

Rural round-up



Claire Hunter
Clinical Lead
(East)

As a production animal vet, August is my absolute favourite month because it's calving time! Nothing beats the satisfaction of successfully completing a challenging calving and it's amazing how the stress of the job gloriously falls away when armpit deep in a cow's vagina! I also enjoy sharing my hard-learned calving tips with our younger (fitter) vets and learning new tricks from them in return.

After winter consults, it's great to be getting back out on-farm and catching up with farmers at the start of a new season. A major focus this month is how cows are handling the transition from dry to lactating, which is key to a successful season.

Whether you've called me out for a calving or a routine trace element check, I'll be subtly interrogating you to see how this is going, and keeping an ear out for early indicators of something brewing, in the hope we can get onto things early and get ahead of any issues. This might be cows returning home from winter grazing in poor condition, high numbers of down cows with metabolic problems, or milk quality issues and lots of spring mastitis. A new season can bring new problems.

It's also a good time to check how youngstock have come through winter and make plans for getting them ready for mating – before things get really hectic with the cows.

On a final note, it was nice to see those who made it to our recent Calving Spring Order clinic days.

We look forward to seeing our sheep farmers during this month's Lambing Expo.

Top tips for assisted calvings

by Angela Butcher

Last season, between July and November 2023, we were called out to assist with 665 calvings!

Of these, 15 were for beefies (including two prolapses) and 650 were for dairy cows, with 67% of these considered "normal" calvings. So, it pays to be prepared to step in when necessary.

Here are some top tips to help you navigate calving difficulties:

1. If you have made no progress after **10 minutes**, call your vet for a hand.
2. **Head ropes** - never place it around just the calf's jaw, as this pulls in the wrong direction and can break the jaw if the calf is alive. Instead, place the rope behind the ears and through the mouth. Getting the rope behind **BOTH** ears is the biggest factor in getting a head-back calf facing the right way again.
3. **Leg ropes** - always loop the chain above the fetlock and place a half hitch below it. This reduces the chance of breaking the calf's leg.



4. **Two legs and no head?** How do you tell if it is coming forwards or backwards?
 - Front legs - the bottom two joints of the leg (fetlock and knee) bend in the same direction, forming a C shape.
 - Back legs - the fetlock and hock bend in the opposite direction, forming a Z shape.
5. **A prolapsed uterus is an emergency! Call us right away.** Keep the cow calm and clean until we arrive.
6. Always check for **SPARES** and **TEARS** after calving. Even if you pull twins, check for a third...you never know!
7. Only give Butocin **AFTER** you have calved a cow.
8. Don't forget to consider **pain relief** post-calving.

ON-FARM FOCUS



DAIRY



- Provide trace elements to support cows post-calving & during their transition to peak milk production.
- Keep an eye out for spring mastitis.
- Review calf rearing processes – particularly colostrum management and pen hygiene.
- Consider our Complete Calf Care programme to cover calf drenches, vaccines and trace elements.
- Book in disbudding for the calves and metrichecking for the cows.

BEEF



- Transfer off crop pre-calving.
- Does your herd need a clostridial booster vaccination?
- Consider a pre-calving lice drench.

SHEEP



- BCS ewes.
- Remember your pre-lamb clostridial vaccinations (2-4 weeks before lambing starts).
- Vitamin drench as close to lambing as possible.
- Consider your pre-lamb parasite management.
- Supplement ewes with iodine to avoid unnecessary lamb deaths.

DEER



- Copper is essential - is there enough on board for your stock?
- Book us in for pregnant/empty scanning.
- Test dry hinds at the works for copper & selenium.

Minimising mastitis

by Sunita McGrath

Mastitis, a common disease after calving, is an inflammation of the mammary gland caused by bacteria getting into the udder.

While sub-clinical cases only have a high somatic cell count, clinical cases can be visually identified. An affected cow's udder will be hot, swollen and sore. Her milk will look different – it could be thinner or thicker than usual, or an unusual colour. She may appear uncomfortable and, as it becomes severe, be unwilling to move around.

Bacteria enters through the hole at the end of a teat end, as well as through teat damage called hyperkeratosis, where skin around the teat canal gets thick and rough as a response to improper cup placement or pulsation, or excessive or prolonged vacuum. Once inside, somatic cells try to fight the infection, increasing their numbers as it grows.

Even if the cow is cured, her production will be affected going forward and her cell count will remain slightly elevated. She may need to become a three-titter and she'll be at a higher risk of being culled from the herd.



Sunita shows participants at our recent milking management workshop the inner workings of a cow's udder to explain how bacteria enters the teat and causes mastitis.

So, what practical steps can be taken to reduce cases?

Try to avoid muddy paddocks and long walks on messy lanes, where possible. Shed cleanliness is important, however, don't hose near cows as muck can flick up onto their udders. Wipe dirty teats with a dry cloth before putting the cups on and wear gloves to stop the spread of bacteria.

