

JUNE 2016

VET NEWS

COLOSTRUM

LOCAL COMMENTS

LEPTOSPIROSIS



PHOTOS BY RICHARD HILSON

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COLOSTRUM – GET THE BEST FROM THAT LIQUID GOLD

KATHRYN SIGVERTSEN

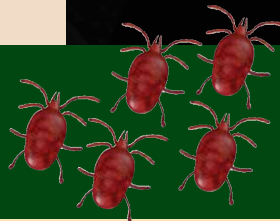
It's coming to that time again – soon the cows will be calving and the calf sheds will be full of happy, healthy, bright eyed calves. They will have all had a good drink of high quality colostrum soon after birth, and will be well set up to become a great dairy cow. The amount of quality colostrum a calf receives in her first 12 hours of life can affect not only her health to weaning, but growth rates after weaning, and even milk production in first lactation.

The difference between poor and good quality colostrum is hard to spot with the naked eye, but some good guidelines can be followed. Only the very first milking is considered to be true colostrum (the gold stuff), after that it really is transition milk. Colostrum takes 5-6 weeks to produce in the udder pre-calving, and contains high levels of antibodies required by the calf. The best and most practical way to improve colostrum quality is to milk freshly calved cows as soon as possible, as quality declines every hour that the cow is not milked after calving. Generally it is thought that mature cows produce better quality than heifers but this has been disputed! It is possible to measure the quality of colostrum with a simple, cow-side test using a refractometer. This is the only way of really knowing how good it is, and it does make a difference! For an average sized calf to get enough antibodies they need 4 litres of good quality colostrum in the first 12 hours of life, but if it is poor quality they may need up to 6 litres in this time.

Levels of specific antibodies such as those against rotavirus, can be improved by vaccinating cows pre-calving. To get protection from these, and other antibodies (and therefore be able to fight infection), the calf must have a really good drink within 12 hours

after birth, preferably within 6 hours. After this time the calf has very limited ability to absorb beneficial antibodies due to "gut closure". The consequences of poor antibody transfer (failure of passive transfer, FPT) are wide and varied. Most of you will be aware that calves that haven't had enough colostrum are more prone to diarrhoea/scours, but the effects don't stop there. Heifer calves with high levels of colostrum intake (4 litres of good quality, in the first 24 hours) are less likely to die before weaning, have a higher average daily weight gain, more milk in their first two lactations, and possibly the best news for farmers is the reduction in vet costs.

Calf management to weaning is such a crucial part of growing a quality cow, and there are many pieces in the puzzle. We can provide on-farm staff training to smooth out the calf rearing season, and also look at ways to improve the systems in place on your farm. If you are using pre-calving vaccines it is important to manage colostrum in a way that maximises the benefit of the vaccine, and we can also provide advice on this.



LICE AND TIMING

RICHARD HILSON

Have you ever had nits? Had a pig or duck louse running about in your hair when hunting? Not a nice feeling, eh? Think how cattle, sheep or horses must feel when they are covered in lice at the end of winter.

"Lice are very precise" is a line I remember from lectures at university- a long time ago now but the lice still do the same things. Lice are quite specific about which species of host they infest. A duck louse won't last long on your head as it will not find the correct environment to survive, let alone breed. Sheep lice will not cross to cattle, and so on. And being "precise" also means that they don't really want to crawl off their host to infest other hosts of the same species either- obviously they do, to assist spread, but they tend to stay well away from the end of hair and wool, nearer the skin level, and so are less likely to move from animal to animal without prolonged close contact.

Lice are also quite slow breeders and they are most successful at this when their host's coat is longer, offering more cover and more environmental variation. Thus we see the most lice numbers in winter and early spring when animals are quite hairy.

So if your animals are lousy, don't rush to blame the neighbours animals and a sudden explosion in numbers- it is unlikely to be the neighbours fault and the lice must have been there for a very long time to get to decent numbers. Much more likely that you should have done something about it sooner! Sorry.

The use of the ML drench family has to some degree dealt to lice issues in cattle, especially sucking lice in young stock. Cattle are not often dipped for lice only but when numbers explode, cows in particular may do considerable damage to trees and

farm structures with their rubbing. They also end up looking pretty scruffy. Most cows will be dipped pre-winter, at or just after scanning.

Sheep have a bigger issue as massive lice infestations are possible and the effect on wool is marked, as are the tell-tale lines of wool left on fences when sheep rub. That wool on fences is also a big long white flag to your neighbours that you have been daydreaming and not farming!

