hear proposals on how we can keep them here. It's up to us now to come up with a workable proposal to keep the good people next door where they belong; next door. Get your thinking caps on folks.

Merry Xmas & best wishes to you all & here's hoping for a joyful & prosperous New Year.

**ENJOY YOUR FREE XMAS HAM
WITH PURCHASES OF SELECTED
MERIAL ANCORE PRODUCTS OR
ALLEVA'S BOSS POURON**



**Join us at the clinic for
an end of year celebration**

**Tuesday
19th December
5 -10pm**



Clinic & Farm Supplies
Railway Street, Eltham
Ph . (06) 764 8196
Trading Depot
Hollard Engineering,
Victoria Street, Kaponga
Ph. (06) 764 6686
J Larkin 0274 482 585
D Kidd 0275 479 261

Veterinarians

Alistair McDougall BVSc - CEO
Giles Gilling BVSc BSc MRCVS
Andrew Weir BVSc, PhD
Jim Robins BVSc, BSc, DipPharm
Polly Otterson BVSc, MSc,
Teresa Carr BVSc
Adrian Clark BVSc
Linley Gilling BVSc
Lindsay Lash BVSc
Leon Christensen BVSc
Erika Pieper BVSc

Office

Joan Hughes Sue Morresey
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Nicola Childs CVN/RAT
Nina Bloemen John Larkin BBS
Daniel Kidd Frank Suter

How did they manage that?

In late September we took 10 lucky couples (winners of our Boehringer Spring Drench Promotion) to the rugby at Yarrows. It was a beautiful night & we were treated to a nice dinner, drinks & a good game of rugby. Some of our guests did better than others however. The Mangamingi Mafia (led by mafia "Don", Matthew Francis) somehow managed to invite themselves into the corporate boxes during the game & next thing you know they were being delivered finger food for the rest of the evening. Just goes to show if you act like you belong there no-one bats an eyelid. Good effort guys! We hope to stage a similar promotion during the Super Rugby season next year so look out for it in the New Year.



Thiamine Deficiency in Calves

In the last month we have seen a few early cases of this problem (otherwise known as Cerebrocortical Necrosis or Polioencephalomalacia; see why we call it thiamine deficiency?). Usually just a single animal or two is affected but an outbreak can occur in a mob of calves. Usually it occurs in calves 4 months of age or older, that are well fed and growing rapidly. Signs include staggering, champing of the jaws, frothing at the mouth, blindness and head pressing. This often progresses to the calf going down with rigid forelegs, head and neck bent upwards ('star-gazing') and convulsing.

Thiamine is normally produced in the rumen by bacteria during digestion of feed. Deficiency is due to either insufficient production in the rumen (usually meal feeding with no roughage), destruction by enzymes in the rumen (present in Bracken fern for example) or interference from amprolium (coccidiosis treatment). High sulphur diets are also involved such as molasses, fertilisers, sulphates in drinking water (magnesium or zinc) and some crops (kale, swedes, turnips, rape). Sudden changes in feeding or even a change in the pasture conditions have been suggested as precipitating causes as has recent drenching with levamisole. The truth is often it is very difficult to pinpoint the exact cause.

Thiamine levels can be checked by a blood test in affected calves but due to the time delay and cost it is best to treat first with high doses of Vitamin B1. This is different to the Prolaject B12 injections, and is called Duoject B. If caught early the damage to the brain is reversible; if treatment is delayed, then there is often some improvement but not complete recovery. If there appears to be an outbreak in a mob of calves, then dosing with Biostart Ruminant at 10ml per calf daily for 2 to 3 days may assist in settling down the rumen bacteria. It is also important that other causes of strange behaviour in calves are ruled out such as Ryegrass staggers, Listeria infections, lead poisoning or meningitis.

Cancer Eye

The commonest bovine cancer that we see and can actually do something about is cancer eye, otherwise known as squamous cell carcinoma. It usually begins as a



benign smooth plaque anywhere on the white surfaces of the eyelids, but is most often seen on the margin of the third eyelid (the flap in

the corner of the eye that comes across when they blink). It can progress to a knobby wart like lesion which then breaks open and ulcerates, leading to bleeding and/or infected discharges – this is often the stage we are called.

Cancer eye is a malignant cancer and can spread into the eyeball itself (treating this may mean removal of the whole eyeball and most of the tissues in the eye socket), the eyelids, the bones of the eye socket and to the lymph glands of the head and neck. Any spread into these deeper structures means condemnation of the whole animal at the works.

Call us early – when you see the first signs on the third eyelid. At this stage it is a simple job to remove it, and most times, that's a cure. Metastatic spread can occur even in the early stages, but as a rule delaying treatment increases the chance that your cow is only fit for dog tucker, not hamburgers; let alone having a further lactation or two.

The other important point is welfare – it is not acceptable to leave these until they are a real mess, when early intervention could prevent unnecessary pain and discomfort.

RECEPTAL FOR REPEAT CYCLERS

Cows that come bulling every three weeks are frustrating. Recent trial work says an injection of 2.5ml Receptal 11 - 12 days after mating will help improve these cows' conception rates. For best results use in cows that have returned for the 3rd time (or more). Contact the clinic to arrange.