Look at her udder while cupping. Does one quarter look different? If you strip (manually milk) her teat, what does the milk look like? Spotting cases and not cupping the affected quarter is vital so infection isn't passed between cows on the liners. Plus, nobody wants bad milk to go in the vat and risk a fine or milk refusal. Have a system for marking affected cows.

Teat spray thoroughly; covering everywhere the liner has touched will kill bacteria and lower the risk of cross-

contamination. It also keeps the teat skin soft, reducing the chances of it getting cracked.

RMT solution is useful for checking for mastitis during milking. We can also test milk samples in the clinic to help diagnose cases and offer treatment recommendations. Grab a few of our sterile test pottles when you're next in town.

If you experience a lot of infections this spring, have a chat to your KeyVet and we can come out for a visit to help you identify problem areas.

Scan for Sunita's full article



Metrichecking

We recommend metrichecking all cows who are 10-14 days (or more) post-calving. For most herds, this means getting us out two or three times to cover the whole calving season.

After calving, most cows' uteruses will be full of bacteria. While many will clear these infections naturally, around 10-20% won't. Infections will cause delays in cycling and reduce conception rates, as well as making cows unwell.

We can find these infections by metrichecking your girls with a quick vaginal test that can be done at milking time. We then treat any positive cases with the intrauterine nil-milk withholding antibiotic, Metriclean.

Finding and treating affected cows will help them get in-calf quicker and improve their body condition and milk production.

Upskilling our farmers



Last month we ran our popular annual dairy winter workshops, which aim to help our farmers get prepared for the season ahead and allow us to pass on knowledge around common spring topics on-farm.

Our vets from Winton and Gore shared their expertise on calf rearing, spring first aid and tips for calving a cow, milking management and mastitis, and preventing and treating lameness. A highlight for participants of the lameness workshops was getting to try their hand at hoof trimming on real cow hooves!

Thank you to all those who came along – we hope you got a lot out of the workshops and can utilise our tips and tricks in the coming months.



Sir John Kirwan on beating burnout

by Rachael Buckingham

With Southland rarely offering up the most inspiring springtime weather, and with the huge responsibility of so many new lives coming in quick succession, lambing/calving time can be incredibly stressful and overwhelming.

Whether you yourself struggle during this time, or your staff members are feeling it more than usual, it is important to carve out some time for self-care whenever possible.

Rugby legend and mental health advocate, Sir John Kirwan, gave some great advice at the recent New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA) conference on managing stress and avoiding burnout:

1. Do something everyday to switch off the “monkey” in your head (TV, read, play guitar, cook etc).
2. Compartmentalise (partner, kids, work, spirituality etc) – which ‘box’ needs me most now?
3. Connect - with people, with tech (send that message when you think of thanking someone, or saying Hi), and with nature.
4. DOT – just Do One Thing.
5. And then DAT - Do Another Thing. Break it down into small steps.
6. When you can feel burnout coming, do twice as much of the things that help you. Do DOT and then do DAT.
7. Check in on your employees – care for the whole person, not just the skills you need from them. This is performance care.
8. As a leader, remember you can show you are struggling too.

Deer scanning

For those who opted against foetal age scanning your deer, there is still time to do a simple pregnant/empty scan, which is useful when you want to make culling decisions, or just to ensure that the stags did their job and you're hitting in-calf targets.

Ideally, you are aiming for a 99% in-calf rate for mixed-age hinds, and at least 95% for two year-olds.

The time window for yes/no scans is not as critical, as the scanner can look for other signs of pregnancy. Beyond 40-60 days after conception, the foetus is usually not able to be aged as it is too big to fit in the viewing screen.

Inside the lamb shed

by Emily Chisholm

Whether you are planning to dust off the milk feeding machine, or save some \$\$ by mothering-on this year, it pays to get your lamb shed set up for rearing ahead of the chaos. Here's a quick guide:

Facilities:

Try to choose a shed that hasn't previously been used by adult sheep (i.e. hay or implement sheds) to avoid passing on diseases. It will need to be warm, clean, dry and draught-free, with good ventilation to reduce ammonia build up. It should also have:

- Warming pens with heat lamps;
- A sloped floor to avoid any pooling of water;
- Solid pen divisions to reduce draughts and the spread of disease;
- Pens with a minimum 0.5-0.6m² allocated per lamb to avoid overcrowding;
- Appropriate bedding. Woodchips or shavings are the preferred options, being warm and dust free.

Food and water:

All lambs need unrestricted access to fresh, clean water and ad-lib access to hay and a good quality, palatable meal from day one to aid rumen development.

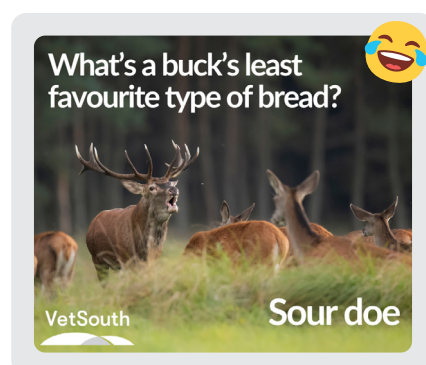
It is safest to assume that every lamb coming into the shed needs colostrum. Remember, not all milk replacer powders have a coccidiostat included, so this may need to be added separately.

