

The Vet Link

NITRATE POISONING:

Nitrate poisoning has been in the news recently, after a Waikato sharemilker lost 49 cows. In our district we have seen deaths from nitrate poisoning in yearlings as well as the more usual dairy cows.

Nitrate poisoning can occur from different sources, but most commonly from nitrate accumulation in plants. Nitrate is taken up from the soil by the plants and converted to protein for growth. If energy is limiting, nitrate accumulates. When the plant being consumed has excessive levels of nitrate, the toxic metabolite nitrite is absorbed into the bloodstream. A chemical reaction buggers up haemoglobin in the blood and makes it unable to carry oxygen around the body. The cow basically suffocates from the inside out.

Nitrate toxicity is most common when warm, moist conditions encourage plant growth but overcast conditions limit the amount of energy from sunlight, to convert nitrate into plant protein. Plants that are growing rapidly after a period of stunting (e.g. drought) are particularly dangerous. Plants most commonly associated with nitrate toxicity are short rotation ryegrasses, green oats, sorghums and turnips. Excess nitrate can also occur after over-application of nitrogenous fertiliser or farm effluent.

A typical scenario is a cloudy autumn day with relatively good soil temperatures, a vigorously growing annual grass and hungry cows. Typically, several animals will be found dead, others are down and dying. Some of the surviving cows will abort within the following few days. The fetus dies as a result of the low oxygen levels in the blood.

An emergency call to the vets may result in some of the lesser affected cows being saved. Methylene Blue is the antidote, but for most it is too late.

Prevention and Control

Allow toxic forage to age and set seed, ensiling will usually reduce the nitrate content (making hay preserves it!). Have a good understanding of dangerous weather conditions, if you are unsure get suspect crops tested! Plant material taken to the clinic early in the morning will usually have results by the afternoon. Pre-feed with high carbohydrate feedstuff; cattle are less inclined to gorge and carbohydrates help to process nitrate/nitrite into less toxic forms. Initially, only allow cattle to graze for 1 hour. Check cattle regularly for signs of toxicity. Over a period of several days to weeks cattle may adapt to higher nitrate levels. If you require any additional information, please contact us at the clinic.

Sandra Hegh

STAFF

We have recently said farewell to Sam Looney who was a Vet Nurse and Rural Animal Technician in our Whakatane Clinic. WE welcome local girl Annie McKeown to the team as Sam's replacement.

After many years of Veterinary service in the EBOP Mark Howell has decided to retire—but I am sure we can convince him to come back and do some locum work for us.

Bridget has had an amazing trip to America to attend the Western Vet Conference in Las Vegas. Most of the large animal vets will be attending the NZ Vet Conference in Hamilton later this month.

Heather and Bruce have just returned from a trip to South Africa.

TIPS FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS:

- ♦ PAR CONSULTS—ring and book your spring consult now, before you get busy with calving.
- ♦ TEATSEAL—book your heifers in to be teatsealed. This is best done 4 weeks before the planned start of calving.
- ♦ SPRING ORDERS—Order your bulk products now. Starter Plus and Jump Start delivered on farm early July. VHC minerals specially blended for our area available in bulk or 25kg bags. Contact Allister 027 734 9745 for all bulk orders.
- ♦ PRECALVING DRENCH—Drench your cows at calving—Just one treatment of Eprinex at calving can shorten conception times giving an average of 10 extra milking days.
- ♦ YOUNG STOCK—It is very important to treat now for parasites and top up trace element supplementation.

Vets: Chris Peterson
Sandra Hegh
Joanne Allan
Martine Murtagh
Mark Howell
Gillian Hogarth
Sally Gummer
Anna Cochrane
Ben Miller
Heather Wise
Carolyn Hamill

Support Staff: Bridget Malcolm
Kat Nelson
Janet Evans
Carmen Donner
Allister Watson
Maryanne McLay
Kathryn Palmer
Jude Anderson
Rebecca Wright
Lisa Ross
Melanie Goodburn
Petra Parkinson
Annie McKeown



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Newsletter to Clients of

Issue: **JUNE 2016**

The forecast payout for next season was less than hoped for. Perhaps Fonterra is being overly pessimistic; perhaps they are suggesting we should all be very cautious. We all agree the climb out of this hole will be a long one. NZ dairying will have to learn to live in the space below the cost cut off price for Europe and USA. Clearly this is the time for some strategic planning by all farmers. Farmers that are top performers will do well. Read Bens article in this issue. The best 25% of our clients have excellent reproductive KPI's. The two indicators that come up everywhere as drivers of profit in a low cost environment are:- amount of pasture eaten and six week in-calf rate. The best are showing us profit can still be made. I think it is time we all got together to discuss dairying into the future.