On the east coast most ewe flocks are second shorn and this is actually a very effective lice control measure. Shearing removes between 80-90% of the lice and as they breed very slowly, it is usually impossible to breed enough lice back up before the subsequent shearing to ever cause a problem. It is likely that use of cover combs pre-winter may allow a few more lice to hang on but where lice get out of hand on sheep farms we usually see issues in hoggets (with poorer lice control and longer wool through winter) or in flocks where ewes have longer wool (full wool and eight month shearing policies or split shearing dates).

Lice are easy to control with some forward planning and there is a good range of products to help you do this. But prevention is definitely better than cure and if you wait until you can physically see an issue it will be hard to quickly regain control. Long wool lousy sheep in particular are a challenge for any products.

We understand lice really well. We would far rather avoid the stress of terribly lousy animals and panicked owners by ensuring lice are well controlled. Now is a good time to have that conversation and to be sure you are "covered".

LEPTOSPIROSIS

CLARE RYAN

Just saying the word conjures up pictures of abortions, sick and dying stock and very seriously ill humans.

Leptospirosis is an infectious disease that can affect all domestic and wild animals. It passes between animals through infected urine contamination of wounds, feed, water and contaminated foetuses and afterbirth.

Leptospire survive very well in cool moist conditions especially stagnant water in winter and early spring.

Leptospire enter into the body causing high temperatures and localise in the kidneys leading to ill health and /or a carrier state which excretes leptospire in the urine or localisation in the placenta causing abortions.

Control of Leptospirosis is aimed at preventing of spread of leptospire, protection against acute leptospirosis and minimising number of carrier animals therefore preventing urine shedding.

This is done by Whole herd vaccination programmes, best undertaken in Autumn as the season of greatest risk is winter and early spring (lots of cool water lying around).

All animals in the first year are vaccinated twice 4-6 weeks apart with an annual booster given in autumn.

Early vaccination of calves before first exposure to leptospirosis will prevent carrier status and urinary shedding. Some products can be used as early as 1 month of age but may require a 6 monthly booster to align calves with the annual herd booster.

Don't forget all introduced stock also require vaccinating.

Humans can get Lepto so care should be taken to avoid direct contact with urine or aborted foetuses by using gloves and protective clothing.

ARTHRITIS MANAGEMENT

KATE MATTHEWS

With the weather getting cooler we start to see an increased number of dogs coming through the clinics suffering from arthritis. Osteoarthritis affects many dogs and cats as they age, sometimes due to hereditary issues (hip and elbow dysplasia), or in working dogs may be a common sequelae to trauma and orthopaedic surgery.

Arthritis often presents as a reluctance to rise, especially after long periods of sitting/sleeping. This lameness may resolve once the animal gets going. It may also be seen as a reluctance to jump – into the car, onto quadbikes or over fences, as an intermittent or constant limp, or just as general 'slowing down'.

Cats are affected by arthritis – however it can be harder to see the symptoms as cats hide pain and stiffness so well. It may only be noticed that they hesitate when jumping onto benches or the bed/couch, are reluctant to go up and down stairs, or just are not as playful as they used to be.

There are many treatment options available for arthritis, depending on your pet's general health, the severity of disease and their athletic function.

Warmth and Bedding:

A warm padded bed and/or insulated kennel significantly reduce stiffness early in the morning when rising. For older working dogs who struggle to maintain weight and/or suffer from arthritis putting a coat on at night often works wonders as well.

Joint Diets:

Diets such as Hills j/d and Eukanuba Joint Mobility have high levels of omega 3 fatty acids which have an anti-inflammatory effect, Glucosamine and Chondroitin, and moderate calorie levels to help maintain a healthy weight. Within a month significant improvements can be seen on joint diets alone, and they may also be used to reduce the amount of anti-inflammatory medication required. Joint diets are a great option for managing arthritis in cats.

Cartrophen/Pentosan:

These are products which are given weekly for 4 weeks, then every 3-6 months as required. They work by reducing inflammation and increasing the health of joint fluid which lubricates the joint.



Non-Steroidal Antiinflammatories

For dogs and cats with moderate to severe arthritis anti-inflammatory medications (Rimadyl/Carprieve, Metacam and Previcox etc) are the mainstay of treatment. This oral medication is given daily (or as required) and reduces pain and inflammation in the affected joints. These tablets are often used in combination with other therapies as described above.

