PADDOCK PRESS
Moos, ewes and vet views
MARCH 2025

VetSouth

Rural round-up

Angela Butcher
Mixed Animal Vet (West)

After a spring I think we'd all rather like to forget, it has been nice to see the sun this summer!

We are finally getting some well-deserved grass growth and, from what I have heard while out and about on Ram Run, stock are picking up. It never ceases to amaze me just how important seeing a little sun is to our own happiness and wellbeing as well. I'm sure we can all agree a sunny day after a period of rain makes it easier to see the brighter side of life.

With more settled weather, now is the time to ensure we combat the toll spring took on our stock as much as possible. Body conditions should be a focus on all farms.

As autumn arrives the little beasties living in the pasture thrive, so we also need to focus on parasite management.

Often beefies are overlooked when thinking about parasites, but in New Zealand-wide studies it has been shown that worms and drench resistance are also problems affecting our beef cattle. While beef calves do generally get the best start in life with access to both mum's milk and pasture, it is important to ensure that they are drenched with a product that is working.

Speaking of beefies, it's also a good idea to get pregnancy scanning booked in for them. Identifying your empty girls will allow you to make more informed decisions around pasture utilisation, allowing you to ensure your pregnant girls get priority fed where practical.

Plus, it will give you a chance to have a quality yarn with your vet!

Targeting trace elements

by Taren Jones

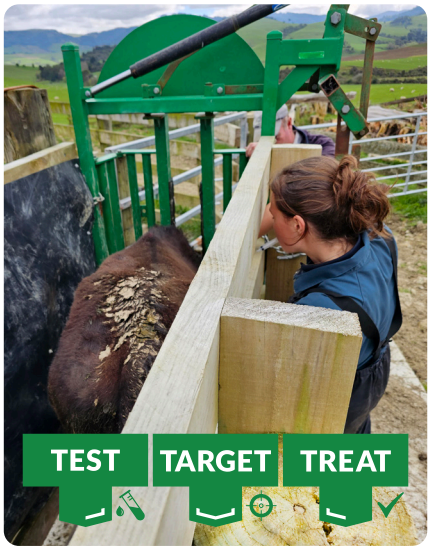
With all stock – young or adult, cattle or sheep – trace elements are an essential consideration.

Vitamins and minerals have a big impact on the health of animals and their ability to perform to their best potential. Most farms will have a basic trace element supplementation plan for their stock, but is this working and are they the right ones?

Key trace elements include copper, selenium, calcium, magnesium, iodine and vitamin B12 (cobalt). There are also other important ones such as zinc, manganese, chromium, and vitamin E.

There are many methods of supplementation available. These range from in-feed or in-water options to both short and long-acting injectables and oral products. There is no one way that will suit all ages and species – or all farms.

We recommend you **test** to find out the current trace element levels of your animals, which then allows you to **target** the necessary elements and an appropriate method of **treatment**.



We can collect blood and liver samples, run tests, and look over the results with you, supporting you to make informed decisions ahead of winter. We can also help select the right trace element product (if any is needed).

By supplementing only what you need, not only will you ensure that your herd or flock has the right balance for health, growth and production, you will also have more control over your animal health spend. It's nice to know you're not spending money on the wrong product or an unnecessary one!

Give us a call to book in some trace element tests for your stock.

ON-FARM FOCUS

DAIRY

- Herd and heifer re-check scans.
- Schedule your pre-drying off PP+ trace element tests for cows.
- Ensure adequate trace element supplementation for calves.
- BCS cows ahead of drying off (aim for a 4.5 average). Lighter cows may need to dry off early.
- Sort Lepto vaccination and consider vaccinating against Salmonella.
- Book a dry cow consult with us to create a drying off plan.

BEEF

- Wean calves.
- Test copper and selenium levels.

SHEEP

- Supplement ewes with iodine ahead of mating.
- Autumn drench check (FEC test) for lambs.
- Sort Salmonella and clostridial vaccinations.

DEER

- BCS hinds, preferentially feed for mating.
- Wean fawns and drench for lungworm.
- Stag rut management.

WORKING DOGS

- Feed a high-protein, high-fat diet to support endurance and recovery.

Southern Salmonella update

by MSD Animal Health

As many people have heard, or even experienced themselves, there has been a massive increase in the number of cows in the southern region affected by Salmonella.

This increase coincided with the wettest spring on record, and other factors such as changes in feed, waterlogged paddocks, cold weather, carrier cows and exceptional stress on cows (and farmers) all meaning some of these outbreaks were very severe.

Interim data has shown there was almost 10x more cases of Salmonella in Southland in 2024 compared to the previous seven years!

Salmonella Typhimurium is usually the most common type in cattle in the south.

Cases of *Salmonella Bovismorbificans* were very uncommon until 2024, when case numbers suddenly spiked – with 22 cases recorded between May and December.

S. Bovismorbificans has been associated with higher morbidity (sick cows) and mortality (dead cows) than *S. Typhimurium*, and there are also concerns about resistance to certain antibiotics developing more quickly.

