

INVESTING IN BETTER BCS PRE DRY-OFF

Tighter farm budgets are the reality for our dairy clients heading into late lactation this year, but few can afford to let parasites compromise next season's production. And that means drenching pre-dry off becomes less of a cost and more of an investment into generating better financial performance in 2016/17. It is well established that body condition score (BCS) at calving is a vital influencer of milk production and reproductive performance in dairy cattle.

Research has shown a cow that calves at BCS 4 will on average produce 15 kg less milk solids and cycle eight to 10 days later than a cow that calves at BCS 5. The lost days in milk from cycling later results in a further loss of 15-20 kg of milk production the following season. The optimal BCS at calving for mixed age cows should be 5-5.5, with all first and second calvers 5.5.

Due to the increased demands of the foetus and udder development during the late dry period it is difficult to put weight on cows at this time. Further, cows put on body weight up to 20 per cent more efficiently during lactation compared with the dry period. These two facts make it a preferable option to increase BCS now and maintain it as close to the optimal calving BCS as possible.

This year, the impact of the reduced dairy payout and/or drought will have many farmers facing the difficult choice between obvious short term benefits of extending lactation for maximum MS production and long term benefits of maintaining BCS for the sake of the following season. Given the fact parasite numbers during autumn are often higher than at any other time of the year, appropriate drenching has a potentially critical role to play in either scenario. Eliminating parasites ensures cows are able to use all available energy resources for foetal development and milk production. This can also help them maintain body condition throughout the dry period. Trial work in New Zealand and overseas has shown that there is an economic response in milk production and increased weight gains to treatment of lactating cows and heifers with Eprinex.

The nil milk withholding of Eprinex means it can be used at any time, including during lactation to take advantage of the increased efficiency of weight gain and help put weight on cows before dry off. Eprinex applied pre dry off can be a smart animal health investment with a rapid return.



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Blowfly Strike - Be Proactive

Tactically and economically blowfly strike is best approached using a proactive attitude, and product choice and application play crucial roles. A proactive approach will mitigate the negative economic impact that may arise from waiting until flystrike is present. Ideally, the prevention plan you put in place will take into consideration things like time until shearing, chemical class previously used for lice control and regional knowledge about seasonal weather forecasts/patterns and the relative blowfly challenge. The old adage that 'the best defence is a good offence' holds true when looking at your blowfly prevention programme.

When it comes to chemicals insect growth regulators (IGRs) are the most common chemical family used for flystrike prevention, mainly due to their persistence. The two categories of IGRs are:

- Triazine-pyrimidine derivatives – this category is sufficient for fly control only and actives include cyromazine and dicyclanil
- Benzoyl Phenyl Urea (BPU) compounds – suitable for fly & lice control which includes the actives diflubenzuron and triflumuron



The above chemicals are common choices for those proactively approaching the upcoming season; however should there be a need to treat blowfly strike it is important to look for products that have two actives, one of the above for ongoing strike control and the secondary ensuring rapid knockdown of maggots. For example, **Cyrazin® K.O.**, this contains the IGR cyromazine in combination with ivermectin.

Chemical application involves adhering to the label instructions with the correct method to ensure appropriate coverage of the target areas (pour-on/spray-on products) or complete coverage and saturation to skin level (dipping products) to provide the best outcomes.

When assessing the comparative protection periods of different products (usually stated as "up to" X weeks) it is important to remember that actual length of cover will be determined by factors such as effectiveness of application, fly pressure, environment and other influences.

If in doubt, talk to us about the best product for your situation. We will be able to advise whether sticking with a chemical compound or group previously used will continue to offer long-term protection or if it is time to change. New Zealand is still on the front-foot with regards to chemical efficacy, with lessons learnt from Australia, however without responsible use of the currently available chemicals we will risk breakdowns and lack of efficacy. Talk to our Trading Manager, John, for more information on what will suit you best.



