

FEB 2021

VET NEWS

FACIAL ECZEMA

PREPARING TO DRY OFF

FLYSTRIKE



VET SERVICES

HAWKE'S BAY | DANNEVIRKE | WAIRARAPA

WAIPUKURAU

Camille Flack, Production Animal Veterinarian Group Leader

We start the year quite differently compared to this time last year. Last year the first cases of Covid-19 were being confirmed in New Zealand and we were starting to get concerned about the dry. This year while it is dry in CHB at least there is something covering the ground.

Mating for sheep farmers seems to be shaping up to be a good one as ewes look to be in really good condition. Beef and dairy cattle scanning is underway and results will hopefully be positive considering the feed we have had available.

Here in CHB Surfing for Farmers has been featuring along our coastal beaches. It has been a great mental health initiative which many have been getting involved in.

We are happy to welcome Alyse Hansen to the team as a mixed practice vet. Alyse is from Lower Hut and recently graduated from Massey University. She's jumped straight in-to things and may have already met you in clinic or assisting on farm visits. Hamish Grant also joined our production animal retail team last spring. He may be familiar to some of you as he had previously worked with PGG Wrightson. Predominantly based in Waipukurau, Hamish brings with him plenty of practical farming and product knowledge along with his exceptional customer service skills.

Here's hoping autumn will make an appearance this year as it seems to have evaded us for a few! However the downside of autumn turning up means we will need to be extra vigilant on the disease front with facial eczema being number one on that list. Unfortunately we can't have one without the other, a marriage like no other.

HASTINGS / NAPIER

Clare Ryan, Veterinarian & Clinic Manager

It has been a busy summer in our clinics, and we are thankful that the latest COVID scare was a short one. Hawke's Bay has had some dry spells with long, warm days and farmers across the region welcomed the few days of rain we received in mid-February. Some areas reported up to 120mls, but we know others weren't so lucky.

Our facial eczema monitoring programme is well underway, and spore counts have been low so far. Be prepared that spore counts could now lift. You can check the weekly updates on our website or keep in touch with our retail team for the latest results. Bring in samples from your farm if you want to check paddocks.



Maggie & Ned showing off a new jacket. Winners of the December Bravecto Swannndri Competition.



Gabby & Harry have been taking new team member Alyse out on some of the more glamorous vet jobs. Pictured here scanning a dairy herd.



Nicolette & Libby visit a foal on for a general check up on a beautiful January afternoon



Rescue kitten affectionately named Dumpster riding shotgun on a visit to the Waipukurau clinic.

HASTINGS / NAPIER continued

Clare Ryan, Veterinarian & Clinic Manager

Pregnancy testing in cattle is well underway and sheep scanning is just around the corner, please start sending in your scanning numbers. Ticks continue to be a problem in some places. They survived through mild winter in 2020 and are prevalent in the long rank grass. Come and talk to the team if you have issues.

Many of you will know Roger Mckinley retired in November (after being with Vet Services for a whopping 27 years) and Holly Spurrier is now on maternity leave as she looks forward to starting a family. We wish them both all the best in their next chapters.

Garry Jones and Gill Beaver joined our growing in store teams late last year. Both bring a wealth of product, client & farming knowledge.

New graduates Sal Bredenkamp and Mitchell Lowe, and 3rd year Henry Yule have joined our growing mixed practice vet team and we look forward to having Anyika Scotland back in our production animal vet team this March. She has spent a number of years based in our Waipukurau clinic and been on maternity leave.

WAIRARAPA

Sara Sutherland, Veterinarian

It's been a long grass summer in the Wairarapa, unusual for our area! Some of our farms had several falls of rain since Christmas, others only had the very welcome 40ml in mid February. Wasn't that a nice rain! Farmers are telling me that stock condition is good. No cases of Salmonella yet but with fat sheep and lots of grass everyone is looking out for it.

We are very happy to have Keri Giles join our team as a mixed vet with an interest in sheep and beef. Keri is from Southland and her partner is farming in the Wairarapa. Some of you have already met her on farm as she has wasted no time in getting out and getting her hands dirty! Aimee Alexander has also joined us, her interest is mainly on the small animal side but you may see her on farm from time to time as we try to persuade her that sheep and beef work is way more fun.