For the past few years there has also been a 'once a month' anti-inflammatory called Trocoxil available – this has been particularly well utilised in working dogs with some great success stories. Over the past few months there has been a national shortage of this drug, but we are hopeful that it will be back on the shelves soon.

If you think that your dog or cat is suffering from arthritis pop into the clinic and we can discuss which treatment options best suit your situation.

A COUPLE OF SHEEP REMINDERS IN A DIFFICULT AUTUMN AND WINTER

RICHARD HILSON

Two animal health considerations for sheep farmers in what has turned out to be a difficult autumn and winter...

Firstly, we can see there has been a fall-off in number of ewe hoggets mated in HB with a reduction in hogget scanning bookings alongside a normal number of two tooth and MA ewe bookings. This age group is quickly dropped from the mating plan in a tough autumn as there is some choice about tugging the young ewes. The effects of facial eczema alongside a decided lack of grass has made the decision pretty easy for some, even if it isn't a happy choice. To further complicate matters, some will join a reduced number of hoggets, based on a weight cut off. The message is to remember to vaccinate the two tooth ewes next year if they were not given toxoplasmosis or campylobacter vaccines this autumn to ensure that flock immunity stays strong- missing age groups can have huge effects in later years. Making sure the unmated hoggets are done can really complicate a system when it comes to identification of the unvaccinated hoggets and many farmers choose to vaccinate all the young ewes as future replacements, regardless of whether or not they are tugged as hoggets.

Secondly, when things get tough, winter shearing is often dropped off the work schedule in a bid to reduce feed demand and maybe costs. We have seen this happen in many previous droughts and unfortunately the medium term issues have cropped up just as regularly. Firstly, you will have to watch ewe condition really well. It is so easy to miss the falling ewe body condition as you know full well how wool makes the ewes look better than you might think. Please be careful and monitor ewe body condition by hand, not by eye. A good case example happened during the Bearing Study when a flock with split shearing dates had what the owner considered to be fat woolly ewes and light shorn ewes presented for weighing and condition scoring- in fact, the woolly ewes had lost about half a condition score and the shorn ewes were half a score better than the last measurement at the end of tugging. And also consider how you will control lice if ewes are not second shorn (see the other article) as a summer fly dip won't cut the mustard if ewes are woolly in winter, stressed and hungry.

"Droughts" force us to make different decisions and we need to do some other things differently as a result- we are happy to help with the different bits.

BUGGER!

RICHARD HILSON

How is this for an awkward after-hours call? It is definitely not the first time this has happened in NZ and it won't be the last. Cattle like rubbing and scratching: sometimes because they have lice and sometimes just for the sake of it. Rubbing the side of their neck is a favourite spot so sticking your head through a power pole and rubbing both sides of your neck may seem like a really good idea- until you lift your head up and get properly stuck.

If you are a bull and your mates find you stuck in this precarious position, you are in even more trouble. The other bull looks very pleased that his mate is captive! Maybe he is just doing the neighbourhood watch thing... maybe not.

How to get him out? The bull would not relax enough for us to push his head down to where the gap was wider so we had to sedate him with an intravenous injection and hope that we could extricate him as he began to sag. We did not want him to collapse, completely asleep, as it would be extremely hard to move him then and there was a real risk of choking or suffocation. All is well that ends well and the itchy bull was removed and then given a reversal drug for the sedation. Hopefully he never does that again.



HEALTH & SAFETY — YARDS

On April 1, 2016 the new health and safety laws which governs all workplace (and farm) related injuries have taken affect – There is a new website www.yardsafe.co.nz which has been designed to help you access the safety of your cattle yards. The site has 15 thought provoking questions that helps the user to identify dangerous areas in your yards and then will email you a simple 1-page report that gives a priority ranking to issues identified. The site is free to use and also contains useful links to H&S information provided by the government and other industry providers.

Vet Services Hawke's Bay have a brand new website, to keep you up to date with the latest news www.vshb.co.nz

SEASONAL UPDATE

HASTINGS/NAPIER

Facial eczema has been a major problem in most areas but especially Kereru and Taihape Rd. Spore counts are finally starting to reduce but many farmers were still using preventative treatments mid May. Winter crops have been used extensively to graze animals during the peak spore times which means some will have less feed available for Winter grazing than normal. On one farm ewe replacement hoggets lost 4 kg from mid March to mid April purely as a result of the facial eczema challenge.

