

## WEEKLY TIMES MILK QUALITY AWARDS 2009

This award recognises those farmers in the top 5% of the nation with the lowest average bulk milk cell counts over the last season. Congratulations go to Geoff and Wendy Abblitt, Steve and Sharon Fowlie, Geoff and Lisa House (share farmers for Greg Frankcombe) and Leigh and Kelly Schuurung and all their respective staff. Each of these recipients have won this award at least 2 years in a row with Leigh and Kelly winning 3 years in a row and Geoff and Wendy winning it an impressive 6 years in a row. Low cell counts are possible and achievable on an ongoing basis! Strict attention to effective teat spraying and calm and consistent milking routine are common themes in these herds.

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## INTERESTING NEW MASTITIS RESEARCH RESULTS

This year Craig attended the International Mastitis Conference in New Zealand. There were many speakers that presented from all over the world. Some of the interesting trial work that came out of the conference was:

- Twice daily removal of freshly calved heifers from the calving mob reduced mastitis in these heifers by 45%
- There has been some promising work on using DNA testing to ID mastitis bacteria instead of culturing, reducing the amount of 'no growths'
- Extending treatments of certain intramammary and injectable mastitis treatments improved cure rates
- Treatment of mastitis with certain anti-inflammatories improved cure rates

Teatseal and the use of certain antibiotic injections prior to calving decreased mastitis rates in heifers.

It needs to be remembered that although some of this work seems promising, there are still some practical issues in commercial herds. These include the cost effectiveness of some of these treatment protocols, the issue of developing antibiotic resistance and the problems of antibiotic residues and with-holding periods due to the lack of testing in this area. If you would like any more information on these new findings feel free to contact the clinic.

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## CETON VS KETOL

Both are 'energy' supplements for ketotic or preg tox cows or in fact for any cows that would benefit from a 'boost', but need to be compared on a per cow basis rather than the cost of a bottle. Ketol is cheaper by the bottle but is far more expensive per cow. As with all products the full recommended dose should be given, be it antibiotic, intramammary, supplement or whatever. The label recommended complete course dose for Ceton is 700ml and for Ketol is 1.75 litres. That is, the volume of Ketol required to treat a cow is 2.5 times more than Ceton. Smithton Vet Service uses and recommends Ceton.

*(see this month's specials)*

## PRE-CALVING DOWN COWS

Some can be easy and straightforward to treat and other cases can be much more challenging. Correct diagnosis is obviously very important so correct treatment is given.

If a cow is on her side it is critical to sit her up as soon as possible before she bloats and dies. A cow in late pregnancy with a full rumen of hay and/or silage that lies on her side to sun herself, relax or whatever can simply become cast. Sitting her up and maybe pressing in on her left flank to encourage burping, may be all that is necessary to get her up.

Some cows very close to calving (well bagged up) may also suffer from milk fever, so if it looks like milk fever try a couple of 4-in-1 packs. Many of you are now giving these intravenously, but if in doubt as to whether it really is milk fever, it is safer from the cow's point of view to give just 1 pack IV and the second under the skin, or alternatively, both under the skin. Simple milk fever cases should respond quickly and be up within a couple of hours. If they are not, then we advise that you call us to examine the cow or discuss the case further. Other diseases like mastitis, metritis or Salmonella can mimic milk fever. Remember, every hour a cow is down means increasing muscle damage and lower treatment success rates.

A more serious condition is sometimes called **pregnancy toxemia**. Other names for this condition are protein energy malnutrition or, perhaps a less savoury term, pre-calving starvation. Quite often these cows are carrying twins or a very large single calf. A recent article in the Cattle Vets journal where several practices were canvassed for their experiences with this condition revealed how frustrating successful treatment can be.

These cows go down due to an energy deficiency in the weeks just before calving. The cows are generally otherwise bright and alert but are unable to stand. Basically these cows are putting more energy and protein into the calf or calves and themselves than is going in the mouth. Once the cow goes down her prognosis or predicted outcome becomes more guarded. As with all conditions, prevention is much better than cure so if early warning signs are apparent, the condition in an individual cow may be addressed before she goes down. These signs may include the cow appearing disinterested in feeding particularly hay or silage, standing off from the other cows or showing signs of struggling to stand. If these cows are recognized early and put onto better quality feed including high quality hay and concentrates, they may recover, not go down and not need inducing. These cows also serve as a warning sign that others may be on the verge of doing the same. Picking out any poorer cows and treating them preferentially may prevent potential disasters.

If the cow does go down it is very important to get her up as soon as possible to prevent muscle damage and pressure sores. For a cow, the act of getting up is harder than staying up so often a helping hand with hip clamps or pelvic lifters may help and allow the cow to move around and feed for the day. Sometimes this is all that is necessary for a few days to correct the imbalance. This of course assumes the cow is then fed much better and continues to be. Additional energy supplements like Ceton or Ketol and concentrates should also be used. Dextron (sugar) pouches can also be given. These cases are more likely to survive and deliver a normal calf.

If the cow is unable to stand on her own the outcome is likely to be less favourable as it is extremely difficult to reverse the advanced imbalance. Good nursing becomes critical and includes soft bedding or surfaces, regular rolling, provision of water and high quality feed and supplements like Ceton or Ketol. Administration of Dextron pouches and sometimes 4-in-1 pouches will also help. It is important to continue dosing with Ceton until the cow gets up. Often we will induce these cows to calve. Although inducing places additional stress on the cow it will remove the calves and hence one of the energy drains on the cow. It may save the cow. Many of these down cows will however die 7-14 days after going down and sometimes even if they calve in the meantime. Unless you are able to commit to proper nursing euthanasia may be the best option.