AUGUST 2018

VET NEWS

SKINNY HORSE

PERCENTAGE DOWN?

BIO SECURITY PLAN

Some photos by Richard Hilson

VET services
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WHAT SHALL I DO ABOUT MY SKINNY HORSE?

LOUISA BROUGHTON

This year, more than others, we've been dealing with more underweight animals. There are some common problems and basic guidelines that can be helpful for getting your equine in a good order.

Firstly, identifying when they are losing weight early helps you to change their management before it becomes much harder. You need to take rugs off, or actually feel ribs of furry ones – you can't tell small amounts of weight loss from across a field.

The number one reason for weight loss is not enough food. Horses predominantly need high fibre food, so an ad lib source of good grass/hay or haylage is a great place to start. Make sure bullying is not stopping some horses from eating enough. In a herd situation, sometimes leaving a large bale in the paddock might be more effective as there is access to food 24/7.

Hard feed, such as oats or pony nuts, are a great addition if ad-lib fibre is not enough. There's a wide range of options available depending on the age or requirements of your horse.

Don't forget to check the basics health care too. Horses need their teeth checked yearly and they need a good worming program based on faecal egg counts. We've found that there is still a lot of confusion about worming – horses need worming with a Moxidectin based wormer at least once per year, usually in Spring, to cover encysted Cyathostomes. Equest and Ultramox (or a 5 day course of Panacur) are the only wormers in NZ that cover these. Your vet can help you decide an appropriate one for your situation.

If all the above basics are covered, then it might be time to investigate if there is something amiss medically – we'd be happy to help. There's a wide range of problems that can cause weight loss, including ulcers, liver and kidney problems, diarrhoea or colitis, chronic pain and metabolic issues.

MAGNESIUM STAGGERS AND RUMETRACE

HARRY WHITESIDE

Magnesium is the eighth most common element on earth and was named after the city of Magnesia in ancient Greece where huge deposits of the element were originally discovered. However, of far more use to us is the information that magnesium deficiency in farm animals is associated with "grass staggers/ tetany" otherwise known as "hypomagnesaemia". This can be a significant cause of cattle losses in the run up to and in the 6-8 weeks following calving.

It is caused by a sudden drain on magnesium that in turn is caused by the cow's need to start producing milk for her calf. The reason magnesium deficiency is such an issue is that there are no body stores of the element that the cow can call upon. All of her requirements for magnesium are met on a day to day basis and are therefore wholly dependent upon her daily dietary intakes. These are highly unpredictable and the problem is further complicated by high protein and potassium levels in lush spring grass, both of which inhibit magnesium uptake.

Don't panic - we can provide a very reliable solution that is well worth having a look at given the current value of stock.

"Rumetrace" is an easy to administer bolus that will pay out the cow's recommended daily requirement of magnesium (2-3g) for between 9-12 weeks. The variation depends upon the acidity of the diet as this determines the rate at which the bolus dissolves. Even at 9 weeks, the capsules are the longest lasting form of magnesium supplementation available and avoid the daily hassle of having to dust pastures or fill water troughs with the alternatives. Furthermore, the magnesium released from "Rumetrace" is in a form of magnesium which is 100% available for absorption in the cow's rumen in contrast to magnesium oxide/sulphate/chloride.

It is important to note that the magnesium provided by "Rumetrace" takes 7-10 days to reach the required levels and as such it is important to look at bolusing animals 7-10 days BEFORE the start of calving.

We see losses in beef cows every spring that could easily have been prevented by the prudent application of a bolus so why not pop into the clinic and talk to us about finding the best fit for "Rumetrace" on your farm this calving season.

CHB DOG VACCINATION RUN

YES it is that time again!

YES We will come to your place mileage free to vaccinate your dogs.

YES We will contact you late August-early September to confirm times.

If you have not heard from us by mid-September you may not be on our runs. Please call us at the clinic to ensure you don't miss out.

Ph: 06 858 9060 **NOTE:** We will now be doing our dog runs late Sep - early Oct

LAMB LOSSES – LESS IS MORE

SARA SUTHERLAND

Lamb survival at lambing is a major production and welfare issue for commercial sheep farmers in New Zealand. Lamb losses range from 5% to 30% per farm, with an average of 10-15% per farm. Most of these losses occur in the first 48 hours. There are a number of factors which influence lamb survival, some we can control and some we can't.

