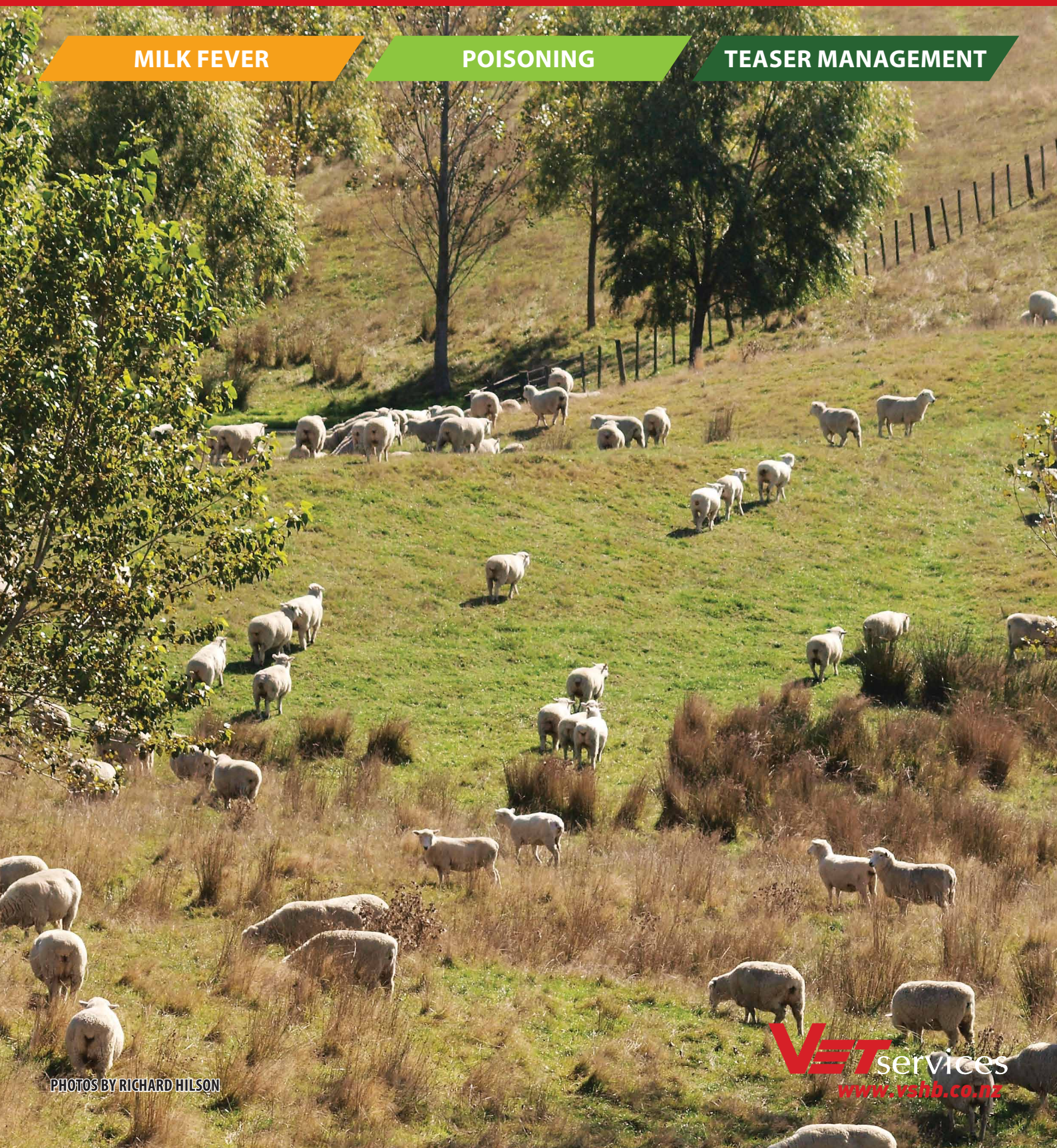
MAY 2016

VET NEWS

MILK FEVER

POISONING

TEASER MANAGEMENT



PHOTOS BY RICHARD HILSON

VET services
www.vshb.co.nz

MILK FEVER – ARE YOU PREPARED?