We have scanned a large number of ewes and so far the results are similar to last season. We are predicting that the ewes mated late March early April when spore counts were high will have a reduced scanning percent.

The dry continues with many farmers feeding out baleage and maize to ewes. There have been a few issues with transitioning

WAIPUKURAU

What a drawn out, unusually mild autumn we've been having to date. Needless to say many parts of the district are looking pretty skint for feed following weeks of sun and warm winds. The protracted nature of these conditions has significantly stalled fertiliser application and although soil temperatures are still 2-3 degrees above average for the time of year we are running out of days for the moisture to bring much benefit. Many farmers are feeding out supplements to all classes of stock and we are seeing quite a few trucks moving animals elsewhere...not all to pastures greener!

Sheep scanning is well underway and early results look favourable; the later tugged animals may present a different picture as feed started to drop off towards early April.

DANNEVIRKE

Generally speaking the Dannevirke district has had an amazing autumn. Wonderful grass growth and good underfoot conditions. Feed quality and utilisation has been excellent. It is still dry however towards the north east and on the coastal strip.

Dairy cows are now being dried-off. Most farmers are pleased with production levels similar to last year. Dry cow therapy and "Teat-seal" has been in demand. Farmers recognise the benefits of this preventative mastitis measure and are continuing to use Dry cow therapy in spite of the low pay-out. Don't forget to recheck cows for mastitis on two occasions after drying off.

We have been receiving pasture samples for Nitrate testing from new swards and some very high nitrate levels are being recorded. Interestingly we have had one outbreak of Nitrate poisoning in dairy weaners with a loss of 13 calves. Outbreaks are most likely in calves/weaners fed newly sown pasture or Oat crops. If you are uncertain of the nitrate status of a sward bring a sample in to

WAIRARAPA

Many of our sheep farmers reported to us that they had seen in the order of 20 - 50 clinical cases of Facial Eczema in their ewe flocks. Stu has started semen testing beef breeding bulls and is finding a few "duds". If you are concerned about bull fertility, give him a call and he will help sort this out for you. He has also tested more beef herds for exposure to BVD. The virus is still about and

MARK MATTHEWS

cattle onto fodder beet with acidosis being a common problem. By the time this newsletter goes to print the early lambing farmers in the Mangatahi area will be half way through lambing. These ewes have been well managed through the summer and were set stock in very good body condition. Supplementary feeding is continuing in these ewes with lambs at foot which requires careful planning and implementation.

Orchardists in the area have had a very good apple growing season but like the dairy industry the pay out has dropped dramatically so overall returns are diminished. The grape picking season is over with good yields and high quality which should make for a good vintage this season. Watch for Merlot and Pinot Gris out of Hawke's Bay this season.

HARRY WHITESIDE

The impact of a particularly challenging facial eczema season is also yet to be realised. Worm egg counts are starting to rise as Trichostrongylus comes to the fore and we are still getting plenty of requests for fluke treatment following the dry spell.

At the risk of sounding like the prophet of doom, keep an eye on those crops over the coming weeks as we will expect to see an increase risk of nitrate poisoning from here onwards. Blood testing for trace elements has also thrown up some alarmingly low results in many parts of the region and will have significant impact on winter growth rates if deficient.

On a positive note Leicester City were just a couple of games away from relegation last season and look at them now!!!!

PETER MCNEIL

the clinic for testing.

Dannevirke has experienced its worst facial eczema outbreak for 20 years!. In some cases 200 to 300 lambs have had clinical signs and lesser numbers of cattle. Some dairy herds have had 10 to 15 clinical cases and a big drop in milk production when the infection was at its peak. There will also be a big sub clinical effect in some ewe flocks. Most animals recover as their liver regenerates. Because the problem is so sporadic in our area, almost no farmers take preventative measures when the spore counts are rising.

The current weather conditions have been conducive to rapid reinfection with worms in hoggets. We have seen some very high faecal egg counts in hoggets just 3 to 4 weeks off their last drench. Make sure weaner cattle are also on a regular monthly drenching programme through the autumn and early winter months.

STUART BRUÈRE

affecting herd fertility and calf growth rates. Expect FEC counts to be elevated this winter in all classes of sheep. Low pasture covers expose sheep to high levels of infective worm larvae. Our companion animal team have been very busy with cats and dogs of late. It continues to be a privilege to offer the public of the Wairarapa excellence in veterinary services.

Congratulations to Mark and Jaime Arnold who won the New Zealand Dairy Share Farmer of the Year Award for 2016

Good to go



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