The most important factor is probably weather. Weather, particularly weather events bringing wind and precipitation, have the most visible effect. We can't control the weather, apart from putting our most susceptible ewes in the most sheltered paddocks.

Lamb survival is also influenced by maternal behaviour. This can be selected for genetically between breeds and within a breed. Surprisingly, this is also influenced by pasture cover – ewes take better care of their lambs on 4cm of grass than 2cm of grass.

Lambs that stand and nurse quickly are more likely to survive. The energy level of the lamb depends to some extent on the amount of "brown fat" the lamb is born with. This can be influenced by making sure ewes are in BCS 3 before lambing, and on good feed for the last month before lambing. Twins and triplets have less brown fat each than singles do, so good feeding is even more important for multiple-bearing ewes.

Once the brown fat has been used up, lambs need colostrum. Ewes on low covers will give less colostrum, and less milk. Making sure ewes are on good covers for the last month before lambing will improve milk production. Ewes with crook udders or mastitis give less milk. We are looking forward to the results of a recent comprehensive study by Massey University on udders and udder abnormalities, and will let you know when these results become available.

The other kind of ewe that doesn't produce a lot of milk is a dead ewe. Losses of ewes on commercial hill-country farms are also variable. Studies trying to quantify the reasons for these losses haven't had a lot of success.

Dystocia is lambs getting stuck during lambing, either because they are too big or because several are trying to come out at once. This is another significant cause of death in ewes that we can't do much about. Breeders are talking about an EBV (breeding value) for small size at birth, for rams used for hogget mating, as is done in beef cows, but nobody has actually done it yet. Feeding level of ewes in the last month before lambing will not make the lambs bigger - by that stage lamb size has been set.

We know that bearings are a major cause of lamb loss on farms in some years. Richard Hilson has already published lots of information on avoiding bearings, so I won't go over that again, apart from reminding you that fat ewes are no more likely to get a bearing than skinny ewes. Don't limit feed to ewes close to lambing in an effort to reduce bearings – it won't influence bearings and will potentially have a major detrimental effect on lamb survival.

Another cause of ewe death is metabolic conditions ("down ewes"). This includes low energy (ketosis, also called "sleepy sickness" or "twin lamb disease"), and low calcium ("milk fever"). The balance of calcium, magnesium, vitamin D and phosphorus, and their influence on energy, is extremely complicated.

First, ketosis. Before the lamb is born, the ewe needs to provide it with energy in the form of glucose. That foetus, or foetuses, will take glucose every day, even if the ewe is not eating. That glucose can come from feed intake, or from fat. However making glucose from fat requires energy, and puts a load on the liver. The liver has hundreds of important roles in the body and can get overwhelmed. If the ewe is on limited feed, or stops eating because of illness or a spell of bad weather, the liver may not be able to cope and the greedy foetus(es) still wants to suck in that glucose. The ultimate outcome is either subclinical ketosis (the ewe survives but the lamb is born dopey), or clinical ketosis (the ewe goes down, and dies if not treated).

A ewe that has had facial eczema will have limited liver function, as will a ewe that has been too fat (commonly seen on lifestyle blocks, but also keep an eye on the kid's pets!). Older ewes will have livers that just aren't quite as good at handling glucose (just like old people don't process alcohol quite the same way they did when young!). Two foetuses need more glucose than one – so older twin and triplet-bearing ewes are more susceptible to sleepy sickness.

Secondly, milk fever. The calcium level stays in a very, narrow range in the blood. This is used for all sorts of things, including keeping the heart beating, rumen moving, muscles contracting, and temperature regulated. In late pregnancy the requirement increases dramatically as calcium is needed to form the skeleton(s) of the lamb(s). In a normal, healthy pregnancy, the ewe gets calcium from the grass until late in pregnancy when that intake from grass isn't enough and she starts to pull it out of her bones. At some point in the pregnancy this changeover from gut to bones has to happen. Unfortunately, it takes a couple of days for the changeover to take place. Spring pasture in NZ is high in calcium, so ewes are used to absorbing calcium from the diet in high quantities every day and don't become efficient at absorbing it. When they are off feed (weather event, or prelamb shearing for example), they still have this demand for calcium. They try to draw it from their gut but have nothing in their gut. They can't switch over straight away to drawing it from their bones. So their blood calcium levels drop and they get milk fever.