Sodium bentonite is a special clay that can be added to meal, acting as a buffer against rumen acidosis, absorbing toxins, and reducing scours.

Supplies checklist – you can grab some of these during our Lambing Spring Order Expo, on between 2-9th August!

- Tags with imprinted numbers
- Scales
- Supplies for a dextrose injection: Dextrose 40% mixed with sterile water to form a 20% solution, sterile needles and syringe
- Stomach tube
- Iodine spray
- Colostrum and milk powder
- Broad spectrum disinfectant (use weekly)
- Vaccinations for clostridial disease and scabby mouth
- Woollen or plastic jackets to help keep lambs warm
- Stalosan or a similar powder that absorbs moisture and binds ammonia in the bedding, to help control bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites and fly larvae
- Anti-inflammatories/pain relief. Effective pain relief gets ewes and lambs up and eating/drinking more quickly
- Separate clothing and footwear for sick and healthy pens
- A clean place to put the lambs when they are being transported from the paddocks to the shed.

We hope those of you lambing early have a successful start to the season!





Paws off the coccidiostats

by Gillian Swinton

With calving and lambing kicking off, remember to pay special attention to any farm dogs who might be inclined to go on the hunt around the sheds for some extra kai! Some milk powders, particularly those intended for agricultural animals, may contain

coccidiostats. These prevent or treat coccidiosis, a parasitic infection commonly found in farm animals. However, they can be lethal to farm dogs who may be sniffing around the sheds.

Dogs suffering from coccidiostat poisoning may show the following symptoms:

- Gastrointestinal distress, i.e. vomiting, diarrhoea (which may be bloody) and abdominal pain. These symptoms can range from mild to severe, depending on the level of exposure and the individual dog's sensitivity.
- Loss of appetite. Dogs may show a decreased interest in food or refuse to eat altogether. This can contribute to weight loss and dehydration if not addressed promptly.
- Lethargy and weakness. Dogs may appear tired, lack energy, and have difficulty moving or standing.

- Neurological signs. These may include disorientation, confusion, tremors, seizures, or even coma. Neurological signs typically indicate a more severe poisoning and **require immediate veterinary attention.**
- Increased thirst and urination, due to the toxic effects of coccidiostats on the kidneys.

If you are concerned that your dog may have gotten into the lambs' milk powder bag, or helped himself to the calves' milk, it's crucial to seek veterinary assistance immediately. Prompt veterinary care can help mitigate the effects of poisoning and improve the chances of a successful recovery.

We recommend knowing what ingredients are in your milk powder and getting into the habit of washing out any leftover milk immediately, while always keeping an eye on your dog or cat roaming the pens!

Let's celebrate the farmer fathers!



Whoever decided to make Father's Day in the middle of lambing/calving season was clearly not a farmer! To give a well-deserved shout out to our farmer fathers this year, we are running a competition for the best 'Fathering on' picture to WIN* a cool hamper of goodies you can make use of when out on your rounds, or to enjoy with the kids at home.

Email us an action shot of your Dad/husband/Grandad out on-farm with their kids this lambing/calving (any generation of father-child welcome), or doing some awesome 'Mothering on' in the shed.

Email your submission to contactus@vetsouth.co.nz, with your preferred contact details, or, enter via our VetSouth Facebook page (from 26th August 2024).



Clinic corner

Spring Order

We had a great time catching up with our clients (and the next generation of farmers) at our Dairy Spring Order Expos around the region last month. Gore's retail lead Rebecca is never afraid of a good dress up and check out vet Sunita's skills with the face paint in Winton! Thanks to everyone who came along for a yarn, placed orders and got involved with the competitions!



We're looking forward to seeing our sheep farmers at the Lambing Expos early this month. Scan this to check out our website for more details, or to place your order online at www.vetsouth.co.nz.



Dog Run 2024

Here's vet Tayla vaccinating some very chilled farm dogs on the last dog run of the season in Eastern Southland. They're well trained to wait patiently for their preventative healthcare! These annual 'Woof WOF' visits are a great way to keep on top of your working dog team's vaccinations and get them checked over by a vet on-farm.

Our clinics

Balclutha
Gore
Winton
Otautau

Tapanui
Invercargill
Lumsden
Clydevale

Follow us @VetSouthNZ



0800 VETSOUTH

Keep your pets happy and healthy with our small animal teams in Balclutha, Tapanui, Gore, Invercargill & Winton



*T&Cs apply. Competition closes 30/08/2024. One winner will be chosen on 02/09/2024 and contacted directly using details provided. Prize pack to be collected from your nearest VetSouth (Winton, Gore or Invercargill clinics only).