

OCTOBER 2016

# VET NEWS

BLOAT

LAMB TAIL LENGTH

FLY FOLLOW UP



PHOTOS BY RICHARD HILSON

**VET** services  
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# WATCH OUT FOR BLOAT ON FANCY FEEDS...

RICHARD HILSON

As spring kicks into gear, so do the worries and losses with bloat in cattle. The two go hand in hand- bloat and spring. The risk is ever present- hungry cattle, gates off hinges, breaks too big, early morning, misty mornings, fancy feeds.

One standout variation on "standard" bloat in recent years has been the ever-increasing use of plantain in the Bay. This stuff is awesome for sheep, cattle and deer and it grows great stock. But keep in mind that it also carries a risk of bloat for cattle that you either put on it on purpose or that break onto it. Reports of bloat and bloat deaths tend to make their way south from the earlier and warmer climes around Hastings towards CHB and beyond, as plantain growth takes off in spring. We would not want to blame plantain alone but it's ability to grow fast in early spring means it is often used to kick start animal performance post-winter.

So what to look out for? Primarily, be aware. If you are not putting cattle on plantain (or any other juicy crop, such as chicory or brassicas) be really careful about the fence and gates that separate the animals from the crop. Many of the cases that we will attend in spring will be due to cattle being given access by accident- open gates or loss of power to electric fences. Whole-herd bloat issues are very stressful and often deaths can be significant as numbers overwhelm the farmers and vets in attendance. So, simply think "bloat" for a start.

Watch stock closely, especially after shifts to new paddocks and early on warm mornings. A few individuals with distended left abdomens are a warning sign that you shouldn't need to look too hard to notice. The best time to check that is three quarters to one hour after a new break or paddock shift- many animals that have supposedly died of "blood poisoning" soon after going on a new feed, actually turn out to have died of bloat. We can quickly ascertain that with an autopsy but we'd rather not have to do autopsies! So ring for advice if that is happening.

And the best bet, if you are risk averse or looking for top performance and a safety factor, is to use a product that reduces or (nearly) removes the risk of bloat. So consider using anti-bloat capsules (Rumensin ABC) if you want cattle to graze plantain- they allow you a good measure of security and they also grow animals even better than before can eat more because they spend less time bloated.

Bloat is a tricky subject and there are a mass of management options to reduce the risk, depending on the what you are feeding, who you are feeding it to, how you feed it and what the relative risk is- we can help you to navigate those options. Use of an ABC is not necessarily the last option but it is a good option. And we have a few tricks to use if you want simple management options instead...

# FEEDING WORKING DOGS

KATE MATTHEWS

The next few months are some of the busiest of the year and during these times providing good nutrition for your working dogs is essential to ensure they can perform at their best.

Just as nutrition is incredibly important for our top athletes, the endurance, speed and risk of injury in working dogs is markedly affected by what they eat.

Many studies have been undertaken to try and determine the best overall diet for working dogs. It has been shown that high fat, low carbohydrate diets increase muscle endurance, and high protein diets increase the rate of oxygen utilisation by muscles which reduces muscle fatigue. Reduced muscle fatigue not only reduces the rate of soft tissue injury but also the risk of orthopaedic injury in working farm dogs. As such we currently recommend that a high fat, high protein diet with lower carbohydrate levels will provide the optimum fuel for peak performance.

## SO WHICH DIET IS BEST?

Premium diets (Royal Canin 4800, Eukanuba Premium Performance and Proplan) are all based around the high fat, high protein ideal and are what we consider an optimum diet for working dogs. Royal Canin 4800 and Eukanuba Premium Performance also have the additional benefits of glucosamine and chondroitin to help support good joint health.

It is interesting to note that Tux biscuits have significantly lower fat and especially protein levels compared with the premium diets, as well as a much higher carbohydrate level – comparable to the All Blacks playing on toast rather than steak and 3 veges!

It is also interesting to consider that the vast majority of dogs which we see through the clinic with issues such as constipation are on a high carbohydrate diet and/or bones. It is almost never seen in those dogs fed solely a premium diet.

## WHY IS HOMEKILL ALONE NOT ENOUGH?

Combining a premium biscuit with some home kill has also been recognised as a reasonable approach to nutrition as energy requirements and nutrient levels are usually met with this combination. However, the feeding of a sole meat diet has been discouraged due to deficiencies in vitamin and mineral levels, as well as an insufficient energy level. Most of the dogs which I see through the clinic with poor body condition scores or illnesses related to poor nutrition have been fed a sole meat diet – there is just not enough energy in it for working dogs.

