

BVD testing of bulls

Make sure all your service bulls are BVD free



BVD is a widespread viral infection of NZ cattle and has a wide ranging impact on cattle performance and hence productivity, including growth of young stock, pregnancy rates, susceptibility to disease and milk production. A proportion of cattle that get exposed to the virus become carriers for life. These are the animals that become infected whilst still a foetus. These 'persistently infected' (PI) animals are the major cause of spread of infection and should be detected and culled.

Persistently infected bulls are a great way to spread the virus as they shed large amounts of virus. They are also introduced to the herd at a time of greatest potential impact – at mating and first 3 months of pregnancy. The virus affects conception rates and causes increased early embryonic loss. The semen quality of these bulls may also be inferior, and that's true for any bull that isn't immune or vaccinated for months after they are exposed (not just PI bulls). If this isn't sufficient, there are likely to be persistently infected calves born the following spring. These can be hard to rear and may well die before reaching 2 years of life, but infect all the stock around them until they do die.

To avoid such disasters, it is essential that all bulls brought in for mating are tested free of BVD virus to make sure they are not PI, and BVD vaccinated prior to their use (ideally several months before use if possible). When purchasing bulls that are advertised as BVD tested, ask to see a veterinary certificate of proof, or the actual laboratory results. Make sure the result says 'BVD Ag negative' or 'BVD PCR negative.' If they haven't been BVD tested, purchase them conditional on a free test. Purchase them early enough to allow this to happen and give time for two vaccinations one month apart prior to their use; i.e. purchase at least 6 weeks prior to putting them into the herd, but several months earlier is even better; or from a bull supplier who vaccinated them in the winter.

Given the devastating economic impact a BVD persistently infected bull can have on a herd, it is a no brainer to insist all bulls are BVD free and vaccinated at the time of purchase, even if you have to pay slightly more for such assurance.

Incidentally TB testing of service bulls is free so if there is any doubt on the TB status of a bull ring TBfree New Zealand on 0800 482 4636 to check the status or arrange a test.

For more information on BVD, refer to www.controlbvd.org.nz

Scabby Mouth Vaccines – use with care

With docking on the horizon many of you will be picking up your scabby mouth vaccines from the clinic in the next month or so.

While this is a vaccine that you will have used for many years please remember that it is a live vaccine and is infectious to humans so please be careful when using it. Preferably wear gloves and eye protection to minimise the risk.

This year we will be handing out a safety sheet with advice on how to use the vaccine & what to do if you accidentally scratch yourself with it or (heaven forbid) get some in your eye.

There aren't many "live" vaccines left in this country but this is one of them & as a result we should not let familiarity lead to a casual approach when using it.



Purchase any 3 or 6 pack of FRONTLINE Plus, 3 pack of NEXGARD Chewables or NEXGARD SPECTRA or 2 x BROADLINE and go in the draw to win one of 2 FORD FIESTA SPORTS CARS Plus One Eltham Vets client will win a Ford Fiesta remote control car

B12 and Selenium warning

During spring dairy cows are often deficient in vitamin B12. Lack of B12 depresses appetite, amongst other things, so many farmers inject their cows with 'Prolaject B12 2000' or 'Prolaject B12 2000 with selenium' to correct this. It is also often recommended in the lead-in to mating. So far, so good. Problems can arise if the injection is not done cleanly. If cows are injected as they calve and the product is kept slung over the milk line and the needle left uncovered, the unfortunate later calvers get abscesses. Worse than abscesses, every year we see at least one case of fatal blackleg after a cow has been injected intramuscularly, instead of subcutaneously, and with a dirty needle. The risk of fatal blackleg is greater with selenised B12 than plain B12.

So the moral of the story is:

- use sharp, clean needles and if you are going to re-use them, keep them capped between uses.
- always inject B12, especially selenised B12, under the skin, not into the muscle.



SEPTEMBER 2016

Things are looking up! The weather is nice; the Global Dairy Auction has risen 3 times in a row & my economist mate at the ASB continues to doggedly stick with his prediction of a \$6 payout by the end of this season. I'll drink to that! Let's hope this "recovery" is a real thing & we can get back to some sort of normality in the dairy industry because whether people want to admit it or not, if dairying is doing well then everyone benefits.

Mating is just around the corner so this newsletter focusses mostly on things to do with that. As always the most important decision you will make in setting up next season is when to intervene with non-cyclers and as always all the cost benefit formulas reinforce the fact that if you're going to do it you must do it early to get a return on investment. We can help that by letting you know that all our prices relating to cidrs & anoestrus cow treatments remain the same as last season. Every little bit helps.

