



QUEEN OF CALVES

We have known for some time that early calf growth rates and heifer weights at puberty are important factors in their lifetime survivability and profitability. What is becoming better understood is the effect of early lean growth which leads to better mammary tissue development and

better milk production as an adult. The growth phase, from birth to puberty, is one of the most important periods in a heifer's development. If it's missed, it cannot be compensated for after weaning.

A recent economic analysis of New Zealand data has shown that the better-developed heifers reared on Queen of Calves not only survived better in the herd, they also out-produced the same age and same breed cows in the same herd by 150kgMS over the first five lactations. At a \$4.50 payout, this equates to a potential return of \$135/lactation for up to 5 lactations on the one-off outlay of \$80-90 during the milk rearing phase.



Sam Lawn, Bird Road, pictured with John Larkin (the clinic's resident eligible bachelor) receiving the \$500 Hunting & Fishing voucher he won after purchasing FaceGuard capsules.

JUNE 2016

Goodbye & good riddance to the 2015/16 season & hello & welcome to a new season with new hope & new expectations. While a return to the glory days of a few years ago is still some way off at least we are hearing slightly more encouraging news as commentators gaze into their crystal balls. Let's hope their predictions of better times ahead come true.

Hopefully you are all taking a well-deserved break from the daily grind of farming over the winter to clear your heads & ready yourselves for another challenging season ahead. Even a weekend away will help refresh you & relieve some of the daily stress that just builds up without you even knowing.

I'm taking that advice to extremes & will be away for 5 weeks as my wife & I head to South Africa to catch up with her side of the family. When some of you are at Field Days I'll be in Kruger National Park - I suspect it will be slightly warmer where I am. While I'm away Adrian will take the helm with the support of Joan & senior staff.

Welcome to new clients; we hope you'll be very happy here. If we haven't been in touch yet, please don't be a stranger - call in to the clinic where the team will make you welcome & we can sort out your RVM prescription for the new season. Any regulars who have taken on new properties please call in to arrange RVM authorities for those properties as well before calving starts.

Annual RVM authorities for the new season were posted last week. Please check them over & get in touch if I've done something wrong or left something out. If you haven't read the covering letter you may have missed the news that Mastalone will be unavailable until spring 2017 at the earliest so once our stocks have run out that's it, I'm afraid. That has meant some re-arranging for a few of you & you'll find that in most cases we have replaced Mastalone with PenClox and/or Lincocin Forte. We can talk you through the differences but they should do much the same job. This is another direct result of big overseas companies "rationalising" their product lines. Apparently NZ & Australia are the only significant users of Mastalone in the world so while it's big for us, on a global scale it's quite small & some bean counter in the USA or Europe has drawn a line through it to make way for something "more important" until they start making it again in a new facility somewhere next year. So sorry about that; there's nothing we can do about it.

On the clinic front we go into the new season with all the same staff, keen to get into a few calvings. Good luck for the coming season.

Annual Golf Day



Our team prior to hitting the greens

Great day enjoyed by all. Ninety clients, staff & supplier reps relished the Ambrose format & the stroll in the sun. Guest speaker Phil-Kingsley Jones entertained in the evening following dinner.

COPPER INJECTIONS AND ANTHELMINTIC INJECTIONS - A BAD COMBINATION?

A common practice is for farmers to give an anthelmintic injection at the same time as a copper injection. Most copper injections have warnings such as "Do not administer at the same time as any other treatment, e.g. drenches or vaccines. Do not use in animals with impaired liver function." In spite of this warning, many farmers have administered a copper injection at the same time as a single active mectin drench with anecdotal evidence reporting no adverse effects. However, there is a new challenge on the horizon with the shift towards combination products in an effort to slow the onset of resistance. This challenge is the possibility of the copper injection interacting with the levamisole in these combination anthelmintic injections, and the concern that adverse reactions may occur. While the mechanism behind copper injections interacting with other treatments is unknown, it is a phenomenon that has been reported (Surveillance 1984. Vol. 11 No. 3 Page 11). There may be factors such as genetics, facial eczema and/or liver fluke that play a role and mean different farms will be more or less susceptible.

What are the options for vets and farmers going forward?

- Separating the drenching and the copper injection by 1 day, and ideally 3 days. However, this is not practical for most farmers.
- Taking a risk, giving the copper and combination anthelmintic injection at the same time and hoping no reactions occur. This is a gamble, is off-label and until large numbers have been done safely by farmers willing to take that risk, it is not something we recommend.
- The safest option, though more labour intensive, would be to give the combination anthelmintic and a copper capsule. This allows the farmer to be undertaking best practice drenching, and giving a safer, longer lasting copper supplement.