Facial eczema spore counts were high for a couple of weeks, then the cooler nights dropped the counts significantly. Warm weather is forecasted to return soon and we are anxiously waiting to see what effect that has. The fungus likes warm weather overnight and a bit of humidity – a heavy dew is enough humidity, they don't need lots of rain. Remember the way we would like farmers to use the regional counts is that when you see these are rising (which means there is potential for that fungus to grow), get your scissors out and bring a grass sample from your farm. Spore counts are the only way to tell what is going on on your farm. You want to know what is happening before costly liver damage has occurred. By the time you see peeling skin and drooping ears it is too late to avoid production losses (which can be significant). Read Kathryn's article below for more on this.

We did see a case of brucellosis this year. This is a reminder that the disease is still out there. This farm was not one that got us to palpate rams annually – they probably had the infection for years without being aware of it. A reminder this disease is contagious from ram to ram and causes infertility. It can be a very costly disease - if you haven't had Sara or Keri out to palpate rams yet this year then give us a ring as soon as possible. You won't make any money from a ram who can't do the job.

Keri and Sara between them have done a heap of teasers this year, remember if you need more teasers you should do the surgery 6 weeks before you want to use them.

We have done about 10 faecal egg count reduction tests so far. Normally it gets too dry in February for egg counts to get high enough to start the test. That may not be the case this year, so if you haven't done a reduction test in the last 3 years then give us a ring!

The next big job on our calendar is cattle scanning – please book this in to make sure you get the date and time you want. The summers seem to go by faster and faster each year – it will be autumn before we know it.



DANNEVIRKE

Simon Marshall, Veterinarian & Clinic Manager

The region has grown a lot of feed over the last few months and a lot of it has ended up in silage stacks, baleage bales and hay bales. I have talked to a number of contractors that think this will be up on most years. In saying that things had definitely started to dry out until we got some rain mid February. I measured 19ml in town and know that there was more the further east you go. This will help but with the predicted high temperatures coming again next week it could burn off again shortly.

We haven't seen too many major animal health issues apart from young weaner calves of dairy origin not growing as well as they should be. This has been replacement dairy heifers and Friesian bull calves. When they have been investigated the issues have ranged from some to all of the following: Internal parasites, Lungworm, Coccidiosis, Selenium deficiency, and Yersiniosis. We only found out the causes by investigating them with examination and various samples being taken. Once this is done we can treat the issues and hopefully get them going again.

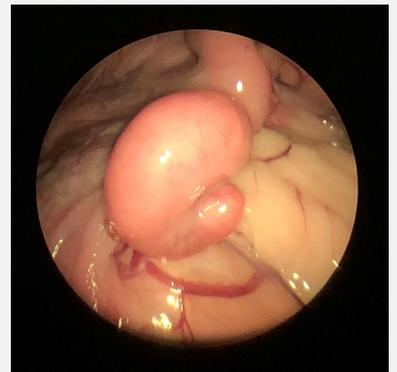
Pregnancy testing is in full swing with the majority of the dairy herds nearly done. It's a bit too early to tell of any results but we are seeing the usual range of highs and lows. The next thing to get underway is milk quality reviews pre-drying off.

SHEEP REPRODUCTION SERVICES

Dave Warburton, Veterinarian

In 2020 Vet Services launched stud and commercial farming reproduction services and despite COVID-19 and the drought coming together, we were proud to achieve the following results!

- Implanted frozen embryos from the UK.
- Inseminated ewes using frozen semen from the UK.
- Collected semen off 12 rams for fresh and frozen use and storage.
- Artificially inseminated ewes from north of Gisborne to the Wairarapa, in groups ranging from 10 – 500 at a time.



If you are looking to multiply your best genetics, access top rams, market semen to a wider audience and/or increase the progeny per sire these reproduction services may be of interest to you.

Head to our website (<https://www.vshb.co.nz/sheep-services/>) or call your local clinic to find out more.