SAM BURROWS

As it comes to that time of year when you are thinking about drying your cows off and getting the most out of the remaining grass before winter, important decisions need to be made with the focus on getting your cows through to the end of the season in good condition for winter. But it is also that time when you should be looking forward and preparing for calving and the likes of milk fever; as being prepared now will set you up for a hassle free calving period.

Milk fever is the most common metabolic problem seen in New Zealand dairy herds, and can be prevented through forward planning which needs to begin now. Most commonly seen in the days either side of calving, milk fever results from the increased loss of calcium into the milk that is due to the increased demand brought on by the sudden onset of lactation following calving. During the early stages of lactation, the demand for calcium resulting from lactation will exceed the supply that is available through her diet and what is available to be mobilized from the calcium reserves in bone. This generally occurs in your high producing cows usually 5 years and older. The characteristic signs you are generally going to see with a clinical case of milk fever are: down cows, kinked neck and back (typical S-bend), tremors, hypothermia and a dry nose. Untreated, these cows can progress through to death. There are also effects that you won't see due to subclinical milk fever. The significance of subclinical milk fever will be seen long term as: increased incidence of disease in your herd, reduced reproductive performance and lower milk production throughout lactation. This is why it is important to try and prevent milk fever affecting your herd in the coming season.

The following are a number of things you should be looking to get right in order to prevent these problems:

- Supplementing calcium – your herd shouldn't be supplemented with calcium prior to calving, but once in the colostrum herd cows can be supplemented with up to 300g of limeflour/cow each day.
- Magnesium supplementation - for the 3 weeks prior to calving and the following 2-3 months, it is recommended that you supplement cows with 20g of magnesium per day. Spring pasture Mg levels are generally limited and considering Mg plays a role in many body functions, low levels of Mg will contribute to your incidence of milk fever. The following table suggests equivalent options of Mg supplementation.

Magnesium source (%Mg)	Example product	Magnesium required (grams/cow/day)				
		12gm	14gm	16gm	18gm	20gm
Mg Oxide (55%)	CausMag	22	25	29	33	36
Mg Sulphate (10%)	Epsom salts	122	142	162	182	202
Mg Chloride (12%)	Mag chloride	100	117	134	151	167

- Management of your calving paddock, as you will probably already know calving cows on a paddock that has been recently fertilized or has been used as an effluent paddock (high potassium levels) will predispose your cows to milk fever.
- Calving cows at a good body condition; ideally you want your cows calving at condition score of 5-5.5, any fatter than this will again predispose to milk fever.
- Identify and monitor your at risk cows, these will be previous offenders or older high producers. If you suspect anything, treat them with an oral drench; such as any starter drench that contains calcium chloride.

By beginning to plan now to prevent milk fever, you can keep ahead of the problem and reduce the effects that milk fever will have in your herd and on your farm in the future.

RAT BAIT POISONING

NEIL STUTTLE

Rat bait (rodenticide) poisoning is the most common poisoning we see in the clinic. It generally affects dogs as they are more readily ruled by their stomachs! It is rare to see in cats.

There are various rat baits on the market including Talon, Storm, Pindone, Racumin and Pest Off. These baits work by preventing the production of clotting factors (anticoagulants). This lack of clotting factors causes prolonged and uncontrolled bleeding which is often fatal if untreated.

Primary poisoning (eating the bait directly) is the most common route of exposure. If you have rat bait on your property your dog is at risk. Even bait that is hidden away can be "sniffed out" or dragged out into the open by rats which is then accessible.

To reduce the risk of ingestion

1. Use bait stations to lay the poison.
2. Store poison in watertight plastic containers (rats can eat through the bags of bulk poison and then dogs gain access).
3. Take note of signs detailing poisoning programs in bush areas /farmlands.

Secondary poisoning when a dog or cat eats a rat that has been poisoned is rare but can occur.

Following ingestion it takes 3 –5 days before bleeding starts. This is due to a "store" of clotting factors which are used up before clinical bleeding occurs. Clinical signs of bleeding include lethargy, white gums, anorexia, laboured breathing, dark faeces and lameness.

