

## Scottish Love Story

A young Scottish lad and lass were sitting on a low stone wall, holding hands, gazing out over the loch. For several minutes they sat silently. Then finally the girl looked at the boy and said, "A penny for your thoughts, Angus." "Well, uh, I was thinkin'... perhaps it's about time for a wee kiss." The girl blushed, then leaned over and kissed him lightly on the cheek. Then he blushed. The two turned once again to gaze out over the loch. Minutes passed and the girl spoke again. "Another penny for your thoughts, Angus?" "Well, uh, I was thinkin' perhaps it's noo about time for a wee cuddle." The girl blushed, then leaned over and cuddled him for a few seconds. Then he blushed, and the two turned once again to gaze out over the loch. After a while, she again said, "Another penny for your thoughts, Angus." "Well, uh, I was thinkin' perhaps its about time you let me put my hand on your leg." The girl blushed, then took his hand and put it on her knee. Then he blushed. Then the two turned once again to gaze out over the loch before the girl spoke again. "Another penny for your thoughts, Angus." The young man glanced down with a furrowed brow. "Well, noo," he said, "My thoughts are a wee bit more serious this time." "Really?" said the lass in a whisper, filled with anticipation. "Aye," said the lad, nodding. The girl looked away in shyness, began to blush, and bit her lip in anticipation of the ultimate request. Then he said, "Dae ye no' think it's about time ye paid me the first three pennies?"



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## A Woman's Brain

In the hospital the relatives gathered in the waiting room, where a family member lay gravely ill. Finally, the doctor came in looking tired and sombre.

'I'm afraid I'm the bearer of bad news,' he said as he surveyed the worried faces. 'The only hope left for your loved one at this time is a brain transplant. It's an experimental procedure, very risky, but it is the only hope. Insurance will cover the procedure, but you will have to pay for the brain. The family members sat silent as they absorbed the news. After a time, someone asked, 'How much will a brain cost?' The doctor quickly responded, '\$5,000 for a male brain; \$200 for a female brain.' The moment turned awkward. Some of the men actually had to 'try' not to smile, avoiding eye contact with the women. A man unable to control his curiosity, finally blurted out the question everyone wanted to ask, 'Why is the male brain so much more than a female brain?' The doctor smiled at the childish innocence and explained to the entire group, 'It's just standard pricing procedure. We have to price the female brains a lot lower because they've been used.'



**Make sure you have the right tools for the job! Purchase selected Merial/Ancare products this spring and receive Powerbuilt Ratchet spanner set or 23 piece Socket Set.**



## SEPTEMBER 2015

So how are you doing? It's been a tough start to the season both weather-wise & of course the constant stream of depressing news regarding dairy auctions & pay-outs. I imagine John Roache (DairyNZ) is tempted to stand on top of the highest hill with a megaphone & scream out "I told you so" with regard to high input systems & his assertion that we were far more profitable & efficient producers of dairy products 10 years ago. Of course not even he would have predicted such a plunge in this season's payout but with people looking at options such as cutting out concentrates & PKE, dropping cow numbers & concentrating on better feeding of those cows left, it seems he may have a point. When we come out of this depression (& we will; you know we will) maybe we will see it as a correction to the headlong pursuit of milk production through high input feeding systems? Or maybe I'm just getting old & looking at "simpler times" through green-tinted lenses ... Anyway if it makes you feel any better at the AGM in July I announced that Eltham Vets would freeze all prices on services & goods to at least the end of the year in light of the current gloomy economic conditions. As well as that we continue to seek out lower cost alternatives to prescription and over-the-counter products (recent examples being Ketomax, Kelacef & Tylovet) & are actively reviewing & comparing costs for goods & services to make sure we are giving you the best deal we can. If you find a cheaper price elsewhere for the same product please let us know - we try our best but we will miss things so let us know if we've fallen off the pace. Also don't be afraid to ask for deferred & spread payments. As mentioned in previous newsletters we are very open to whatever options work for you so don't be afraid to have a chat. Now some disappointing news (just to add to the general gloom). One of our young vets, Jimmy Bruce has been poached by Okato Vets & will be leaving us in early November. Jimmy has been with us 6 years & was seen as one of the leaders of the next generation to take this practice forward over the next 10 years. However, while we can offer outstanding working conditions, facilities, continuing education, collegial support, benefits & a top salary package, one thing a vet club can't offer a young ambitious vet is the chance to become a partner in a practice & own his own business. That's what Okato have offered & it's a great opportunity for young Jimmy so he's off. He goes with our blessing & we wish him all the very best as he makes his way in the profession but we will be very sad to see him go. He finishes up here on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November so you've got plenty of time to wish him well & tell him what a mistake he's making. And finally (a pathetic attempt to make you chuckle here) I recently removed all the German names from my cell phone's address list ... It's now Hans free (boom boom!)

