**Trace Element Testing**

End of season liver biopsies and blood tests on keepr pregnant cows are a good idea. The liver stores copper and releases it slowly in to the bloodstream where they are used for metabolic processes. Blood tests are better for selenium and vitamin B12.

The liver can be viewed as “the water tank at the top of the hill”. When it runs out the “house at the bottom” will soon (at an unknown point in time) run out of water. It is useful to know the reserves of copper in “the trace element tank” because this is a longer term view of trace mineral status rather than blood levels which only really reflect weekly changes at best. Young stock usually only require blood testing to establish if they are deficient. Calves and heifers should be tested in the autumn to evaluate trace element status and parasite status and enable corrective action before winter.

**Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Virus**

In discussion with your vet you may decide to include BVD testing on the young stock especially if there is evidence that the herd has a problem with BVD such as a high number of longer returns to oestrus. Detecting changes in the antibody levels in bulk tank milk can be an important indicator that BVD may have entered the herd, or that through culling and time the BVD situation is improving.

**Late Season Pregnancy Scanning**

Wintering empty cows can be a very expensive exercise. Pregnancy testing the whole herd again during May, especially in herds where we suspect or have seen previous high rates of pregnancy loss, is a good idea with a high return on investment in most cases. Please let us know if you would like to have this done.

**Update on Transport Certification:**

Over the last few years there has been a nationwide move to improve the standards of welfare in animals being transported. Making sure animals at slaughter premises are fit for both transport and human consumption is an important part of maintaining good relations with our overseas trade partners. Remember that our trading partners make regular visits to slaughter premises to ensure standards are being maintained.

Here’s an update on what is OK and what is not OK when you are looking at sending injured or abnormal stock to the works.

1. Any animal that is abnormal e.g. lame, cancer, wounds, lumps must have a transport (works) certificate issued by your vet.

2. Transport certificates are required to show you have done your best to minimise the risk of the animal suffering in the process of being transported for slaughter and that the animal is fit for human consumption.

3. Transport certificates are only valid for up to 4 days. If you have an abnormal animal you would like certified, contact your local stock agent involved to make sure the animal can be processed in the same day.

**CLINIC FACEBOOK COMPETITION**

Win a premium diet for you pet...

- Head on over to your local clinic Facebook page by simply searching VetEnt followed by your preferred clinic location for example VetEnt Mosgiel.
- Like our page and our April photo competition picture and go into the draw to win one of 22 large bags of Hills VetEssential Canine 12kg or Feline 6kg.
- Post a selfie of you and your pet for an additional entry, plus every person who posts a photo will receive a 10% off voucher to use on Hills Feline or Canine food at your local VetEnt clinic.

Competition runs 1st April - 30th April 2017, see terms and conditions on our Facebook page for more details.
Planning for a Successful Mating Season:

As the season ends, hopefully there will be a well-earned break for many of you on the horizon. No doubt, the cows are also looking forward to a break from walking to the shed twice daily!

In farming, making informed decisions with historical and real-time data is the key to success. Valuable data extends over several seasons and involves all groups of cows. The analysis of this data can be extremely useful when making decisions. This data analysis is particularly useful in mastitis control and reproduction systems.

Infovet is a comprehensive data management program that can be used to assist with herd management. In particular you are able to generate in-depth reports for mastitis and reproduction which are created using accurate data sets from your herds. Reproduction analysis is extremely important as the rate at which your herd becomes pregnant and the effect of reproductive interventions is critical.

The key step in the process is to establish the six-week in-calf rate for all groups of cows. The six weeks in-calf rate is a measure of reproductive success in seasonal calving herds. Cycling cows and non-cycling cows (of all ages) will have different six-week in-calf rates. There is value in having a high herd six-week in-calf rate so we can apply effective interventions.

Our aim is to apply interventions which result in good 18-24 day returns, a high first service conception rate and a high final pregnancy percentage.

By using the clinical case rates and drug purchase analysis you can gauge the impact mastitis is having within your herd. The bulk milk somatic cell count seasonal pattern enables us to show you the impact (financial) of sub-clinical mastitis, the accuracy of clinical mastitis detection, and the effects of the milking machine and milking management on mastitis.

Dry Cow Therapy

Dry cow therapy is a restricted veterinary medicine (RVM) and requires a prescription for us to be able to dispense it for the farm. This prescription is given after a one-on-one consultation with your vet, unless you are now very familiar with this process, but for some it may be a new experience! Most importantly dry cow consultations provide data and advice (plus a cuppa of tea and biscuit!) which will reduce the prevalence of mastitis in the herd at dry off and at calving.

Dry Cow therapy has the following functions:

- Cure existing intra-mammary infections that are present from the current lactation
- Prevent new infections throughout the entire dry period
- Prevent new infections during the first two weeks of lactation
- Promote the formation of an effective teat plug

When used in combination with teat sealants dry cow therapy can become more effective in preventing new infections. Your consultation with your vet will reveal which antibiotics should be used in which cows to ensure the greatest benefit. Dry cow therapy is not 100% effective. When administered to older cows or cows that have had multiple infections in more than one quarter, or those who dry off with high somatic cell counts, dry cow therapy may not be as effective as it would be in younger cows that have not had as many infections etc. These are the critical decisions that make up a part of the dry cow consultation.

Teat sealants form an integral part of dry cow therapy. Cows need to be accurately identified as being uninfected before teat sealants can be used on their own. Herd testing is highly recommended.

As the season ends, if your average bulk milk somatic cell count is over 200,000 you can expect about 20% of the herd to have sub-clinical mastitis. Reducing this level of sub-clinical mastitis with a good dry cow therapy program has a production benefit. For example reducing average bulk milk somatic cell count from 200,000 to 150,000 next season will have a production benefit of 0.9%. In a 600 cow herd producing 420kgMS per cow with a $6.00 payout, this equates to $14,600 or $24 per cow per season

Winter Feeding

Feeding the herd through the winter can be a challenge. Wet and cold weather can create problems with feed utilisation which has an effect on being able to fully meet the cows’ nutritional requirements. Optimal body condition score at calving is 5.0 for mature cows, and 5.5 for first and second calvers. Cows in optimal body condition at calving that don’t lose excessive condition after calving cycle earlier and are more likely to get in calf earlier in the breeding season. Planning for a successful mating next season starts now.

Kale is commonly fed in combination with some fibre (hay or straw) during winter. Potential issues with kale are:

- Lower than expected energy content of the diet,
- Poor utilization,
- Bloat,
- Nitrate poisoning
- Rumen acidosis
- Frozen kale can burn the rumen lining causing temporary reduction in appetite

Cows on kale need to be regularly checked for condition loss and other signs of nutritional disease. We can help with assessing cow condition on kale and feed allocations etc. if necessary.

Fodder beet is higher in energy than kale but lower in protein. The leaf has the potential to bind available calcium in cows and lead to a milk fever type syndrome. Rumen acidosis is also common. Allocating fodder beet can be difficult because the exact amount of energy which can be metabolised per square meter is often not known. At your end of season review you should discuss fodder beet feeding management with your vet to help prevent very costly outbreaks of rumen acidosis.

Continued...