Diagnosis when ingestion of bait has been undetected is based on the presence of rat bait on the property, clinical exam findings and a blood sample to check the clotting time. Clotting times are increased 48 hours after the ingestion of rat bait.

Treatment of rat bait toxicity involves supplementation with Vitamin K1 until the bait is out of the system. The length of vitamin K treatment needed depends on the type and amount of bait ingested but on average at least two weeks treatment is needed. When life threatening bleeding has occurred a blood transfusion is needed to replace the lost red blood cells and rapidly replace clotting factors.

When the ingestion of rat bait is known the best treatment is the induction of vomiting to prevent absorption. This needs to be done within 2-3 hours after ingestion. A blood clotting test can then be taken 48 hrs later to determine the need for vitamin K treatment.

If you see or suspect your dog has eaten rat bait call the clinic ASAP. With prompt and effective treatment the prognosis is good.

ULTRASOUND SCANNING OF EWES WITH VET SERVICES

RICHARD HILSON

We are aware that alternative scanning services operate in the wider HB area so thought that maybe we could remind you of the complete package we offer with your ewe scanning. We have been at the forefront of ultrasound pregnancy scanning in the Bay and we pride ourselves in the delivery of a timely and accurate service. We have always aimed to be "middle of the road" from a pricing perspective and we have seen many other operators come and go over the nearly three decades that we have been scanning ewes en masse.

A SET OF TWIN LAMBS- CAN YOU SPOT TWO HEADS?

- top operators, both veterinary and technicians, with an annual training and succession plan
- flexible service to provide your preferred team, around dates that suit you. Weekends too!
- veterinary back up and immediate investigation of flock fertility and fecundity issues
- NZs largest and most complete sheep scanning data base with your data back to you with strong and valid age, breed, district and provincial benchmarked comparisons
- good gear: we invest in the latest ultrasound equipment for quality results, we carry "spares" so we never get held up by breakdowns and we maintain and modify our crates to make them better all the time
- an experienced labour unit is included in the price to assist in good sheep flow. This is not an "extra" and neither are the raddles or markers.

SCAN TRAINING FOR OUR VETS AND TECHNICIANS IN 2010- SOME OLD FACES!

- free faecal egg counts from two mobs of ewes, reported back to you promptly by vets. Do you need to drench or draft this winter?
- we will come back to rescan late ewes or to scan little mobs. Scanners from far far away don't want to come back for these jobs- we do, happily.

We believe that we provide an efficient and accurate service with strong veterinary input and back up, as well taking real pride in our long association with the improved performance of the Hawke's Bay and Tararua ewe flock

Congratulations to the following Wairarapa farmers who have received farming awards recently:

- Blair & Deanna Percy (Goodlands Partnership):— L.I.C Dairy Farm Award
- Richard & Becks Tosswill (Te Awaawa Farm):— Farm Stewardship Award in partnership with the QEII National Trust & The New Zealand Farm Environment Trust Beef + Lamb New Zealand Livestock Award
- Mike & Anne Longworth:— Greater Wellington Regional Council Akura Conservation Centre Lifestyle Farm/ Small Block Award
- Jim and Brendan Varty of Alfredton:— won Wairarapa Farm Business of the Year.

TEASER MANAGEMENT IN EWES

MICHAEL CATLEY

There are two lines of thinking (at least) for teaser use in mixed-age ewe mating; one is to use teasers to condense mating to the first cycle (and therefore condense lambing); the other is to allow a more relaxed approach for the rams, without the use of teasers, and spread mating over 2-3 cycles (or more). Use of teasers in hogget mating programmes should also be considered.

Use of teasers in mixed age ewes (including 2-tooths) causes an induced silent ovulation in the majority of ewes (80-90%) within 3 days. 40-60% of these ewes will then short cycle and silently ovulate again in 6-8 days. Cycle length in ewes, on average, is 17 days – in a practical sense, this means that there is 90% of MA ewes ovulating 17-26 days after teaser introduction, with two peaks at 17-20 days and 23-26 days. The other 10%, and those that don't get pregnant, will be mated in the second and third cycles. A high number of ewes ovulating at once will mean a lot of ram power is needed, and we recommend at least 1 ram: 50 ewes to do the job. The benefits are obvious with even lines of early lambs, condensed lambing and increased hardiness to spring storms as lambs are potentially older. On the flip side are the common arguments that large numbers of lambs may face the risk of a storm, more ram power is required, and you will possibly rely on a spring flush. There must be no exposure to rams (sight, smell or sound) for 21 days, and then teasers are introduced for 15-17 days with entire rams introduced straight after removal (15 days can be used to allow entire rams to settle before the rush begins). 1 teaser ram: 200 ewes is sufficient!!