On the 24th June we are holding an "Are you Winning" forum. You all need to be there. Hear from leaders in the industry, as well as local "thinkers". In our area the Kiwifruit boys have just been through a calamity- what can they teach us about being cohesive, being agile, and dealing with banks? See you there.

CHRIS

DISBUDDING

Dealing with horns in adult cattle (whether dairy or beef) is a nightmare. Horns are dangerous to both people and other cows and are traumatic to remove once fully grown. Removing the horn buds as calves is quick, low risk, cost effective and the calves bounce back with minimal growth checks.

We offer the most humane disbudding service on the market and once you've seen it done you'll never want anything else. We completely sedate the calves so they are sound asleep, shave the hair to minimise smoke, inject local anaesthetic around the horn buds so they can't feel a thing and then remove the buds with a gas burner. We apply antibiotic spray after removal, vaccinate with 5-in-1, remove any extra teats, check umbilical cords for infection and castrate (ring) any bulls if required. All for the price of \$6.20 per calf and at up to 80 calves per hour. While the calves are asleep we can also take blood samples easily for BVD or DNA testing if requested and treat infections with antibiotics.

We can disbud calves from the age of 4 days onwards – and the younger the better! The smaller they are, the less drugs required and the better they recover with fewer complications. So we recommend to book smaller batches more often, rather than one big batch of old calves at the end of the calf rearing season – once you have 30 calves over 4 days old give us a call! Calves should not have any milk for at least 2 hours before the procedure so feed earlier or delay feeding if required.

Remember a lot of white faces do actually have horn buds so it is a good idea to get them done too. Calves are usually up and about within the hour and ready to feed later that day. We recommend you boost the 5-in-1 vaccine 4 weeks later for complete tetanus protection.

I look forward to seeing your calves this spring.
Martine Murtagh BVSc



CONGRATULATIONS

Peter & Catherine Martin and Paul & Heather Warneford
winners of the **FACEGUARD PROMOTION**
Winning a
\$500 Hunting & Fishing Voucher



JUNE PROMOTION

20kg Eukanuba Performance **Save \$49.90**

NOW \$120.00



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PREGNANCY TESTING RESULTS

The results from this seasons pregnancy testing done by Veterinary Health Centre have confirmed our gut feeling – empty rates have increased. The average empty rate across the practice this season was 14%. The last two seasons were 13% and 12% respectively.

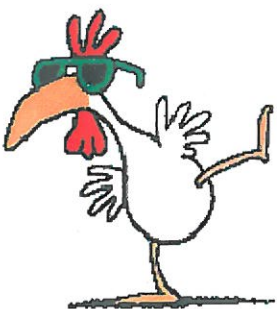
Comparing empty rates is meaningless without taking into consideration the length of mating period for an individual farm, but averages still produce useful information. Mating periods continue to shorten; the average mating length of the herds we pregnancy tested was 11 weeks. The industry standard empty rate for an 11 week mating is 10% and an excellent result is 7%. So our average empty rate of 14 % is poor.

However, the best 25% of farms we pregnancy tested had an average empty rate of 6.95% so the herds in our practice with the best reproductive performance are as good as any herds in the country! There are some big opportunities for improvement outside of these top performing herds.

Below is a table that you can use to benchmark your result as it takes into account the length of time you mated for.

Length of mating (AB + natural)	Empty Rate (%)	
	Average Result	Excellent Result
6 weeks	32	22
9 weeks	15	10
12 weeks	9	6
15 weeks	8	5

The farmer's son was returning from the market with a crate of chickens his father had entrusted to him, when all of a sudden the box fell and broke open. Chickens scurried off in different directions, but the determined boy walked all over the neighbourhood scooping up the wayward birds and returning them to the repaired crate. Hoping he had found them all, the boy reluctantly returned home, expecting the worst. "Pa, the chickens got loose," the boy confessed sadly, "but I managed to find all twelve of them." "Well, you did good, son!" the farmer beamed. "You left with seven!"



LATE CALVERS—DO YOU NEED THEM?

It is well accepted that late calvers are undesirable from reproductive and productive points of view. Extending your mating period beyond 11-12 weeks has little impact on empty rate, even at an average level of performance. However, going shorter than 11 weeks can lead to a significant increase in empty rate. We regularly see very short mating lengths end in disaster. The 11 to 12 week mating length seems to be the sweet spot for most farms.

