

NEWSLETTER

DRY COW

This season we have returned to using Elaclox DCX as the standard dry cow therapy. At this stage this product still contains the blue dye as the companies go through the transition to dye free products.

The price has been reduced this year and we encourage farmers to take advantage of a further discount by paying for your Dry Cow purchase by the 25th of the following month.

We would also encourage you to carefully read the information sheets we hand out with the dry cow. It is critical that dry cow is administered properly and there is an instruction sheet on how best to do this.

We also have some guidelines on deciding whether or not to selectively treat although all current work generally still recommends blanket treatment. Another handout also gives advice on reducing the cow's daily yield to an acceptable drying off level. This is also very important for the dry cow to be fully

effective.

If you have not received these sheets please ask for them. We are also willing and able to discuss any cell count information or mastitis records you may have to help you make informed culling decisions.

All indications from last season are that those who used Teatseal either on its own in heifers or in combination with dry cow in cows, found the results to be very good ie a significant decrease in clinical cases around calving time and soon after. This backs all the research in this area and it is likely Teatseal will become more important as another strategy in mastitis control.

We soon hope to have access to a cost benefit tool to help improve decision making around the use of Teatseal.

Please feel free to talk to us about this product and its use.

RELAY FOR LIFE

SVS will again be entering a team for this very important and worthwhile event, being held in Circular Head over the weekend March 27th and 28th. Any encouragement on the day (& night) will be gratefully accepted.



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BRACKEN FERN TOXICITY

We have seen some deaths in calves recently due to bracken fern poisoning. With the dry spell and less quality feed available in some circumstances, calves in particular become less discriminate in their feeding habits. There only needs to be a few ferns at any stage of their growth for problems to occur.

Signs of poisoning may include sudden death, blood in the faeces with or without diarrhoea, bleeding from the nose, drooling saliva or blood in the urine. Some affected calves will also succumb to secondary infections like pneumonia. Be aware that animals can develop and show signs weeks after ingestion.

Early diagnosis and treatment is often successful although there is no specific antidote. As always, prevention is better than cure so not allowing access is the best strategy.

SCALES

After several technical problems and equipment failures last year we are at last pleased to inform you our cattle weighing scales are now working, updated and available for hire. We would appreciate them being returned in the state they were when leaving the clinic and this will help with their longevity and reliability.

SALMONELLA REMINDER

For those of you who have Autumn calving herds and have been vaccinating against Salmonella or are intending to, please let us know your requirements so we can ensure we have enough vaccine on hand. Please note, previously vaccinated cows should receive a booster dose approximately 3-4 weeks before calving start date. This increases colostral protection of calves and these calves should be fed colostrum from vaccinated cows for at least 5 days after birth. In previously unvaccinated cattle, 2 doses should be given 3-4 weeks apart with the second shot 3-4 weeks before calving start. Many rising 2 year old heifers will be in this category.

FARMER EDUCATION COURSES

We are still keen to host farmer education courses. We are once again calling for expressions of interest in attending Lamé Cow workshops, Responsible Usage of Veterinary Drug courses and the Countdown Downunder Cups-on Cups-off course.

Once we have sufficient numbers for each, we can finalise dates and venues. If you require further information on any of these please feel free to contact us.



**Please contact the
Clinic on 64521054
to order your
Salmonella Vaccine
and/or
register for our
Farmer Education
Courses.**

STAFF 2010

We have recently welcomed back Lauren for a six week stint with us helping out with preg tests etc whilst others are on leave. Lauren postponed her mainland Australia trip last year with the uncertainty from the GFC but will finally head over to Western Australia soon beginning with a locum at Geraldton.

We welcome two new vets to the team this year. Both spent some time with us as students before graduating, so have already met a few clients and have a rough idea of the layout of the district.

Georgie Vollus started mid January and Michael Healy started this week. Georgie

is a Hobart girl and completed her degree in Queensland. Michael is from north of Sydney and finished his degree at Sydney Uni. Both are keenly interested in all things cattle as well as our mix of other species.