### End of Calving Get Together




With all the bad weather & bad news on the dairy front & knowing that spring is busy and stressful even in good times, we thought

**“why not celebrate the end of calving by having a party?”**

So, on **Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> October** (in that tiny gap before you're flat out mating again) we're hosting a get together at the clinic **11 am - 3 pm.**

We'll have the barbeque going, drinks & nibbles, spot prizes & a chance for you to get off the farm for a few hours, forget about the payout & have a drink, a feed & a yarn with us & each other. Plus we'll have the Rugby World Cup to talk about & dissect.

**So, get your overalls off, put on some glad rags & come into the clinic for a few hours stress relief & good company.**

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**Pea, Pie & Pud**  
*Farmers helping farmers through the tough times*  
 A social evening for farmers to support each other/chat/socialise over a meal & a game of pool.  
**\$5 for Pie, mashed potatoes & peas**  
 At Touchpoint Restaurant, Eltham (opposite TSB)  
 Bring neighbours & friends. Whether you need support or have tips to help others, come out for a casual evening.  
 Text to book 027 7273285  
 Friday 11th September  
 Friday 9th October





## SO WHAT CAN WE SAVE ON THIS SEASON?

With all the dairy gloom it's no surprise you're looking for every avenue to save money & reduce spending. Naturally your animal health spending will come under the microscope along with all your farm expenditure. A few things you can look at include:

**Metrichecking.** While whole herd checking has become the vogue if you keep decent records (& by golly a lot of money can be saved simply by keeping good records & doing the basics right) you can save here by just checking all your "At-Risk" cows (see article). Statistically they are far more likely to be dirty so check them rather than the whole herd. Give them 3-4 weeks after calving before checking them out (to avoid over-diagnosing) unless they are obviously infected.

**Use Intracillin rather than more expensive antibiotics.** As mentioned in another article in this newsletter, there is nothing wrong with good old fashioned penicillin; just make sure you use a decent dose on sick cows rather than the standard 20mls you give to a cow with Footrot.

**Mastitis:** Unless you are treating a heifer with mastitis (where statistics show a high likelihood that more than one quarter will be infected) or a cow with infection in multiple quarters use an intramammary tube rather than an injectable; it's nearly always cheaper.

**Non-cyclers:** This is a tricky one because not treating your non-cyclers before the start of mating could turn out to be the most expensive mistake you make all season & will impact on future seasons as well. See the article in this newsletter. However we know that most older cows will generally cycle within acceptable time frames at mating so this season in particular concentrate solely on 2,3 & 4 year old cows & treat them 7-10 days prior to the start of mating. The older ones will look after themselves.

**Lame cows:** Get in and treat them early before they become severely lame. Don't "stockpile" lame cows for us to see because any delay in treatment is likely to result in a much more expensive cure (or not at all if you leave it too long). Treat each lame cow as she comes along so she is back in the milking herd quicker.