Lame Cows & Cut Fingers

Some of you will have noticed that a number of our vets are now wearing cut resistant gloves to reduce the incidence of cut fingers when treating lame cows. When we looked at our Health & Safety register nearly half of all the reported incidents involved lame cows, hoof knives & cut fingers. So, we thought we should try & mitigate this risk by wearing gloves that would protect the hand holding the hoof. Since we started using them reported cuts have virtually stopped. We are using "Ninja X4" cut resistant gloves purchased from Blackwells/NZSafety. A pair costs around \$15 including GST.

Of course, you actually only need one glove (unless you are ambidextrous) which makes the other one surplus to requirements. If there is enough interest, we would consider getting them in & selling gloves individually otherwise it's not that hard to get them online or at any good Safety Shop in the province. If you treat your own lame cows & want to reduce the risk of cutting fingers maybe you should give the Ninja X4's a try.



Kennel Cough Reminder

Dog trialling season is upon us again & we thought it would be timely to remind those of you who will be taking your dogs to places where there are large numbers of other dogs that a vaccination booster would be a very good idea.

Kennel cough in particular is very contagious & a couple of years ago we saw at least 2 top dogs that (probably) picked up kennel cough at a trial & became seriously ill. Don't let that happen this year; book in all your dogs for a booster.



BVD Testing Update

We have bulk tank BVD test results for 64% of our dairy clients this year. Taranaki has one of the lowest rates of positive herds in New Zealand, but we still found **seven newly infected herds this season!** If the infection rate was the same in herds that didn't do bulk tank testing, that's about another 4 infected herds we don't know about...

BVD infection can be very expensive. The average cost for a herd that doesn't control BVD is about **\$18,000 per year**. That's averaged over all years including the years without infection.

The herds with new infections this year were not particularly "high risk" herds and some considered themselves "closed herds". Unless you've built your own border wall, you don't really have a closed herd.

At the time of writing, all the infected herds except one has successfully cleared the infection by targeted cow testing. That's because they had the bulk tank testing history to rule out most of the cows. That's one of the benefits of regular bulk tank testing.

This is a good reminder that there is still a lot of infection out there, and there is a pretty high risk of infection getting into your herd at some point if you don't have controls in place. BVD control is pretty easy. If you want to keep BVD out, you need to either vaccinate the herd, or test all replacement calves each year. Either way, you still need to test new arrivals (bought cows & bulls) and vaccinate the bulls. That's all. After following up these 7 herds and figuring out how they became infected we can say that all of them would have avoided the cost and damage from BVD if they'd followed these guidelines.

Bulk tank testing is important to catch any breakdowns. Even if that's all you do plus clear infection if it's found, you can save about half of the total cost of BVD (disease costs plus control costs) compared to herds that ignore BVD.

Note that if you book bulk tank BVD testing through us, it'll cost the same as if you book direct with LIC, and you get our extra reporting for free. If you aren't already signed up with us and want to arrange bulk tank testing for next season, give us a ring.

Contagious Mastitis and Shed Hygiene

With the steady march into summer (and in theory, drier, warmer weather) the emphasis will switch from environmental causes of mastitis to predominantly contagious causes. Cows will be less likely to get infections from contact with muddy bits of race and what-have-you than they are from bacteria picked up from their skin or other cattle during the milking process. Overall the challenge, or opportunity for infection, will be a lot lower since infectious mastitis generally runs at a much lower level under NZ conditions than environmental mastitis.

Bacteria responsible for such infection include the well-known Staphylococcus aureus, usually referred to as 'Staph', and members of the 'Strep' or Streptococcus family. These bacteria are resident on the skin of cattle, the people who milk the cows and in the machinery used milking the cows. Both the people and the machines (the cluster usually) are capable of transferring infection from cow to cow. Bacteria particularly like to live in or on cracked and damaged skin. This is part of the argument for teat spraying all the cows properly all through the lactation with a reputable spray containing a conditioner.

However this is not the only issue to consider. As early as the 1960s it was shown in a survey in the UK that half the people involved with milking cows had bacteria on their hands capable of causing mastitis at the start of milking and all of them were contaminated at the end of milking.

Following from that, potentially harmful bacteria can be found on milkers hands for up to 10 days after contact.

When dealing with known/potentially infected quarters:

- Try and milk them last (draft them round rather than milk in the row).
- Avoid creating aerosols – clusters falling off and howling half way round the platform.
- Never get milk on your hands.
- Use a sanitizer and lots of warm (dissolves milk solids) water to clean potentially contaminated clusters.

Note that teat spray is formulated to deal with skin contamination and is designed for slow release. It is not suited to machine and hand disinfection which needs to happen much more quickly.



Gloves offer a marked improvement over bare hands as far as hygiene is concerned. Bacteria do not get any chance to colonise the skin. They can generally be rinsed clean pretty quickly and will lead to an improvement in the overall skin condition on

the hands of those of us who use them. The idea that bugs might sit about on one's hands for days after contact, in spite of being washed regularly, is perhaps the most compelling reason to consider the use of milking gloves – especially if casual milkers are a feature of your farming system.

Experienced Relief Milker Available
Ph Nicole Watson 027 826 7457 References available