## HOW CAN WE HELP OLDER DOGS KEEP GOING?

Hills, Eukanuba and Royal Canin all provide 'joint' diets – these diets have optimal omega 3:6 fatty acid ratios, glucosamine and chondroitin to help promote and maintain joint health and mobility. We have had good success in working dogs on these diets and in many cases have reduced or eliminated the need

for anti-inflammatory treatment long term. They are a great option for dogs who have previously had injuries and/or orthopaedic surgery to keep them mobile for longer (or for that one older dog you just can't do without!)

Please contact our clinics for further information and pricing – there are many options to suit your needs and we can help select the best one for your dogs.



# THE VET SERVICES (HB) LTD SCHOLARSHIP

RICHARD HILSON

In a bid to up the profile of our veterinary business with veterinary undergraduates and to help identify good potential vet employees, VSHB has been offering a scholarship to fourth year vet students for over a decade. Our senior vets take a rostered turn to ply through about two dozen applications, picking about 5-6 to interview at Massey University, NZ's only vet school.

The scholarship is worth \$4000 (one of the biggest available, the students tell us) with the successful student required to spend a couple of weeks at any of our clinics to see practice. This isn't onerous as vet undergraduates have a requirement to see a certain amount of hands-on practice in a range of disciplines and obviously this gives us yet another look at them in action. Possibly the hardest thing about these interviews is that we must choose just one recipient so several excellent young vets miss out. We do send a small sum to the others interviewed to show that we value their time, but the phone calls still feel a bit tough.

The scholarship has been successful for our business, achieving all that we hoped it would. Our veterinary business is well known and better understood by young vets and in the time that it has been running we have ended up employing three of our previous winners: Tim Hogan (Dannevirke) and Mike Fitzgerald and Sam Burrows (Waipukurau). Any of you who have regularly worked with any of these three will know they were all an excellent choice!

This year's winner is Georgina Campbell from Feilding. Georgina stood out with her happy demeanor, her drive to be an excellent vet and for her extracurricular activities- she is a top basketball and netball player too. She will see practice with us soon so you may see her about- she might be hard to miss as you would be right if you thought her chosen sports required a fair amount of height!

## FLY FOLLOW UP

RICHARD HILSON

You have an awesome range of options available to avoid your sheep being fly struck over summer and autumn now. There is something for everyone and everything- short term, long term, fly only or fly and lice, pour on or spray on, cheap or expensive, coloured or clear, big drums or little drums. Most of these products have done, and continue to do, a very good job.

But sometimes they don't quite do what we thought they might. In the main, that is because we have asked them to do too much and their length of action has run its course or we simply applied too little or applied it too late or too early. When we investigate apparent failure of fly treatments, it is less often the active and more often the application or expectation.

We do want to follow up these "failures" with you though. There are increasing issues with resistance of flies in some locations to the active ingredients in some of our common options and we do take these seriously. Your feedback is really important to us and to the wider industry. So if you have what appears to be disappointingly short cover from fly treatments, please take that seriously enough to ask us the questions. We will investigate the background with you and we will follow up with testing if it is possible that we have a resistance issue- a smelly job but someone has to do it. We'll collect some wool and some maggots! Hopefully everything works just as planned and for as long as possible... but if it doesn't, please come and have a conversation.

## VET SERVICES NAPIER HAS SOMETHING NEW AND EXCITING TO OFFER

VERONIKA PIPE & DAVE KRUGER

Our Vet Services branch on Taradale Road in Napier has come a long way in the four years we have been operating. Over that time we have provided many new services, radiology (xrays) and diagnostic ultrasound being the latest additions.

We are very excited that we now have a full onsite digital xray facility! Radiography is very common and a useful technique used to get a rapid diagnosis of many internal diseases and problems as well as orthopaedic conditions such as fractures.

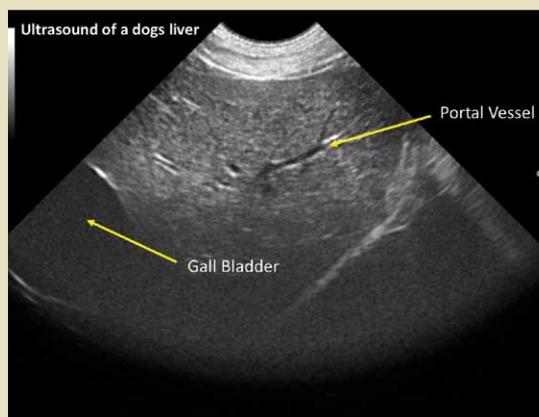
We have purchased the latest state of art digital equipment which means it not only gives us a quicker answer to what is going on, meaning less waiting time for you, but also shortens the time under sedation for your pet (if sedation is required). The images are excellent and we love showing them to our clients.