**Heifer Synchrony:** use of cidrs will most certainly give you the tightest synchrony & best conception rate but if the cost of that worries you (approx. \$42 per heifer + visit fees) then if you're prepared to do a little more spade work the two shot prostaglandin technique has its merits: two shots of Lutalyse 11 days apart (10-12) will synchronise all your heifers into a 5-7 day time frame. This assumes that all your heifers are already cycling so they need to be well grown & well fed - if they are then after the second shot you will find heifers cycling within this time frame and are mated as they are seen on heat. This works best if you are able to do your own AI or you have an understanding technician and your yards are handy rather than 45 kms out the back somewhere. Total cost for this regime is \$13 for the two injections plus visit fees.



## Dose Rate Refresher for Intracillin Injection

Following on from our last newsletter we thought it was timely to remind you what you can use Intracillin for and what the dose rate should be. Over time (& particularly in high payout years) Intracillin tends to get relegated behind "stronger" or newer antibiotics & has been used almost exclusively for Footrot.

In fact because it's cheap it has almost got to point where people think it can't be that good & want something more expensive because it has to be better. Well in fact that isn't true.

**Penicillin should still be your first antibiotic for most conditions you treat on the farm;** it will treat most of them if you use an appropriate dose rate.

If you look at the packaging on Intracillin you'll see dose rate recommendations.

Most of us don't look past a dose rate of 16-20 mls for a 500 kg cow when treating Footrot. This is the dose rate for a 500 kg cow if you're treating Footrot.

But what if your cow has a temperature due to pneumonia or retained cleanings? Before you come running in asking for Engemycin, Bivatop or Marbocyl take another look at the package insert because it also says for cattle over 500 kgs (and to be fair that's most Friesians) 20-50 mls depending on severity of infection.

If I was suspicious of a cow being sick due to retained cleanings or perhaps early pneumonia I would be injecting my big Friesian cow with something closer to 40 mls on the 1<sup>st</sup> day followed by 30 mls for the next 2 to make up my 3 day course. The WHP is still the same for a 3 day course at 72 hours (6 milkings) but at a higher dose rate you have a far better chance of getting on top of that infection before we have to start thinking about Engemycin or something perceived to be "stronger".

In a low payout year consider what you're treating your cow for & increase the dose of Intracillin accordingly. You'll find it's just as "strong" as other antibiotics if you give it at an appropriate dose.



## Heifer synchrony with a CIDR programme

Breeding replacement heifers to AI is the fastest way to increase genetic gain in your herd. It also helps your heifers calve early to give them the greatest chance to get back in calf in their first lactation.

If you are considering AI on your replacement heifers, then it may be advisable to synchronise them with a 'Cosynch' programme. This programme involves:

Day -9: Insert CIDR & Inject GnRH  
Day -2: Remove CIDR & Inject PG  
Day 0: Inject GnRH & Inseminate

This is similar to the non-cycler programme for cows, but as heifers respond faster than cows to this programme, AI can be performed straight after the final GnRH injection.

This programme showed the best economic return on investment in a trial of three heifer synchrony programmes in 2008-9 by Scott McDougall and Chris Compton. In this study the Cosynch programme achieved a first service conception rate of 57%.

The success of any heifer synchrony program depends on heifer liveweight and general health. Reaching liveweight targets is essential for ensuring heifers have achieved puberty and are therefore cycling. The In Calf program liveweight target for a heifer at mating is 60% of their mature weight. In the run-up to mating, ensure heifers have good parasite management, trace element status and vaccinations are up to date. The In Calf program and your veterinarian can provide comprehensive advice to help you set your heifers up for a successful mating.

## Mastitis and milk quality Contagious mastitis and shed hygiene

With the steady march into late spring/early summer (and in theory, drier, warmer weather) the emphasis will switch from environmental causes of mastitis to predominantly contagious causes. Cows are 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 cows 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 New Zealand 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 for 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 or potentially infected quarters

- Try and milk them last
- 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 water (dissolves milk solids) 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, while not universally popular, 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 minimising the cracks on hands for bugs to hide. 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.