Use of teasers in hogget ewes is to increase the proportion of ewes cycling when entire rams are introduced and not to 'synchronise' the young ewes. Some believe longer is better and put the teasers straight from the MA ewes into the hoggets, often giving more than thirty days exposure. Science has so far only given us information on 17 days or less but even this has been shown to improve lambing performance by up to 16% (17 days is more beneficial than 8 days or no teasers at all). Again use high ratios of rams: ewes (1 MA ram: 40-50 ewes; 1 hogget ram: 20-30 ewes) as hoggets are reluctant to let urine soaked smelly rams at them . Weigh your ewes pre-mating and pick wisely - >40-42kg at this stage is best for future performance.

If you want to discuss teaser use just call in at Vet Services, we will be happy to discuss the topic. The best time to get teasers prepared is two months prior to introduction .

FACIAL ECZEMA: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ANYIKA SCOTLAND

How do you pick your monitor farms?
In the past most of these farms have had high spore counts and are regular testers anyway. We also try to recruit other farms that represent certain districts to allow a good overview of the practice area. Remember these are only indicators, and what is happening on your own farm could be quite different. We now add results in brackets below the monitor farm spore count that have been taken from other farmers in the same district if they have higher results.

If I see animals with facial eczema when were they affected and how should I treat them?
Most animals show clinical signs 10-14 days after exposure to the sporidesmin toxin. This toxin causes severe damage to the liver and bile ducts which leads to blockage and build-up of waste products (chlorophyll) in the bloodstream causing sensitivity to light.

Treatment of these animals depends on the severity of the disease. In some cases the most humane treatment is to put them out of their misery. But other treatments include supportive care such as shade (do not discount using the woolshed and letting the sheep out to graze at night), plenty of water and a diet with reduced chlorophyll such as hay and silage. Mandersons Mix seems to help the affected animals recover faster. Zinc dosing should be continued if they are still exposed to spores to prevent further liver damage.

How do I know what is going on at my own farm?
Unfortunately the only way of knowing what the fungus is doing is to test your own farm. The best option is to choose areas that you suspect are "hot" areas i.e. north facing, lots of dead matter, humid areas, and areas that are "safe" i.e. shady south facing slopes that are windy and have less dead matter. These areas you can test at any stage but it would be useful to look at our monitor farms to know when counts are creeping up and sample accordingly.

How do I prevent facial eczema from occurring on my farm?
There are short term and long term ways to prevent eczema.

Short term:
Build up pasture covers and shift the stock regularly to reduce the number of spores that are ingested.

Know where the safer grass areas are on your farm by spore counting and put the highest risk animals on these areas.

Put high risk animals on crops such as brassica or plantain/clover mixes. It may mean that this crop is grown especially for this high risk period.

Do not top pastures or allow a build-up of dead matter in the sward as this is great food for the fungus to thrive in.

Use fungicides to provide safer grazing for 5-6 weeks. These must be used while the spore counts are low as it does not kill existing fungus and spores.

Zinc treatment when the spore counts start to rise especially to your at risk animals i.e. ewe lambs, remaining trade lambs, 2Tooths, any weaner cattle.

Long term:
In Hawkes Bay the areas now affected by facial eczema seem to be expanding. The only long term plan is to build up resistance in the flock by buying in FE-tolerant rams. Progress is relatively rapid and significant gains will be made in only a few years of concentrated selection. A list of ram breeders is available from the SIL website.

What are the long term effects of eczema?