Health & Safety remains a huge issue for farmers & vets alike & we are constantly looking at our own H&S plan & policies and how we can ensure our vets do their jobs as safely as possible & get home to their families each night without incident. Some things like kicks, scratches & bites can be mitigated but will still occur (because you can't always predict how an animal will react in a given situation) & we can live with that but we can't live with injuries caused by situations that could be avoided. This may be due to taking unreasonable risks with a particularly aggressive animal (vets are trained to recognise those risks & take measures to avoid them so this really shouldn't happen) or more often is contributed to in a big way by the facilities we have to work with on farm. This is where you come in. Please make sure all your animal handling facilities are in good working order & don't present an unnecessary risk to you or the vet. Often this just means oiling a sticky head bale, tidying up a dodgy race or alerting the vet to a hazard so he/she can avoid it. We are in the process of compiling a basic checklist for all our clients listing any obvious hazards on their farms that either can be fixed or mitigated so don't be offended if the next time a vet visits he or she takes a look at your facilities & ticks a few boxes on a form. We're just noting down what's good (which for most of you will be the case) & what's not so good & needs to be attended to. We're not going to make a big fuss over this so don't get too concerned about people "sticking their noses where they don't belong" but we have a duty of care to our staff when it comes to mitigating work place injuries & this is just part of the process.

Roll on summer & that \$6 payout!

Neil, Andy, & Leah Gavin won the MerialAncare pre-lamb promotion after purchasing Exodus LA.



Andy is pictured receiving the Waeco 55L Icebox from John Larkin

Clinic & Farm Supplies
Railway Street, Eltham
Ph. (06) 764 8196
www.elthamvetservice.co.nz
Trading Depot
Hollard Engineering,
Victoria Street, Kaponga
Ph. (06) 764 6686
J Larkin 0274 482 585

Veterinarians

Alistair McDougall BVSc - CEO
Giles Gilling BVSc BSc MRCVS
Andrew Weir BVSc, PGDip (Epi)
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 John Larkin BBS
Jill Watson CVN/RAT
Sue Morresey
Nicola Childs CVN/RAT
Frank Suter

Purchase qualifying



MERIAL
Ancare
products and receive a Sunbeam slow cooker



End of Spring BBQ – it's back

Last year's TGITEOS (Thank God it's the end of spring) BBQ was such a success we thought "bugger it; let's have another one".

Any excuse to get off the farm for a few hours at this time of year is a good one so mark down

**Thursday 6th October
from 11-3pm**

as a day to tidy yourself up a bit, leave the farm for a bit & come in to the clinic for a bit of stress relief, good company, top quality local steak on the barbie and a chance to win a few spot prizes. See you there!



Saving Money in the lead up to Mating

Mating is a time of year when animal health costs are at their highest and in the current financial climate we know cutting costs remains high on the agenda for most farmers. What we don't want is this affecting the farm's performance and undoing any gains made in previous years. So how do you achieve the impossible and save money without losing performance? Here are some points to focus on that are cheap but still can offer great results:

- **Metrichecking** is something that should not be avoided as it will cost you more in the long run if dirty cows are left untreated. However you don't necessarily need to do the whole herd if you have been keeping good records. If you have then concentrate on your At-Risk cows (you know the ones). Also, this is something you can do yourself (with a bit of practice) and get the vet to treat/check your suspicious cases or even treat them yourself if you are comfortable passing a catheter through the cervix. A metrichecker can be purchased from us and a quick demo will have you on your way!
- **Tail painting** at 35 days prior to mating and recording these pre-mating heats will avoid unnecessary CIDR use in cycling cows. Topping up tailpaint regularly will also help pick up those suspect cows. You can use a different colour for late calvers to give them a bit more time to cycle before jumping in with non-cycler treatments. Tailpaint costs \$15 a litre and will do up to 80 cows (that's 20 cents a cow!) compared to Kamars or Estroject at over \$2.20.
- **Spending time watching your cows** is the cheapest way to get them cycling this year, not just in the shed but also out in the paddock. Paddock checks are best done 2 hours after morning milking and again in early afternoon when the feed in their paddocks has been grazed down.
- **Iodine** trough treatment ensures stronger heats. This should be started 30 days pre PSM and at a dose of 40ml/100 cows daily. The addition of Stock Iodine to the water (either via dosatron or directly in the trough) costs next to nothing and can help boost metabolic rate & aid cycling.
- A shot of **Vitamin B12 +/- Se** (talk to us first) is very cheap & always worth doing a few weeks before mating.
- **Record keeping!** Attention to detail is always important but even more important when there are dollars at stake. Observe and record. It costs you nothing but a little time.

And finally remember **well fed cows cycle early!**

Now would be the perfect time to body condition score your herd to help identify these lighter cows which need looking after coming into mating so give us a call to discuss your BCS options.

Why you should still treat your Non-Cyclers this Season

You don't have to be Einstein to realise that mating is less than 2 months away & possibly the single most important animal health expenditure decision you make is looming with it.

So what to do about your non-cyclers? Even with slightly more optimistic forecasts many of you will be thinking "I can't afford to do it this season" but **the truth is you can't afford not to.**

Not treating your non-cyclers at the right time will cost you money and will also impact on your income stream next season (and the season after) because remember the use of Cidrs is all about gaining extra days in milk rather than simply making a cow cycle. **So you still need to treat non-cyclers and this year it's more important than ever to do it at the right time.**

We've got a good cost benefit calculator that we can use to show you the return on investment made when using Cidrs depending on when you do it but the single biggest point to take from this is that Cidrs will give a positive return on investment if you use them **7-10 days before the start of mating**. If you do it then, based on a \$4.85 payout & average daily production of 1.4 kgMS/cow/day, you will get a return per cow (including treatment costs) of around \$65. If you wait until the end of the 1st week, you'll make a small return of around \$20. But if you wait to treat noncyclers until the end of the 1st round it will actually cost you \$12 more than you make in extra milk next season so **the message is "do it early or not at all"**. For OvSynch alone the return if done 7-10 days early is around \$40. That's if you are a farm owner.