FEBRUARY 2016

Happy New Year to you all. Of course we're all wishing for a prosperous one too although as it stands at present I'm not sure that's going to happen and it looks like we're in for another year of belt tightening, cost cutting & minimising expenditure. On the bright side I see that ASB are sticking with their prediction of a \$6-6.50 payout next season. That would be wonderful, but I'm not holding my breath. If it makes you feel any better the Vet Clinic will also make a substantial loss this year (the first in over 15 years) so we're all in this together. The fact that we've been able to make good surpluses over the last 6 years & squirrel it away means we have good reserves & remain in a strong position to service your farms, stay up to date on necessary capital expenditure & most importantly, pay our vets. We won't be going under any time soon but we expect a big loss this year & will budget for a similar loss next year. Of course we could have addressed our shortfalls by increasing fees for services & products but we didn't; you've heard of the expression "cutting off your nose to spite your face"? Exactly. If you're not spending now how would increasing prices encourage you to spend more? We will have to address a few things but overall don't expect to see any major price changes in the next 6 months.

We'll ride it out just like you will but when the good times return, like every other rural support business we will have to look more critically at our charges & pricing then. In the meantime major planned projects such as the re-fitting of the clinic reception & sales area will have to wait as we may need to draw on those reserves over the next year or so. Thankfully most of the big drug companies are also seeing sense & the majority have made little or no change to the price of big ticket items like Dry Cow Therapy. We already have significant amounts of DCT in the stores from last season so the price of that wasn't going to change anyway. It now looks like we will hopefully be able to hold our DCT prices either at or very close to last season's prices for the whole season so that is some good news for you doing budgets for the coming year. One of my very favourite clients told me the other day that Palm Kernel is to blame for all our current problems with payout & dairy auctions. Her exact words were "I hate Palm Kernel" and she meant it. By her reckoning PKE (and other bought in feeds but especially PKE) has resulted in huge increases in the cost of production, over supply of world markets & animal health issues we never used to see. And to be fair I kind of agree with her. If nothing else what is happening now may force us to go back to a lower input, lower cost grass based system that made us the most profitable & efficient dairy farmers in the world just 10 years ago. She also blamed Fonterra and more importantly her husband for voting for the merger (see, it's always the husband's fault in the end). All I know is that she makes the best fudge this side of the black stump so I'm not going to argue with her! I note prominent Taranaki farmer John Washer also is trying to look at the bright side of all of this in the form of a return to more traditional low input dairy farming as a way ahead. As he put it "putting the fun back into farming". Perhaps he and my favourite fudge maker are onto something!

The Newborn

One night a woman with a newborn baby spotted her husband standing over their baby's cot. She watched him silently and unobtrusively, with curiosity. As he stood there, looking down at the sleeping infant, she saw on his face a mixture of emotions; disbelief, amazement, enchantment, scepticism, and intense study. Touched by this display and the deep emotions he was showing, she moved into the baby's room and slipped her arm around her husband.

"A penny for your thoughts", she whispered. "It's utterly amazing, and beyond all understanding", he said. "It's got me stuffed how anyone could build a cot like this for \$49!!"



**Calf vaccinations due!
Give Nicola a call to book
Lepto & BVD vaccinations.
Herd can be vaccinated at scanning;
heifers out grazing or upon return.**

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

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Hi, my name is Erika. I hail from Waitaha, a small valley on the West Coast near Hokitika where I grew up on a dairy farm. I enjoy all kinds of veterinary work, including small animals, equine and getting out on farms for dairy and drystock work. In my spare time I love being outdoors, and enjoy running, tramping, kayaking, cycling, netball and horse riding, (or relaxing in the sun with a good book when I'm tired after all that!). I look forward to meeting you all, either through work or while out exploring the beautiful 'Naki.

FACIAL ECZEMA BASICS

Prevention is the key to minimising production losses 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.

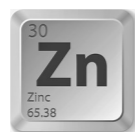
Prevention is key:

- ◆ 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, Sporex, 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)
- Intra-ruminal 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)

If you want to check your animals are getting enough Zinc the best test is faecal zinc. Speak to your veterinarian to arrange



Faceguard

We are coming up to that season again, and if the last few weeks are anything to go by, facial eczema may be upon us earlier than we expect.