- Reduced fertility and fecundity in ewes
- Increased death rates especially at times of stress
- Decreased immunity can increase susceptibility to other diseases
- The lifetime production of hoggets will be reduced
- Reduced growth rate in affected lambs and hoggets
- Increased culling- this can be 12% higher in affected ewes

Facial eczema is one of the worst diseases we have to deal with, causing animals to be miserable with swollen eyes, droopy ears, weeping skin and more, so let's do what we can to prevent this from happening!

SEASONAL UPDATE

HASTINGS/NAPIER

CLARE RYAN

Facial eczema, Facial eczema – what more can I say?!

We are seeing lots of clinical cases and high spore counts still so contact the clinic to discuss options.

Beef cattle scanning is nearly done with variable results despite big fat cows!

Sheep scanning is underway so get yours booked in today.

Lots of grass, more rain, so this should set us up for a good winter but also lots of worms! Don't forget to drench – with combinations.

WAIPUKURAU

ANYIKA SCOTLAND

Most areas have managed to get some decent rain over the last couple of weeks which helps over mating time. However there are still some pockets of dry areas which seem to keep missing out. Quite a few clinical cases of facial eczema are showing up indicating a period of high risk a couple of weeks ago. Areas have been affected that are not commonly affected including Tikokino, Eskdale, Whana whana and Patoka. It might be wise to check spore counts on your own farm as it has been unpredictable. Beef cow scanning is slowing down now with mixed scanning results and approximately a 10% dry rate.

DANNEVIRKE

TIM HOGAN

Finally, a good old fashioned autumn! It has brought its share of challenges; this has been the worst Facial Eczema season seen in the district for a long time. There have been some places with this disease that have never seen it before. Still, we are lucky that it has not been as severe as other parts of the country which regularly see Facial Eczema. Keep an eye out through winter as some animals affected sub-clinically may show up as chronic poor doers or have metabolic problems in the spring.

On the bright side good autumn growth has set things up well for winter on most places, although some of the coastal country has remained dry well into autumn. All we need is for the Hurricanes to play some consistent footy and things will be looking good!

WAIRARAPA

STUART BRUÈRE

The Wairarapa continues to experience El Nino conditions but fortunately other districts of the North Island have good feed so the local weaner fairs have gone pretty well with plenty of "out of district" buyers present. In the latest sales in early April steers averaged $3.70 - $3.80/kg and heifers averaged $3.10 - $3.30/kg.

We have seen some late season Facial Eczema in sheep – this is not a common problem in the Wairarapa as our average wind run generally prevents the high humidity required at ground level to allow the Pithomyces chartarum fungus growth. Previous experience tells us that the warm still nights of late March tend to be the highest risk period for toxin exposure. This can also affect cattle and alpaca. Most sheep farmers have been feeding out some form of supplement prior to and during tupping – this has been done well as the sheep we have seen are in great condition.

We have just employed a new vet to work in our production animal team – Sara Sutherland comes to us from another local vet practice. She will start with us in a few months.

The NIWA weather projections are for the Wairarapa to have a warm late autumn/early winter – great for pasture growth but previous experience has shown these conditions to be high risk for nitrate poisoning on oats and brassica crops. Just put this away in the back of your mind and make sure you do test the crops before grazing so give us a call when the time comes.

DON'T FORGET:

Robyn Cudby is now the Large Animal receptionist in Waipukurau, so all bookings can be made through Robyn, including scanning!

For Large Animal bookings in Hastings & Napier phone Nick McOnie direct on 06 650 3090 or for Large Animal retail orders/enquiries phone Harrold Amner direct on 06 650 3091.

CONGRATULATIONS

to the following clients and families who received awards recently at The Napier Port Hawke's Bay Primary Sector Awards

- **Grant and Sally Charteris who were presented with the Silver Fern Farms Hawke's Bay Farmer of the Year Award.**
- **Rob and Jean Ennor, of Ranui Farms, won the Pan Pac Hawke's Bay Farm Forester of the Year title.**
- **Craig Hickson who was awarded the Hastings District Council Industry Leader of the Year award.**
- **Olivia Ellis was awarded the Lawson Robinson Hawke's Bay A and P Scholarship.**
- **Bay de Lautour won the Laurie Dowling Memorial Award for Outstanding Contribution to Agriculture in Hawke's Bay.**

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