If you are a 50/50 Sharemilker **the only time** you'll make a positive return on investment is if you **treat 7-10 days before the start of mating**. You should see a return of around \$20 per cow with early treatment. After that even waiting until the end of the 1st week is costing you around \$5 and closer to \$25 by the end of the 2nd round.

If the numbers of non-cyclers before PSM scare you then you can be more selective on who to treat. We know that on most farms the older cows (as long as they are in reasonable condition) will cycle within an acceptable time frame so it's a fair decision to say "let's forget about the older cows this season & just treat our 2, 3 & 4 year olds". Then perhaps you could also look at the cows themselves & decide "when I look at their PWs & BWs why am I treating the bottom 10-20% at all? Maybe I should leave them & they either get in calf on their own or get culled". Just concentrate on the young good cows & treat them. Talk to us about your options before you make a decision that might cost you a lot more down the track. I'm sure your farm advisors are probably saying similar things. You can be selective but you still need to treat enough cows early to keep your calving spread solid. The term "damage limitation" springs to mind. Early Cidr treatment generates a much larger nett return for your farm than delayed treatment, despite more cows being treated.

The key message is that whatever group of cows you eventually decide to treat, do them early.

Keep detailed records, tail paint early & brush up on heat detection well before you need to start writing down tag numbers - all these things are in your control; the payout isn't.

Treating your Calves for Worms this Season

With calving comes a busy time of year that seems to go on until Christmas. Before doing what you've always done, 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. 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 and 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.
- **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.
- **Take care with yourself**
Choose a drenching method that works best for you; doesn't unnecessarily put you at risk of injury.

There has been a lot of research published in recent years that has changed the advice given around drenching. 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 us to discuss your particular requirements.

FAILURE OF PASSIVE TRANSFER (FPT) IN CALVES

In July & August this spring we completed a blood test survey of 23 farms and 233 calves to see if calves in our area were receiving adequate colostrum. Calves do not receive any antibodies from their dam across the placenta so they are born with very poor immune systems and must absorb their Mum's antibodies from colostrum to give them protection until they can begin to make their own. They must receive colostrum within the first 12 - 24 hours after birth as the calf's intestine will only absorb antibodies into the blood stream very soon after birth. Calves which don't receive enough colostrum and therefore have low antibody levels are said to have suffered Failure of Transfer or to have FPT.



Calves that have FPT are more likely to die or become ill compared to calves that receive adequate colostrum. 30% of deaths in the first 3 weeks can be directly attributed to FPT. FPT may have on going, long lasting effects. Calves with FPT are more likely to die, become ill, have poor growth and lower milk production as adults than calves that receive adequate colostrum.

A study in NZ in 2015 of 4,000 calves showed that 33% had FPT with the prevalence on farm ranging from 5% to 80%. In our (much smaller) survey 26% of the calves we sampled had FPT with prevalence on farm ranging from 0% to 75% so we appear to be doing better than the average! Three of the 23 farms surveyed had no calves with FPT. The farm with the best results with very high antibody levels in their calves have a policy of tubing every calf with "Gold" or 1st milking colostrum. They pick up calves once daily in the morning and every calf is tubed - calves born in the afternoon or evening are tubed in the paddock at night and then tubed again once they come in in the morning. Calves are given 2 feeds of "Gold" colostrum within the 1st 24 hours after birth, calves that don't drink for the 2nd feed are tube fed. The "Gold" (1st) colostrum is always fresh and warm or has been frozen, thawed and warmed.

The two farms with the next best results have similar policies. Calves and cows are collected twice daily and calves are fed as soon as they come in with "Gold" colostrum, which is fresh and warm. If they will not drink they are tube fed. One of the two farms has a policy of two feeds of 1st milk in the first 24 hours so calves that won't feed at the second feed are tube fed also.

You should aim to have no more than 20% of your calves have FPT. 43% of our farms sampled achieved this. It was interesting to note that quite a number of the farms with high numbers of calves with FPT have had problems of some sort with scours, navel infections or pneumonia. That's not to say that farms with low levels of FPT won't have problems but if they do have issues, their calves recover better and faster so growth checks and deaths are limited.

FPT testing is simple and cheap - we need 10 - 12 well calves, 1 - 7 days old, and can do the test in the clinic. We can now offer FPT testing as part of diagnostic tests when looking at calf disease issues. If you would like to know how your farm measures up keep this in mind for next season; we can come and check for you.

Thanks so much to everyone who volunteered to contribute to our survey. We have a great bunch of clients keen to contribute, learn new information and help out. Thanks so much for letting us blood test your calves and I hope you gained some valuable information out of it. Please feel free to contact me at the clinic if you have any queries.

Teresa