Facial eczema is a disease affecting sheep, cattle and alpacas, and is caused by a toxin called sporidesmin. Sporidesmin is produced by the spores of the fungus *Pithomyces chartarum* growing on pasture.

The fungus grows in the base of pasture in warm moist conditions found at this time of year. When ingested the spores damage the animal's liver which can result in poor reproductive performance, reduced growth rates and in dairy cows a noticeable drop in milk production. Not all animals will show clinical (visible) signs, but they can still be affected subclinically. Those with subclinical infections will have liver damage and the associated reduced performance but will look normal on the outside.

Clinical signs include skin peeling, facial swelling, droopy ears (particularly sheep) and restlessness, while cows with white/pink teats will be painful to milk. All of these signs can cause pain and discomfort, contributing to the negative welfare impact this terrible disease has.



How do we prevent it?

The spores that produce the sporidesmin toxin can be counted in a grass sample. Regular spore counting is done in our regions from a selection of monitor farms, to show general trends of how many spores are out there. The more spores that are consumed, the more risk there is to the animal.

As a general rule, spore counts over 30,000 spores per gram are considered risky. For information on the risk in a specific paddock, a spore count from that paddock will need to be taken as the counts can vary widely even between neighbouring paddocks.

Using these spore counts, trigger levels can be decided on for when to apply further prevention. Prevention options include:

- zinc bolus treatment (eg faceguard bolus for sheep and cattle)
- zinc water treatment (for cattle, not suitable for sheep)
- pasture spraying with fungicide while counts are still below 50,000
- grazing "safe" pasture (identified by spore counting or low risk pasture species such as chicory, plantain) grazing to higher residuals to prevent stock eating the very base of the pasture (where spores are concentrated).

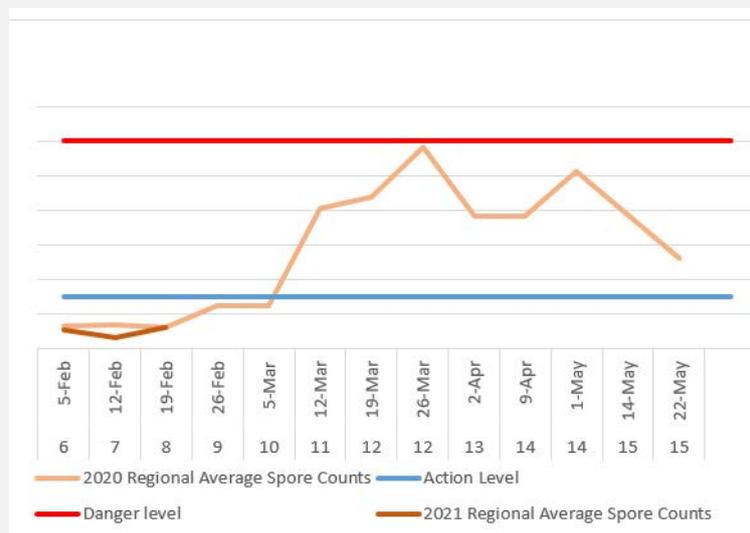
Even exposure to low spore counts (as little as 20,000) over an extended period can cause significant damage

Long term it is possible to breed for tolerance to facial eczema and there are accredited ram breeders working towards this.

Treatment options for clinically affected stock are very limited. There are no good proven treatments for facial eczema and the long lasting effects of the liver damage mean that pregnant stock in particular often struggle in the following spring at lambing or calving, due to increased stress on them at that time.

Being vigilant and watching regional spore count trends will give you warning of when to start prevention. Each season is different and monitoring is the only way we can see what is happening right now.

Our weekly monitor results can be found on our website (www.vshb.co.nz). If you are interested in monitoring your farm please contact your local clinic.



- ARE YOU READY TO DRY OFF?

With the typical summer weather upon us, it is time to start thinking about the wind-up of this milking season. There are many aspects to consider when it comes to drying off your herd (think BCS, long term weather forecasts, expected calving dates, production goals etc), but on the top of the list is the age-old question:

What do I use to dry off my cows?