Calcium in the body is needed for muscle contraction, including the muscles for standing and walking and the muscles in the wall of the rumen that let the ewe digest food. So a ewe that is low on calcium looks identical to a ewe with ketosis – she will be lying down and reluctant to stand up, "dopey" or "sleepy", and may be bloated. Older ewes are also more prone to milk fever – they have fewer receptors than young ewes. The inability to ruminate properly because of low calcium will of course mean that she also isn't getting enough glucose from grass. Having ketosis means a ewe will stop eating, which means she isn't getting calcium either. This means milk fever and sleepy sickness often happen together, and telling them apart isn't usually important.

In a nutshell, the main thing you can control to increase lamb survival and decrease ewe deaths is getting as many ewes as possible to condition score 3 before lambing, and make sure they are on good pastures (3-5 cm, or 1300 kg DM/ha) from the three weeks before lambing starts. Try to avoid sudden changes in feed or keeping them off feed for too long. If you can, scan for triplets and treat twin and triplet-bearing ewes better than singles.

Appropriate feeding close to lambing will mean ewes are less likely to get sleepy sickness or milk fever, lambs will be born with more brown fat and be less likely to be dopey because of subclinical ketosis, ewes will have more milk and better maternal behaviour. They won't have more oversize lambs and they won't get more bearings. The only downside is you might have to call in a couple of extra teenagers to help with docking because of all the extra lambs!

BIOSECURITY PLAN: MYCOPLASMA BOVIS

CLARE RYAN

Biosecurity is about reducing the risk of disease entering or spreading around your farm.

STOCK MOVEMENTS: Any stock that come onto your farm are a potential source of disease to all other stock on the farm.

BEFORE ENTRY: Ask questions about Animal Health, TB status, Vaccinations, Disease and Treatment History. Ask about the following clinical signs occurring on farm of origin - lameness (especially swollen joints), Mastitis (non-responsive, unusual, all four quarters), abortions or premature abnormal calves, calves with respiratory disease, calves with ear infections or conjunctivitis. Ask if all animals were checked for any signs of ill health before leaving farm of origin.

Make sure that all animals have NAIT tags and all cattle movement is recorded in the NAIT system. Any cattle arriving on farm without NAIT tags should be loaded straight back onto the truck and sent back to farm of origin.

NEW ARRIVALS: All newly arrived cattle are kept separate from other mobs for 7 days and monitored for any signs of ill health. This is most important when talking about the arrival of service bulls.

GRAZING MOBS: If at all possible these cattle should stay in their own mobs with no mixing (avoiding nose to nose contact) unless otherwise discussed with the Owner.

YARDS: If feasible ensure a 24 hour stand down period between shared use of yards. If not practical, disinfect high contact areas such as loading ramps and forcing pens.

TRUCKS: All trucks should arrive for loading in a clean state. Consider disinfection before loading if practical.

MANAGING ACCESS ON FARM: Footwear, personal protective equipment, gear and vehicles can spread disease. Disinfection after cleaning minimises the chance of spreading unwanted disease.

WASH AND DISINFECTION POINT: Have signs alerting visitors of your biosecurity requirements with regards to washing and disinfection. A place to wash and disinfect with available water, brush and buckets and disinfectant.

EQUIPMENT COMING ONTO FARM: Make sure machinery and animal handling equipment is cleaned and disinfected between farms and discuss your requirements with any contractors before they arrive on farm.

TRANSPORT AROUND THE FARM: If possible provide a farm vehicle for on farm transport of visitors.

FARM STRUCTURE SETUP: Neighbouring farms or other grazing groups within the farm may have different animal health status and therefore should be treated as a possible source of disease as some diseases can spread by nose to nose contact.

FARM LAYOUT: Think about limiting entry points to the farm, have 1 main entry point. Having a dedicated area for sick animals may help reduce the spread of diseases.

MAP OUT YOUR FARM INTO 3 AREAS

GREEN – areas where no stock can enter (driveway, stock truck access)

BLUE – Areas for holding incoming stock, or sick stock.

RED – Areas where stock graze that no visitors or machinery enter unless follow strict cleaning and disinfection.