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WINTER SEMINAR

Spring First Aid

Wednesday 6th July 9.30am-3.30pm

Spring First Aid topics include:

- Calving and related conditions
- Metabolics eg. milkfever and grass staggers
- Downer cows
- Sick cows
- Calf care and sick calves
- General procedures including injections, stomach tubing and drenching

This seminar is targeted at new entrants to dairy farming and anyone wishing to brush up on their knowledge. Cost is \$150.

Please ring the clinic now to register.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At the clinic, Railway Street, Eltham
 Tuesday 26th July, 2016 at 1.30pm

TUBE FEEDING CALVES

Some of you may have read Dr Lucy Waldron's comments about the dangers of tube feeding calves (published in Rural News 21st October 2014 and NZ Dairy Farmer 1st July 2015).

On the 4th August 2015, renowned calf rearing expert and veterinary consultant, Dr Bas Schouten, published a rebuttal in Rural News, in which he totally dismissed Dr Waldron's Comments. The following points come from his article -

Dr Schouten has done thousands of post mortems on newborn calves and has never seen the damage Dr Waldron talks about as a consistent sign. The bottom line is newborn calves need to drink 10-15% of their bodyweight (generally minimum of 4L over two feeds) of good quality colostrum within 6-8 hours after birth in order to get a good level of energy and antibody intake for protection from environmental challenges and for disease prevention.

The research is very clear – the higher the colostrum intake in this critical period the better the calf will thrive. A calf with poor colostrum intake is nine times more likely to get sick, get scours or die.

There are several reasons up to 33% of NZ born calves are not getting sufficient colostrum.

Calf factors include hypothermia, slow birth, difficult birth (swollen face and tongue; try sucking with that), slow to stand up or separated from its mother.

Cow factors that prevent a calf being able to drink from its mother including mastitis, swollen teats, blocked teats, low udders or downer cows.

And lastly the timing of the intake of this colostrum is critical – the earlier the better.

How long does it take to suck up 2 litres (how long would it take you to suck 2 litres of milk through a straw?).

So let's give nature and the calf a hand and make sure the right amount of colostrum is fed on time.

The calf's natural suckling action helps close the oesophageal groove, transporting the milk directly from the oesophagus to the abomasum (stomach). Tube feeding does reduce the function of this groove, meaning milk can flow into the rumen. However, studies have shown the newborn calf rumen is small and milk spilt into the rumen is cleared within 3 hours of ingestion and is unlikely, in the vast majority of cases, to cause any negative outcomes for the calf. Tube feeding may require feeding slightly more colostrum to account for this.

Physical damage to the rumen is very unlikely if tubing is done correctly. The tube opens into the oesophagus and should never reach down far enough to touch the rumen. The tube should be lubricated (with milk or saliva) to help it go down easier. Patience is very important as rushing the job will increase the risk of damage to the throat or oesophagus.

In summary, the positives of tubing are enormous - you can ensure your calves get the right amount of good colostrum as soon as possible, to set them up for a healthy life. There are some small risks associated with tubing, but these are rare and with the correct technique (gentle and patient; never rushed or forced), tubing is a valuable calf rearing tool.



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BOBBY CALF CARE

Regardless of your opinion on it, the recent programme on "Sunday" was powerful. We all know that the majority of bobby calves are not treated that way on NZ farms but what Farmwatch and SAFE have very effectively done is to focus attention on bobby calf welfare and animal welfare in general in the dairy industry. Interest in where food comes from and the wellbeing of the animals that produce that food is climbing steadily in New Zealand and amongst the overseas markets that we depend on to buy our products. The footage and the accompanying campaign from SAFE have the power to significantly damage the dairy industry at a time when it is already vulnerable.

While the show was deliberate and hostile and some of it was ridiculous it is not enough to say "things aren't like that on our farm". Individual farms and all NZ farming industries (not just dairy) have to look closely at themselves in respect to animal welfare. The wider dairy industry is doing just that and it is starting, logically, with bobby calves.

An action group made up of representatives from all parts of the industry has been working to come up with ways to improve bobby calf welfare. This includes fast tracking enforceable regulations around bobby calf care on farm, collection, transport and processing as well as setting up a voluntary welfare improvement programme. MPI has just finished taking public consultation on proposed changes to animal welfare regulations so there will be changes coming. Keep an eye on future newsletters to see what this may mean for you.