As well as these trends, there have also been several cases of *Salmonella Give* in cattle in Southland, previously only found for the last three years in the Waikato and Taranaki.

In the majority of cases, herds were not previously fully vaccinated with Salvexin+B. This vaccine covers the four most common types of Salmonella, including *S. Bovismorbificans* and *S. Typhimurium*, but not *S. Give*.

Many dairy farmers are planning to implement preventative vaccination using Salvexin+B this autumn.

Timing-wise, we recommend the booster vaccination of Salvexin+B is given at least 2 weeks prior to dry-off, with a sensitiser dose given 4-6 weeks earlier. For most local spring calving herds working to a timeline of giving a sensitiser dose approximately 1st April and booster dose 1st May would be appropriate.

You can vary from this and give booster doses during the winter, however vaccinating early calving cows after mid-July should be avoided due to the possible metabolic effects in heavily pregnant animals.

Salmonella impacts: A case study

by Daniel Cragg

A 550-cow dairy farm experienced a Salmonella outbreak in early May 2024.

Over the course of the outbreak, they had five cows die and 12 cows abort. They treated 20 cows with antibiotics and anti-inflammatory pain relief. During this period in late lactation, they also noted a 20% drop in milk in the vat.

A rough estimation of how much this cost the farmer is outlined in the table below:

Based on these calculations, **the overall cost of the outbreak could have paid for 37 years' worth of vaccination.** This outbreak is similar to many we saw on our farms across Southland and South Otago last spring.

Given the increase of Salmonella outbreaks occurring over the past seven years, and the huge surge of cases in 2024, farms need to start vaccinating against Salmonella.

Get in touch with us now if you haven't organised your herd's vaccinations yet.

SITUATION	NUMBER AFFECTED	COST PER CASE	TOTAL COST
Dead cows	5	$1,800	$9,000
Aborted cows	12	$1,200	$14,400
Treated cows	20	$102	$2,040
20% reduction of milk in vat	140kgMS/day for the 10 days remaining in the season	$7.80/kgMS	$11,000
Overall cost of outbreak			**$36,440**

Cost of vaccinating whole herd	**825 doses**	**$1.20 per dose**	**$990 (annually)**

Dry off nutrition

by Georgette Wouda

Focusing on nutrition is essential for a successful dry off.

There are many changes that occur in a dairy cow around this time to transition her from a lactating cow into a dry cow – the main two being:

1. Milk production needs to slow down to ideally 5-10L per cow per day, before dry off.
2. The rumen needs to adapt to a dry cow diet.

Changing milking frequency, reducing the amount of high-protein feed in the diet (e.g. fresh grass, high quality silage), and replacing this with low-protein bulky feeds to keep them content (e.g. whole crop silage, low quality baleage) will all help when trying to reduce milk production ahead of drying off.

Making those changes in the final week to half a week before dry off day is often long enough to achieve the required outcome. Making changes too early can lead to condition loss and increased stress.

Ideally cows should be close to calving body condition heading into winter, so you don't have to rely on large weight gains over the dry period. Therefore, dry off light cows ahead of the main herd if you are tight on feed and/or make a plan to potentially change milking frequency.

Never let hungry, freshly dried off cows go onto crop without filling them up on roughage first. Over the 7-10 days post dry off, feed bulky low protein roughage and gradually increase the amount of crop (if that is what your cows are wintering on) to avoid acidosis.

Scan for Georgette's full article.

The boys are back in town

by Caitlyn Bell

During February you may have had us out on-farm for our annual Ram Run.

If you haven't, as March rolls in it's the last call to finalise all your pre-tupping procedures. Your rams should be vet checked, body condition scored and shorn. Check their teeth and feet as well, to make sure they'll be able to withstand the mating period.

This is also a reminder to give these lads their clostridial vaccine and any other vaccines or mineral boosters they require now. As sperm production in a ram takes 6-8 weeks, ideally rams would then be left alone for the next six weeks to continue to flourish and 'flush up', so they are rearing to go come tupping time.

Teasers (vasectomised rams) will help to condense your lambing spread. If you are considering using teasers this year, get in touch with us to organise the procedure.

These boys should be treated the same as the rams and given a health check as well as any vaccines or mineral boosters. Don't forget, they should be put in with the appropriate mob 12-15 days before the rams head out to join.

If you have any questions regarding the upcoming tupping time, give your KeyVet a call.

Hind repro performance

by Theo Wieggers

Hinds on New Zealand deer farms normally reach puberty at around 16 months old. Hinds that have hit puberty by 16-months have a very good chance to conceive and calve at 24 months old.

However, to be able to do this, R2 hinds have to be 70% of their adult body weight by their second autumn, regardless of their genetic composition. Failure to do so will delay puberty by at least a year.

Keep in mind, if the average R2 hind weight across your herd is about 70% of their adult body weight, this may mean only half of your hinds are over that 70% adult weight target. This will translate into poor reproductive performance, with potentially only around 50% achieving pregnancy.

If you can lift your average weight across your herd to 85% of their adult body weight, this will bring more of your hinds over that 70% adult weight target and could increase the pregnancy rate to around 90% – a much better repro performance.