BOUNDARY FENCES: Have secure boundary fences to prevent nose to nose contact (outrigger fences) or physical barriers (hedgerows, gullies, forestry). Avoid grazing boundary paddock at the same time as your neighbours are grazing the adjacent paddock so communicate with your neighbours. Consider other things that may break this boundary such as road crossings or grazing the roadside.

BIOSECURITY AWARENESS ON FARM: Discuss biosecurity with all farm workers and remember to call your vet or MPI if you see something unusual regarding animal health. MPI number 0800 809 966.

QUALITY CALF NUTRITION – TO WEANING AND BEYOND!

KATHRYN SIGVERTSEN

Growing a calf until weaning sets it up for its future. If done well, this can have variable effects depending on the production system! Excellent dairy heifers will live longer, and excellent beef animals will potentially live shorter (due to achieving outstanding growth rates and therefore meeting targets earlier in life). There are many factors involved, but one of the main things we are trying to achieve is development of a functional, muscular and capacious rumen, that can handle large volumes of food and efficiently digest plant material and absorb the energy and nutrients produced. Starch intakes early in life have a direct effect on rumen development and particularly the number and quality of rumen papillae (finger-like projections into the rumen that increase the surface area for absorption of volatile fatty acids, the energy currency that rumen bacteria produce). The more papillae that develop as a calf, and the longer they are, determines how well a ruminant processes food for the rest of its life.

"Nourish" is a new product that we are excited to be stocking. Produced right here in CHB, and formulated by Napier company Ruminate, Nourish is a loose calf meal producing outstanding results. Being a loose meal, the recipe always remains the same, eliminating the risk of a sudden change in diet due to formulation changes with pellets. It has high starch levels, made possible by a buffering system, which produces great rumen papillae! Nourish is a great addition to a quality calf rearing system, and we are pleased to see locally grown grain being used.

One of the other vital pieces of the calf rearing puzzle, as we get closer to weaning, is coccidiosis prevention. Coccidia are small protozoan parasites that affect the gut and cause scouring and ill thrift at or around weaning. Most calf meals (including Nourish) and some calf milk powders contain coccidiostats that slow or stop the growth of coccidia within the calf. This allows the calf to become exposed and produce immunity without causing clinical disease. We often see outbreaks of coccidiosis at a time when meal intakes are reduced, but pasture challenge remains high. The worst affected mobs seem to be those that are grazing paddocks that are grazed year-on-year by young calves, often because they are handy for feeding, or have good fencing, or the right size etc. This can allow pasture contamination to increase over time. Affected calves will often be straining or flicking their tails and may have a blood stained scour. Fortunately treatment is relatively simple and the price of this has reduced significantly this year due to a new product. We can definitively diagnose coccidiosis from a faecal sample sent to the lab but often a presumptive diagnosis is made and the response to treatment is rapid, confirming the suspicion.

Remember, rearing a good calf doesn't just stop at 100kg!

SEASONAL UPDATE

HASTINGS/NAPIER

JOAO DIB

June and July have flown by and Spring is not far away. Dairy cows are dropping calves and sheep scanning has now been going on for a while.

Calf rearers are busy dealing with calves and hopefully they have a good season. Late May and June were busy months with the bulk of the heifer teatsealing happening and reports are that heifer mastitis is being kept at bay. We have also run a number of calf-rearing seminars with good attendance. Over 175 people attended so hopefully a good season ahead for most calves, and all those involved in calf rearing.

Sheep scanning results from Hastings are overall pleasing. Scanning in areas like the top of Maraetotara may have been affected by facial eczema. Hoggets are currently being done and we are consistently seeing 80% in-lamb with 40-50% carrying multiples.

Calvings are well under way on most of the dairy farms around Patoka, Kereru and Tutira. We have assisted with calvings but so far have not been too busy. Keep an eye out for retained foetal membranes – some cases of very sick cows have been seen where treatment has been delayed. Watch for environmental mastitis such as E.coli which makes cows very sick and will kill them if not treated promptly. The risk of E.coli mastitis is higher with increased environmental contaminations i.e. mud or manure. Lameness in dairy cows is a big challenge and a major welfare issue. Pick them up early to avoid serious joint infection in the foot. Get our help sooner rather than later.