Over the past few years, the general approach to drying off dairy cows has seen some very big changes. Where we used to aim to treat the whole herd with a 'dry off antibiotic', we now aim to only treat those cows that actually need an antibiotic treatment and to protect the remainder of your herd with an internal teat sealant. The main driver behind these changes is the rise in antimicrobial resistance, both amongst our own NZ dairy herds as well as globally in veterinary medicine and human medicine. More resistance develops and therefore less infections respond to antibiotic treatment every season.

Enter the DAIRYANTIBIOGRAM. This is a new test which detects and monitors antibiotic resistance in mastitis bacteria on a dairy farm. The DAIRYANTIBIOGRAM test is performed on a bulk milk sample which we obtain directly from the tanker sample taken by your milk processor. It provides knowledge of the antibiotic resistance status of your herd. This is the key to choosing the right treatments for your cows, and for monitoring and preventing the development and spread of resistance.

So far these results have shown a large amount of resistant genetics are present within both the *Streptococcus uberis* (the 'environmental bug') and the *Staphylococcus aureus* (the 'contagious bug') population in our own region. They underline the necessity to change our approach to the use of antibiotics on farm as we want to be able to treat these infections (and others) with good results for a long time into the future.

No one likes treatment failures so it is important to ensure we use the right antibiotic in the right situation.

For this reason the New Zealand Veterinary Association has set the following goal:

'By 2030 New Zealand Inc. will not need antibiotics for the maintenance of animal health and wellness.'

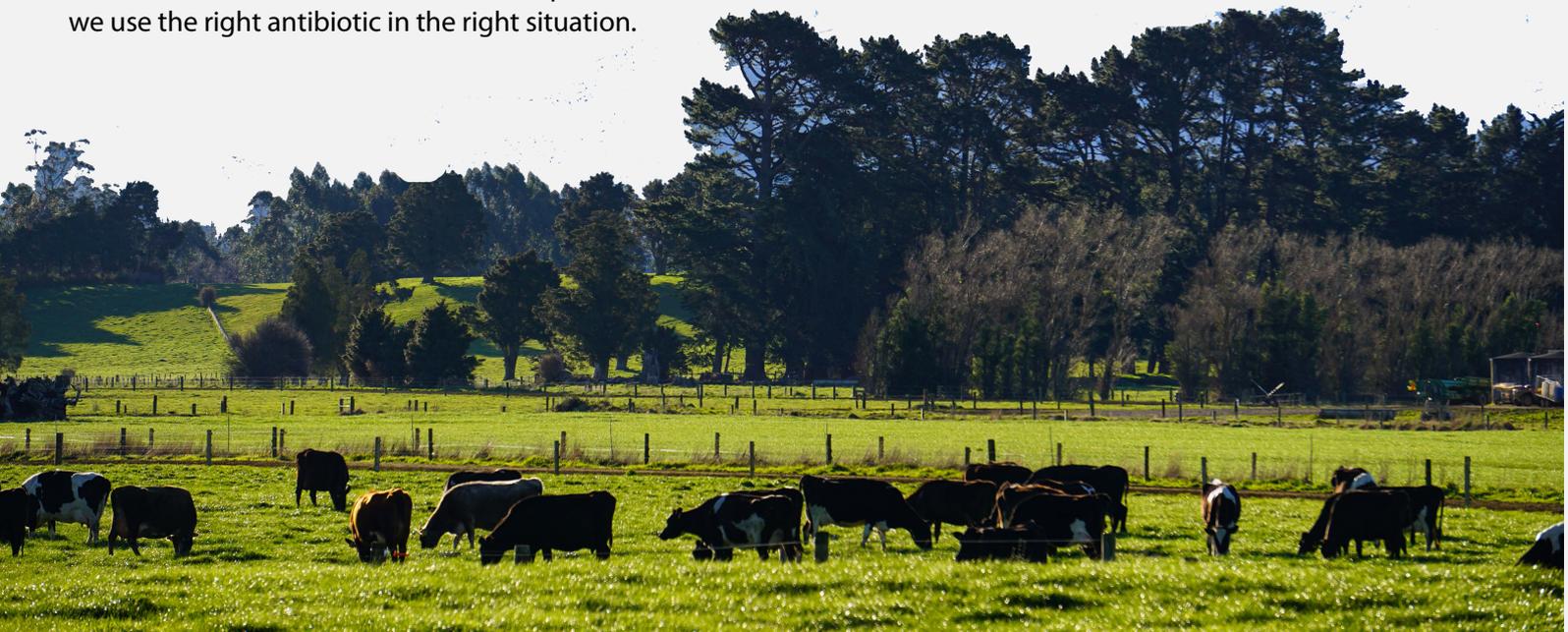
This sounds daunting, however during the annual Milk Quality Consult with our dairy farmers, vets can talk in further detail about this goal, the different strategies out there, and your on-farm focus.