Winning at weaning

by Chanté Kritzinger

Successful beef calf weaning can be a daunting task. How can we help calves stay healthy and minimise the growth check, ultimately returning more profit to your pocket?

Here are some tips for each stage:

Pre-weaning

- Make high quality feed available early on to encourage calves to transition onto this while their mothers are still around. This will help rumen development and digestion of solid feed will be more efficient come weaning day. Additionally, if fed well early, skeletal and muscle development will be better, leading to an improved frame to build on later and fatten at the finishing stage.
- Perform stressful procedures, such as disbudding, well before weaning.
- Administer Selovin LA (selenium), Smartshot B12 and a 20mg copper bolus. Deficiencies in these trace elements will influence immunity and growth negatively.
- Vaccinate against clostridial diseases with Covexin 10 to prevent sudden death of good quality calves later. Give two injections 4-6 weeks apart.
- Regularly weigh your calves to confirm their growth rates are tracking well – our Weigh It Up team can help with this.
- Bring in some poo samples for us to FEC (faecal egg count) test to determine if a pre-weaning drench is needed for your calves. If so, use a triple combination drench to slow the development of resistance.

Weaning

- Minimise stress as much as reasonably achievable during separation.
- Ensure fences are in good condition.
- Select a paddock with easily accessible water and good shelter.

Post-weaning

- Use good quality pasture as calves will be less interested in feeding, so it's vital what they do eat is nutritious.
- Monitor them regularly as they will be more prone to develop disease at this stage and early treatment is key.
- If they don't go off to sale soon, separate heifer and bull calves to prevent unwanted mating.

Reach out to your KeyVet for advice on low-stress weaning specific to your farming set-up if you'd like further help.

Feeding senior working dogs

by Jill Smyth

Senior working dogs benefit from special diets to support their aging bodies and ensure they have the energy for work and recovery.

Ideally working dog diets should contain 25-30% carbohydrates, 25-35% fat and 30-35% protein. Dogs will metabolise carbohydrates as their initial energy source, then move to fat as demand continues or increases. Once these available energy sources have been used up, protein is utilised from muscle and other cells.

Dogs that are consistently fed high-fat diets will condition their metabolism to preferentially burn fat, resulting in a long-duration energy release which is ideal for dogs working hard for long periods. As dogs age, this metabolism may change so that fat is no longer burnt but stored. This can result in weight gain which is detrimental to joints and general health.

Therefore, a senior dog's calorie levels need to be high enough to maintain the energy levels required for their workload, while not too high that they gain weight.

Arthritis is inevitable with age, but supplements such as glucosamine, chondroitin and omega-3 fatty acids can help slow the progression of disease and reduce inflammation. Fatty acids will also improve coat condition and skin health in dogs. Most premium, commercially-produced senior dog diets have these added to them. Alternatively, you can add supplements to food.

Adding soluble fibre as well can support a healthy gut biome and help keep bowel motions regular.

If you would like further guidance about feeding your senior working dog, including diet options, speak to our knowledgeable team.

Staff focus: Showing cattle

Kate Cummings, our West Retail Lead, is talented at showing cattle! After representing New Zealand at the 2024 European Young Breeders School in Belgium, she put her hand up to teach children skills for handling heifers at a showmanship event during the Gore A&P Show.

How many children were in your class at the event?

There were 12, all under 14 years old.

Do you know what backgrounds they came from?

They were from a mix of backgrounds. Some of the participants came from dairy farming families, but some came from more urban backgrounds. We've been helping them get involved in the cattle industry and they have taken a strong interest in it!

What skills did you teach them?

The focus was on showmanship. At their age, it is important to work on their ability to lead and present their animal.

Anyone can walk into the ring with a heifer, but having good showmanship skills includes being able to present properly amongst fellow competitors, stand the heifer correctly, and do what the judges require from the leader. The three most important factors: First is the judge, second is the heifer, and third is where you're walking! Nothing else matters while you're competing.

Why did you offer to help the next showing generation?

So many people dedicated a lot of time to me when I began competing and it made such a difference in my skills, which is something that I hold a lot of gratitude for. I feel passionate about passing on that knowledge and encouragement to the next generation.

Are young people interested in showing cattle?

I think we're seeing an increase of people getting amongst it and the ones that are keen are deeply passionate about it. Being involved in this part of the cattle industry can give you so many opportunities (like I experienced travelling overseas), so it's fantastic to see more youth getting involved.

Does showing cattle at A&P Shows help the dairy and beef industries?

Most definitely – it's a great chance to showcase cattle industries in positive light. A&P Shows are an experience where town meets country and being able to teach urban locals more about agricultural industries and what they do is an important opportunity. Some of the best quality dairy and beef cattle is displayed at shows and I feel privileged to be a part of it and to have influenced young handlers through this event.

Clinic corner

Photo fun in Gore!

Our team had a great time at the Gore A&P Show at the start of February. It was good to catch up with some of our local farmers and enjoy a fun day out in the community. One of the highlights of our stand was our cheeky new face-in-hole photo board – you can choose to be the vet or the cow!