We have been busy x-raying many furry (and woolly!), feathery and scaly customers in the last few weeks. We have seen bunnies, lambs, cats and dogs and even some turtles.

We have also recently acquired a "Eco 3 Expert" diagnostic ultrasound unit. This allows ultrasound examination of soft tissues and is particularly useful in abdominal diagnostics including evaluation of pregnancy status.

So if you are after the best advice on flea products, or you think your pet needs to join our Fat Fighters Club to lose some weight,

or you need to utilise our new services (Blood testing diagnostic work, urine and skin tests and various other laboratory testing), pop into the clinic. We'd love to see you!



# TAIL LENGTH IN LAMBS

HELEN TAYLOR

I must admit to getting a little flash of excitement when I was asked to write an article about tail length in lambs, and then I wondered how many I had debated this topic with and who had been lucky enough to be subjected to my primary school art skills!

Tail docking in New Zealand is a necessity owing to the immigration of the Australian Green Blow Fly and the omnipresence of gastrointestinal worms.

So if we are going to dock, lets do it well and ensure that this doesn't become a bone of contention in our prime lamb markets.

The Code of Welfare for Painful Husbandry techniques states the following:

- Docking must only be undertaken if there is risk or faecal/urine contamination and/or flystrike that leads to poor hygiene, health and welfare
- Or, failing to dock adds significant cost to the farm system
- Docking without pain relief as young as possible and not more than 6 months old

In the same Code of Welfare they do recommend some best practices including:

- Seeking up to date advice from competent sources on the best methods to minimise acute and chronic consequences from the health and welfare of the animal
  - I'm pretty sure a rubber ring or well maintained hot irons are the only methods used in New Zealand.
- Dock before 6 weeks of age
  - Pretty standard – 6 weeks or thereabouts, weather depending
- Precautions, such as vaccination, should be taken to minimise the risk of Clostridial infections
  - Again, I think pre-lamb 5in1 or lamb vacc at docking are standard and you'd be mad not to be doing something.
- Tails, excluding the wool, should be long enough to cover the vulva in females and at a similar length in males
  - And its here that there is a huge amount of variation...

From a farmer point of view the only downside of leaving a longer tail means more dirty bums and more effort at crutching. So, to me the solution is manage your worms better and transition your sheep onto feed better – both of which will make them grow faster and be more productive, so is there really a downside there?

On the upside, a medium length dock has the lowest risk of flystrike compared to a short or a long tail. Giving sheep more than a flush tail means lower risks of sunburn and associated UV



induced cancers (and frost nip potentially).

Stud breeders tend to prefer a short tail in their rams as it looks tidier and serves to emphasise the musculature. I think we just need to reset our eye.

From a shearing contractor's point of view, a longer tail is extra time requiring 3 additional blows, but for an experienced shearer this isn't a big deal. A shearer does have to deflect the tail with their hand but if all the lambs are docked similarly that will help with perfecting the technique.

A long tail is difficult to shear so avoid missing lambs, and there is a welfare issue if the tail gets accidentally chopped off.

If you are killing early lambs then why not leave the tails on? One less job on the docking board?

So, the ideal would be a hot iron or ring placed at the end of the finger shaped piece of bare skin on the underside of the tail.

## THIS MONTHS WINNERS:

**Congratulations to the following people who won a Brent Smith BS4C Farm Bike Trailer**  
**Paul & Jan Sorensen – Hastings**  
**Shaun & Tracie Baxter – Dannevirke**  
**David Chadwick & his son George (right)– Waipukurau**  
**Ekanuba Gasmate Heater Winners**  
**Jeff & Shirley Ravenwood – Wairarapa**  
**Sam & Jen Stoddart – Waipukurau**  
**Paul & Harriet Whiteside – Napier**  
**Richard Wedd – Hastings**  
**Houkura Farms – Dannevirke**



# SEASONAL UPDATE

## HASTINGS/NAPIER

Yeehaa!!! Spring is here, the snow has gone, the rain has fallen, the blossoms are out, and the grass is green and growing finally. So far calving and lambing problems have been manageable and hopefully the worst is over.

With calf rearing in full swing, we are seeing lots of scouring calves due to the full range of bugs. Please contact us if you are struggling, we can do in house testing which will mean an accurate diagnosis with prompt and targeted treatment. Remember electrolytes and disinfection!!!!