Practically speaking, it would be great if, on your farm, you could take some time to make sure you are compliant with the animal welfare codes. You can download the animal welfare code from the internet or if you want to avoid leafing through the whole document talk to your vet on the specific rules relating to the different areas of your business. Beyond that it might be a good exercise to think about practices on your farm and how they would look if someone who didn't understand farming was watching. Could you justify it, is there some other better way?

What the very one-sided story on Sunday failed to mention was that NZ was ranked number one in the world (along with Australia the UK and Switzerland) in the most recent Global Animal Welfare Protection Index. Mahatma Gandhi (some wise bloke) once said "the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated". Let's continue working to keep New Zealand one of the greatest nations in the world.

Premium Calf Disbudding Service

Following the successful continuation of our premium calf disbudding service last season we will be running the same system again this year.

We will be de-horning in teams of two - usually one of the vets (Adrian, Lindsay, Teresa, Leon or Erica) with the help of our large animal technicians/nurses Jill & Nicola. We can come and do all your calves between the ages of 2-6 weeks in one go. *This age range is important to ensure an efficient, quality service.*

As part of the service we check for and remove extra teats. If you wish we can also give the first blackleg vaccination and this year we are offering to blood test calves for BVD at the same time.

Remember, this is a premium service and isn't designed to compete on price. If you want your calves sedated and dehorned in a stress and pain-free way, this is the method for you. There are plenty of people out there offering cheaper alternatives.

The cost will be a visit fee + \$9.50 (incl.GST) per calf.

Phone the clinic to book your calves in early.

NEW MASTITIS STUDY SHOWS CURE RATE AND FERTILITY GAINS

Treating mild clinical mastitis with an anti-inflammatory and an antibiotic can have a big impact on both cure rates and reproduction. Published in January 2016, the "Fertile Study" involved over 500 cows across 6 countries, and found cows treated for post-calving mastitis with the long-acting anti-inflammatory Metacam®, in addition to an antibiotic:

- Had a 16% improved cure rate.
- Had a 10% increased first service conception rate.
- Were 10% more likely to be pregnant 120 days post calving.

The negative effects of inflammation from mastitis on udder health and milk production are well understood, and it is now becoming clear that it also significantly impacts on the ability to become pregnant. Cows which have had clinical mastitis have poorer reproduction than their herd mates. It is thought the inflammation caused by mastitis affects:

- ◆ The ovary and its ability to produce high quality eggs for fertilization and,
- ◆ The ability of the cow to maintain an early pregnancy.

In addition to this, the study demonstrated the additional use of Metacam significantly improved mastitis cure rates – a world first finding. Using a single dose of Metacam in combination with your standard post-calving mastitis treatment not only makes the cow feel better, but also has the potential to provide significant long term performance and economic benefits for your herd.

To find out how Metacam might fit into your mastitis treatment plan, or to get it added to your RVM authority for the season get in contact with one of our team.

FPT IN CALVES

FPT stands for failure of passive transfer. This is a result of calves not receiving enough colostrum within the first 24 hours of life. FPT results in increased disease and slower growth rates and this in turn can impact on empty rates and production in these animals as they enter the herd.

We are doing a survey of our clients calves in spring 2016 to see how our calves rate compared to the national average of 33% of dairy calves in NZ with FPT.

This survey is a free service for our clients.

We will need to blood sample 12 calves between 1-7 days old. Please ring the clinic to put your name down if you are interested.

Rotavirus Doesn't Go Away

Even if you have vaccinated your herd & fed all your calves with super-charged colostrum to get them through the first critical weeks, rotavirus is still hanging around and can be detected in samples from later season scours in older calves.

Remember that vaccinated colostrum fed to new-born calves provides excellent protection against rotavirus for as long as you are feeding it. It also results in less virus building up in the sheds in those early stages of the season. But it's probably still there lurking, ready to pounce, much like Winston Peters every time an election rolls around. Like Winston, it's an opportunistic pathogen so will take advantage & hop on board when a suitable candidate presents itself. Whether it's the primary cause in older calves or just a passenger is often hard to tell, but we do still find it in samples taken later in the season so don't be too shocked if you still get the odd case of rotavirus even if you vaccinate.

The good news is that rotavirus in an older calf (over 6 weeks old) is much less dangerous than the brutal disease that can devastate new-born calves and given that these calves are older & stronger with a more developed immune system, most of them should respond to 1st principles i.e. fluid replacement with electrolytes & TLC without having to resort to antibiotics & Rotagen Combo.

As always with calf scours, don't panic, stick to the basic rules of re-hydration and don't take short cuts.