We know everyone will make them both very welcome as we have come to expect from the CH community.

EARLY PREGNANCY TESTING RESULTS

We have now completed the first pregnancy test for many herds in the district.

As predicted, 6 week in calf rates are down by between 5 to 10% on average compared to last year. Depending on the total length of your mating period (AI and bulls), this may translate to more empty cows as well. This may be a year to consider extending the bull mating period by a week or two.

The downside of this is that some very late cows will not be able to be induced to calve early in the next calving period.

An example: normally mate the herd for 12 weeks; able to induce all the late cows by the end of week 1 of calving; the majority of the induced cows are calved by the end of week 4 of calving.

Now: mating extended to 15 weeks; there will be a group of cows that cannot be induced until the end of week 4 and will calve beyond week 6.

If you have had an early pregnancy test done you are in a better position to make a

decision on when to remove the bulls because you know what percentage of the herd are in calf in the first 6-8 weeks of mating. If this percentage is acceptable then the bulls are probably better removed sooner rather than later. If the result is poor, you may decide to leave the bulls in for longer than normal. If it is longer than 14-15 weeks since AI started in your herd, then bulls should probably be removed anyway. Experience tells us that in the normal, seasonal herd, mating for longer than this is not likely to yield cost beneficial results.

POLIO (also known as PEM or polioencephalomalacia)

(polio = grey matter, encephalo = brain, malacia = softening, therefore polioencephalomalacia literally means softening of the grey matter of the brain!)

Causes of polio are wide ranging from excessive sulphur consumption to lead toxicity. More frequently seen in young animals (<18mths), the most common causes of polio in Circular Head are currently thought to be altered thiamine (Vitamin B1) status and high sulphur intake.

Altered thiamine status is most likely due to reduced thiamine levels in feed eg dry summer pasture, while high sulphur intake may be due to:

- increased sulphur concentrations of bore water or increased intake of bore water containing sulphur
- eating plants that produce sulphur rich compounds (e.g. turnips and rape)

Clinical Signs

Polio animals may be found 'down', comatose and possibly convulsing (poor prognosis). Or, clinical signs may progress more slowly (over hours to days). Animals with slower onset polio may separate from the mob, stagger, hold their head up, appear blind and have an exaggerated walk. Early treatment of these slow onset cases may be successful. However, some animals that survive may be neurologically impaired (blind or poor performers).

Treatment

ASAP with Vitamin B1 injections (for up to 3 days). Improvement is usually seen within 24 hours.

Remember there are other causes of neurological signs in cattle and in the first instance cases should be diagnosed by a veterinarian and/or treated more intensively, eg IV Vitamin B1.

RYEGRASS STAGGERS (also known as Perennial Ryegrass Toxicosis)

Ryegrass staggers occurs in southern Australia during late summer and early autumn. Certain ryegrass species have a type of fungus (endophyte) living on them which produces a toxin. When these "toxic" ryegrasses are eaten by cattle (or sheep and horses) in sufficient quantities, they may cause the animal to stagger, tremor and even fall over. Other possible effects include decreased milk production (reductions of 10-20%), scouring, weight loss, lameness and increased risk of heat stress. Conditions that favour ryegrass toxicity include:

- late seasonal growth
- temperatures over 23°C
- closely grazed pastures. NOTE: the shorter and younger the pasture, the higher the concentration of toxins

Tips for prevention:

- Avoid the need for animals to graze at the base of pastures (e.g. decrease stocking rates)
- Provide alternate sources of forage (eg hay or silage)
- Provide mixed pasture species for summer/autumn grazing

Ryegrass staggers in cattle is generally reversible if managed carefully and resolves with time. If staggers is present in your herd:

- do not stress affected animals or put them under pressure
- move cattle very slowly and calmly
- provide alternate feed sources
- milking cows may need to be dried off to avoid continuing problems with yarding

There are now a number of in feed products available to help bind to the toxins and alleviate their effects, however rain, pasture growth and cooler conditions usually mean the end of symptoms.