We are still seeing high worm burdens across all animals due to high pasture larval contamination over winter - Talk to your vet

## WAIPUKURAU

The days are getting longer and the grass is starting to grow. The region is looking good as we drive around with plenty of feed available in many areas. Dairy farms are well through calving now (there is light at the end of this tunnel at last) and we are starting to think about getting cows back in calf with metrichecking and organising non-cycler programmes. If you haven't done so already, now is a good time to be doing some pre-mating bloods to check mineral levels, allowing any required

## DANNEVIRKE

September has certainly warmed the place up, and apart from a brief storm all has been going pretty well! There definitely isn't an abundance of feed around but everywhere is looking green. There is plenty of moisture around at the moment and with the warmer temperatures we can hope for some good growth going forward. Some sunshine wouldn't go amiss either! Fingers crossed!

Lots of docking going on around the place and (depending on timing with the weather) some good results too. We are still busy calving cows and in the thick of debudding calves and metrichecking cows as well. On the topic of calves, it feels like every calf in the district has been scouring at some point this

## WAIRARAPA

This month we welcome Sara Sutherland to our Veterinary Team. She will be working in the production animal team with Stu and Sandy. She is well known to many of you already and is looking forward to helping with your farm management and production. We have worked our way through a very challenging farming year - we have learnt heaps about drought, supplementary feeding stock and supporting our customers. Thanks so much for continuing to support our business. We are building a well resourced team supported by colleagues and ancillary staff in our "sister" clinics in Dannevirke and Hawke's Bay.

Spring is a time of the year where we have high levels of farmer contact calving cows, testing stud rams prior to sale, metrichecking dairy cows, disbudding dairy heifer calves,

**CLARE RYAN**

about drench plans to get the best results from the new growth. Don't forget that horses require drenching too as we are seeing a few colics due to migrating larvae.

With the grass growth, watch ponies for laminitis and horses for colic due to sudden changes in feed availability and quality issues.

With cattle mating just around the corner, now is the time to contact us for metrichecking, reproduction programmes and pre-mating mineral checks.

We are keeping our fingers crossed for a good spring and summer to make up for the hard autumn and early winter.

**KATHRYN SIGVERTSEN**

supplementation to be done before mating begins. Calf scours have been quite bad this year but it seems the worst is nearly over, however some more sunshine and warm days will be welcome to get calves (and lambs) growing. There have been a few high faecal egg counts in ewes recently so it might pay to get some samples in to see if they need a drench. Don't forget to get those pet lambs in tip-top condition for school pet days!

**JOHNNY ATKINS**

season, don't take your eye off the ball at this late stage of the season and remember to ask for help if required!

Looking forward we will be mating dairy cows soon, it always comes around quickly! A friendly reminder to make sure all your ducks are in a row, and if you are considering treating non-cyclers then early treatment is definitely best so recording pre-mating heats is a no brainer. For any queries mating related don't hesitate to get in touch!

Prior preparation for the beefies is also a must, and if you are using unproven bulls then consider getting them service and semen tested! Now is a great time to get in and do it.

**STUART BRUERE**

screening heifer replacements for BVD and semen testing bulls prior to cow mating. When we are on your farm don't be shy about asking for help with any animal health issues - we don't mind answering these questions. Stu has recently been reading some of Derrick Moot's work at Lincoln - this relates to pasture responses to nitrogen. A key finding has been the identification that a significant reason for slow pasture growth on the shoulders of droughts is a function of low soil nitrogen levels. When the rain arrives, pasture won't "switch on" because the soil nitrogen is too low. His message - be bold and be more flexible around nitrogen application and rethink your responsible use of N fertilisers. Stu is happy to discuss this further with anyone that rings.

## OUR VET TEAM

**Napier & Hastings:**

**Dave Kruger, Vicki Gilchrist & Veronika Pipe Mark Matthews, Roger McKinley, Stuart Badger, Richard McKenzie, Clare Ryan, Neil Stuttle, Helen Crawford, Helen Taylor, Camille Flack, Rachel Griffiths & Ian Leadbetter.**

**Waipukurau:**

**Caroline Robertson, Richard Hilson, Harry Whiteside, Geert Gelling, Anyika Scotland, Kathryn Sigvertsen, Annelise Enslin, Mike Catley, Sam Burrows & Lucy Dowsett.**

**Dannevirke:**

**Simon Marshall, Tim Hogan, Kate Matthews, Johnny Atkins & Ingrid Meijer.**

**Masterton:**

**Stuart Bruere, Sandy Redden, Louisa Broughton, Jacques VanZyl, Nicola Haglund, Sarah Wolland and Elke Blommers, Sara Sutherland.**

# No Flystrike, Maggots or Lice



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