During the sit down we can cover the following details together:

- Review this past season; DAB results, clinical cases +/- mastitis or culture results, treatment options and their responses, ISCC and subclinical case management
- Antibiotic Dry Cow Treatment; which active, what duration and who to treat/ who not to treat?
- Internal Teat Sealants; especially why you should use them, no matter what!
- Heifer management and teat sealant usage.
- Next year's treatment recommendations, future testing options and next year's goals and plans.

We strongly recommend to run a DAB before dry-off to ensure appropriate antibiotic drug selection; to pick the antibiotic that is actually going to work the best as well as causing the least risk of resistance to (further) develop.

If this would be something you want to consider please let your vet know as soon as possible (February/March) so that we can arrange for your farm's sample (bulk milk) to be tested and have the results in time for your Milk Quality Consultation.



Any flystrike is bad news for sheep and devastatingly bad for production. With tupping approaching, bear in mind that if a ewe gets struck in summer or autumn she has only about a 20% chance of getting in lamb.

Most farms will treat the issue aggressively by mustering mobs containing affected sheep, dipping the mob and shearing the struck areas on any affected animals and applying something to kill the maggots still there. But, there are some issues that you might also like to consider along the way. Have a think about why there are struck sheep. Are they uncrutched and offering smelly dirty bums to interested flies? Did lambs miss a drench? When were they last dipped and how long has the protection period been since? There are significant issues with fly resistance to commonly used dip products and we cannot assume that what worked yesterday will also work as well tomorrow.

Make sure the dip that you use on the mob can also kill any freshly hatched maggots that may cause problems for those sheep not obviously struck at the time. Not all products can do this and the IGR group only kill the maggots at their next moult, meaning the freshly struck sheep has to put up with them until then. Adding something effective to kill maggots to a cyromazine dip is what is done with both Cyrazin KO and Cyrex, for instance. Obviously, if you are ahead of the flies and there is no chance of any struck sheep in the flock, you might choose a product that does not have maggot knock-down like that.



What to do with the struck sheep? Make sure you look hard for a start and identify and draft as many as you can see. The early signs of uncomfortable sheep are subtle - stamping, tail twitching, seeking shade and rubbing the affected area. If possible, do put those sheep in another paddock in a small mob, with shade and feed them as well as you can.

What should you treat them with? The commonly used product that actually fits that bill is Maggo, which is an OP. OP resistance is common but the dips themselves have very little use any more, so this is often a good option. Remember that Maggo will have very little residual action so dip those animals within a week or so with an effective longer acting product to avoid a second round of strike!

Another excellent option is Cyrex liquid, which contains spinosad as well as cyromazine, or extinosad, which is spinosad on its own. These are safer products for humans to handle and offer a good 'change' from what you might normally use. Cyrazine KO also offers an ivermectin component to kill the maggots!

Please ask our team for advice if you want to know more about using a different class of product. We truly want to make these products last as long as they possibly can and some basic guidelines are very important in helping achieve that.



This curious bull left us all scratching our heads when he managed to get his head stuck in a tree.

We will never know what he was looking for inside the tree trunk but appreciate the giggle he gave us all at his expense.

Anne Gelling & the owner were able to sedate the relatively calm bull and cut him free.

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SHEEP DRENCHES & VET SERVICES



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