Salmonella has affected both yearling and adult cattle with a major outbreak in adult cows seen with a number of affected cows dying as a consequence. Very sick, scouring and dehydrated animals are the hallmark.

We are having a fair bit of rain as I write this and hopefully it will settle soon and the bright sunny weather will return. Wish you all a great Spring.

WAIPUKURAU

NICOLETTE ADAMSON

What a treat the last couple of weeks of good weather have been! Some sunlight hours and slightly warmer midday temperatures will go a long way to starting the Spring grass growth.

Our winter seminars were run during the week of the 13th of August with great turnouts. We hope that you got some useful information from the wide range of topics. Handouts are available if you would like a copy.

Calves are starting to hit the ground left, right and centre with all the fun that goes along with it. If you still have time left for some of your cows, it may well be time to get onto vaccinating ahead of calving so that the colostrum is as beneficial as possible. Stock up the cupboards with all of the calving goodies – electrolytes, disinfectant and lots of chocolate!! The lambs are also starting to appear so we really have hit the beginning of the end… busy weekends on call are in the future for all of us here, and we hope not to see you - it's at this point that we say "see you on the other side!"

DANNEVIRKE

NAOMI BARRETT

A mixed bag of weather recently has left us with a fair bit of water sitting around, but milder temperatures have seen grass continuing to grow through the late winter period. Many animals have been on crop as well and, whilst great for building and maintaining body condition, we have seen a few metabolic issues as a result. In particular, cows wintering on fodder beet are predisposed to low phosphorus levels, which can lead to milk fever. It pays to have trace element bloods run to anticipate these metabolic problems.

Measuring the levels of non-esterified fatty acids (NEFAs) or beta-hydroxybutyrate (B-OHB) in the early post-calving period can be informative as well. NEFA levels reflect the mobilization of body fat reserves and how well cows have been managed in the transition period. Poor transition can have many downstream repercussions from increasing the incidence of retained foetal membranes to reduced reproductive performance come mating time.

Ewe scanning is drawing to a close with results looking similar to/a little bit better than previous years. Pre-lamb treatments are the next thing to organize with an 8 in 1 vaccine this year giving additional protection against clostridial disease. The usual range of short and long acting drench options are in stock with something to suit every farm system. Now may be a good time to sit down and discuss a parasite control plan for the full season ahead.

Remember to look after yourselves during this hectic calving and lambing period and don't hesitate to get in touch for help with any animal health issues.