Face-Guard is an intra-ruminal zinc bolus for the prevention of facial eczema in cattle and sheep, available through Eltham Vets. With the addition of the 30g bolus size for sheep over 25kg to complement the 60g and 132g boluses for calves of 90kg to 250kg and cattle from 251kg to 660 kg respectively, the range is now complete.

Zinc has been shown to protect the liver through forming bonds with the sporidesmin, rendering it inactive and incapable of causing bile duct damage. There are a number of ways that zinc can be administered to animals. One of the simplest and most effective ways is via administration of an intra-ruminal zinc bolus, such as Faceguard. Faceguard zinc boluses have an innovative bolus design offering flexible treatment options depending on the weight of the cattle and the length of the risk period. The popular smaller cattle bolus covers cattle from 90-250kg with the larger bolus available to treat the 251-660kg cattle. The 30g sheep bolus can treat lambs 25-40kg and sheep over 40kg. Top-up treatments may be tailored to fit a longer or shorter season.

The first dose of Faceguard will last up to six weeks, which is longer than other zinc bolus products available on the market. The durable design of these boluses ensures that they will resist cracking or breaking, even when dropped. This makes them very cost-effective in terms of reduced wastage. Faceguard boluses will completely dissolve over the treatment period, leaving no residues and there is no milk or meat with-holding.

Don't gamble with your animal health this season and get in early with prevention, knowing that if the season turns out to be a long one there is the flexibility to top up as required with Faceguard. Talk to our Trading Manager, John, for pricing & dosage details.



Purchase Face-Guard & go in the draw to win a \$500 voucher



DRENCHING YOUNG STOCK

Before doing what you've always done with your replacements, take a moment to make sure it is still correct for your property. Here are some basic rules that all farmers should go by:

- Use combination drenches: We used to say rotate drenches, but now we say use combinations as research has shown this is best for production and preventing resistance. Ideally you should always use combination products (double or triple) in all cattle under 15 months of age.
- Give the drench properly: Dose accurately for weight, take your time and do it right. Pour-on, injectable and oral drenches can all be given poorly, so make sure you do it correctly. All 3 application methods work well when done properly.
- Take care of yourself: Choose a drenching method that works best for you and doesn't unnecessarily put you at risk of injury
- Take care with young calves:
 - Don't mix drench in with the milk as deaths can occur
 - Avoid Abamectin-containing products in calves under 120kg - this is why we break our own rule before Xmas & use Dectomax injection on young, small calves as it has very wide safety margins. After Xmas we always try & recommend a combination drench.

There has been a lot of research published in recent years that has changed the advice given around drenching as more is learnt about resistance. Unfortunately that can make it confusing for the farmer who was told one thing, only to now be told another. If you are in any doubt, talk to John or your vet to discuss your particular requirements.

HIGH SOMATIC CELL COUNTS

It's around this time of year when we start getting clients coming in 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, say 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.

That issue could be magnified this season with so many of you choosing to do only one or two herd tests, or none at all to reduce expenses in a low payout season. Making individual treatment selections on a couple of herd tests will almost certainly result in cows that should have been treated missing out this season unless you treat the whole herd after culling the problem ones.

When it comes time to discuss DCT this year you're going to have to make sure your records are well documented & thorough & we'll need to talk about who you're going to treat if you're not doing the whole herd.

The Monastery

A man sick of the outside world joins a temple in Tibet. One of the stipulations of entry to this holy order was that he was only permitted to say two words every five years. The first five years he eats rice; he sleeps on a wooden bed and has only one blanket with holes in it. He tends to the fields and looks after livestock every day.

After five years the head monk comes to him and says he can use his two words, to which he replies, "More blankets." Now the man is warm at night on his wooden bed with all his blankets but still only eats rice and tends to the fields and livestock every day.

Another five years passes and the head monk comes to him again and says he can use two more words. He replies, "More food". He now sleeps on his wooden bed with all his blankets and eats good food every day but he still has to tend to the fields and the livestock. Another five years passes and the head monk comes to him and says, "You may use two more words." The man replies, "I'm leaving." "Good," says the head monk, "all you've done is complain since you've been here."