The best way to reduce late calvers is to get more cows in calf early in your mating period. Concentrate on 6 week in-calf rate.

Unfortunately achieving this is not as easy as drafting the bulls out before Christmas! It comes back to excellent reproductive management. Yes you know them...

- Hitting BCS targets. If you get your herd to 5 at calving it can't stop there; you must really feed your girls in early spring, otherwise they'll reward you with milk but disappoint you come October when they need to be BCS 4 or more.
- Heat Detection. Use two forms of aids and go paddock checking for bulling cows. These techniques are well proven in lifting heat detection performance.
- Non Cyclers. These need monitoring and treating early in most cases to hit submission rate targets. Average 3 week submission rates across the practice were 80%. This is below the target of 90%. Don't start mating already behind... you won't catch up.
- Grow excellent heifers. This is a big one and the effect of not achieving this is not seen as empty heifers but as wastage of 3 and 4 year olds.
- Healthy cows. Research is increasing in this area. It is now accepted that we are not just talking about uterine health affecting reproduction. Inflammation associated with mastitis negatively affects a cow's reproductive performance. Management to reduce metabolic disease, lameness and mastitis will all help with mating as well as the obvious metrichcking and treatment of "dirty cows".

There is a lot of talk in the industry at the moment about improving profitability and no matter what you read or who you talk to, **six week in-calf rate** is always in the discussion. See us about your herd's pregnancy testing results, we can advise you on the areas where the greatest opportunity lies to improve your herds reproductive performance.

A police officer in a small town stopped a motorist who was speeding down the main street.
"But officer" the man began, "I can explain."
"Just be quiet," snapped the officer, "I'm going to let you cool your heels in jail until the chief gets back."
"But, officer, I just wanted to say...."
"And I said to keep quiet! You're going to jail!" A few hours later the officer looked in on his prisoner and said, "Lucky for you the chief's at his daughters wedding. He'll be in a good mood when he gets back."
"Don't count on it," answered the fellow in the cell. "I'm the groom."

ARE YOU WINNING?

As an industry New Zealand produces 3% of global dairy production but has a 17% share of global trade. We have been highly competitive (66% share of profits from global trade) and this has been mainly driven by our low cost of production. In fact 10 years ago we were THE lowest cost milk producer in the world – this is probably of no surprise to you. However this is far from the case now with South American and Eastern European producers now producing at a lower cost than us, albeit not producing nearly the same volume – this is increasing...

The share of profit for the NZ dairy industry is decreasing and the gap between cost of production and global milk price is becoming increasingly narrow. The level of volatility is also increasing and does not look set to change. The past 6 years has seen greater change in milk price than the previous 70 years.

This all sounds doom and gloom and is certainly not good news. However it does represent an opportunity-or at least provides significant motivation to examine the way we as individual farmers are managing our farm system. Is it efficient? Can we grow more grass? Do we utilise a satisfactory amount of this grown grass? Are we appropriately stocked (cow numbers and type) and importantly do we achieve an excellent level of production for the level of energy going into our system?

This does not advocate a complete system change as DairyNZ surveys have shown that farm system (level 1 to 5) does not affect profit or risk to a volatile payout. But know what system you are and know how to measure its efficiency.

It seems to me a change needs to be made to lower the cost of our milk production. On farm this will have direct benefits as the key driver of profit is your operating costs and there is a very strong negative correlation between the proportion of pasture in the diet and cost of production.

Put simply the more home grown pasture you can produce the more profitable your dairy farm system will be.

BEN MILLER

ARE YOU WINNING? DAIRY FARMING—INTO THE FUTURE

Join us for an information sharing forum:

On Friday 24th June
At the Tuho building in Tangatua.
Pre-dinner nibbles from 6pm
Dinner at 7pm

You need to be there!!!

COMMERCIAL NEWS

DAIRY COWS

Eprinex Pour on Nil Milk Nil Meat withholding 5 litre \$565.00 - Save \$186.00

Genesis Pour on Nil Milk 35 day Meat withholding 5.5 Litre \$535.00

Liver Fluke

- **Genesis ULTRA** Pour on Abamectin + Triclabendazole 90 Day Milk/Meat withholding \$890.00
- **SWITCH FLUKE** Oral Abamectin/Levamisole + Triclabendazole 35 Day milk, 49 Day Meat withholding

REFLEX Pour on
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5.0 Litre ONLY \$295



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WAECO ICE BOX FREE!!!**

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4800**

June promotion
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NOW \$121.00



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Dog Food**
Purchase a 12kg
bag and
receive a 3kg
FREE!!