WAIRARAPA

STUART BRUERE

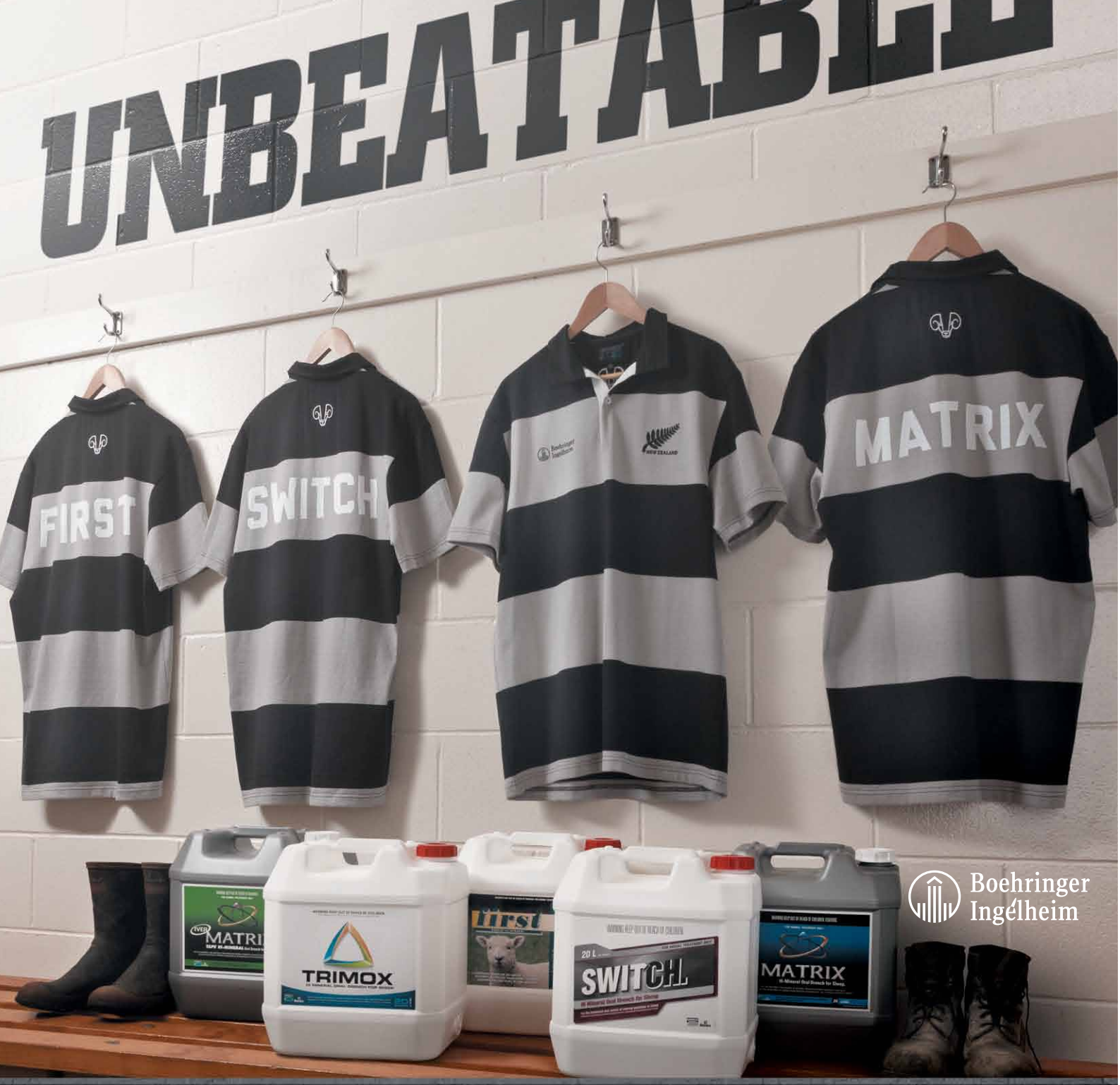
The general picture looks promising for a "growthy" spring. There has been plenty of rain so low soil moisture levels should not be limiting for good spring growth this year. We have seen some cases of abortion in sheep – so far the infectious agents identified are Campylobacter and Leptospira. If you appear to have too many wet/dry ewes with no udders at docking time give us a call as we can blood test some to see what the cause may be.

Our calf rearing seminars were very well attended – 22 turned up in Eketahuna and over 60 came to our Carterton one. The key topics covered were housing, colostrum feeding, common diseases, fluid replacement and welfare.

The 1st of October this year marks some significant changes to our animal welfare laws – as an example, when we sign off transport certificates for animals to be transported to the works; a transport company may be given an infringement notice and an infringement fee for taking them to the wrong freezing works. It is good to be able to report that since the bobby calf regulations were significantly tidied up a couple years ago, the infringement rate at the works has dropped to well below 1%. Roll on Summer for some warmth.

OUR VET TEAM

Napier & Hastings:	**Clare Ryan, Dave Kruger, Dave Warburton, Georgina Campbell, Greg Tattersfield, Helen Crawford, Ian Leadbetter, Joao Dib, Mark Matthews, Neil Stuttle, Rachel Griffiths, Richard McKenzie, Roger McKinley, Sharné Boys, Stuart Badger, Veronika Pipe and Vicki Gilchrist.**
Waipukurau:	**Annelise Enslin, Anyika Scotland, Camille Flack, Caroline Robertson, Geert Gelling, Harry Whiteside, Kathryn Sigvertsen, Lucy Dowsett, Mike Fitzgerald, Nicolette Adamson and Richard Hilson.**
Dannevirke:	**Corinna Minko, Ingrid Meijer, Johnny Atkins, Kate Matthews, Naomi Barrett, Simon Marshall and Tim Hogan.**
Masterton:	**Elke Blommers, Jacques Van Zyl, Louisa Broughton, Nicola Haglund, Sandy Redden, Sara Sutherland, Sarah Wolland and Stuart Bruere.**



BRING YOUR A-GAME THIS SEASON

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DANNEVIRKE 193-195 High Street **06 374 7021**
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