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## Welcome Ash

Tararua Vets are pleased to welcome Ash Mellow to the Dannevirke Team.

Ash comes to us from a mixed practice vet clinic in Westport but is originally off the family dairy farm in Taranaki, more specifically Waverley. Ash has a keen interest in production animal medicine and is enjoying the mix of large animal work on offer in the area. Ash enjoys playing rugby and tramping, so being situated in Dannevirke feeds well into his love for the great outdoors with the Kawekas, Tararua and Ruahine Ranges just a stone's throw away for those weekend expeditions.

**Ash is looking forward to getting out and meeting you all and with spring just around the corner I'm sure it won't be long before he crosses your path!**

## "Dirty" cows

Leisa Norris

"Dirty" is a term used to describe cows that have endometritis, an internal infection of the uterus, which most commonly develops following calving.

Endometritis generally affects 10-20% of a herd (average 17%) and leads to poorer reproductive outcomes, including reduced submission rates (take longer to cycle), reduced conception (higher number of empties) and six week in-calf rates. The bacteria, pus and inflammation associated with the infection impacts overall cow health and welfare and, by negatively impacting on the next season's mating, will also cost you financially.

Endometritis can occur in any cow but some are at greater risk (hence the term "at-risk"! ) than others. The at-risk group includes those that have had an assisted calving/twins/retained foetal membranes, calved prematurely and/or aborted, were induced/sick/down, or are skinny (less than condition score three). Needless to say (but SO critical that I'm going to say it anyway!) identification of these cows therefore requires excellent record keeping!

However, unfortunately the at-risk group are not the end of the story as up to two thirds of cows with endometritis may be outside of this group. Metrichecking (using a metricheck device to detect pus within the vagina) is a convenient and efficient system used to detect infected cows in a herd.



The timing of metrichecking is crucial – three to four weeks following calving is optimal. If done too early (less than two weeks after calving) we may treat infections which are on the way to self-resolving. If done too late (greater than four weeks after calving) the cervix closes and pus may not be detected in the vagina despite infection being present in the uterus. Consequently cows need to be metrichecked in "batches". A straightforward approach to easily identify each batch is to tail paint all cows post-calving with a particular paint colour – one colour for the first four weeks of the calving period, then a different colour the next four weeks and so on.

Ideally this approach to metrichecking would be applied to the whole herd but, if this is not a viable option for you, there are alternate approaches that can be employed. Once cows with endometritis have been identified an antibiotic is infused through the cervix to treat the infection. Ideally treated cows are rechecked three weeks later to ensure treatment has been successful.

**So, consider the effect "dirty" cows might have on your herd and discuss the pros and cons of potential management plans with your vet to work out the most suitable approach for you.**

# Looking ahead

Potential animal health issues, tasks to consider and reminders for **July** include...

## DAIRY

**Spring is springing!** Preparing well for the busy months ahead will go a long way to ensure things go as smoothly as possible.

- **Gather the team** – hold a team meeting to ensure everyone is on the same page. Include discussion on how to approach an assisted calving (**article P3**), the importance of excellent record keeping, and agree on a management plan for at-risk cows (**article P1**).
- **Calving preparation** – organise, check and clean calving gear. Stock up on disinfectant, lube, metabolics, starter drenches etc so they are on-hand should they be needed.
- **Transition management** – the three weeks prior to calving are a critical time in the preparation for the lactation ahead. Ensure that you have a structured transition plan in place, particularly in regards to magnesium supplementation, and keep a good eye on cow condition.
- **Calf management** – shed preparation should be complete and they should be clean and ready to be populated. As part of your team meeting set clear expectations around calf collection and colostrum management, ensure those concerned

# Feeding ewes over winter

Hamish Pike

Having ewes in good body condition in the autumn, means that body condition can be more easily maintained over the winter without compromising production the following spring.

**In winter the main two considerations are:**

1. Allocating feed so available feed (including supplements) meets animal demand until the spring flush.
1. Maintaining a ewe body condition score of three until lambing (especially in last four to six weeks) and avoid under or over-feeding to reduce the risk of sleepy sickness, milk fever or bearings prior to lambing.

**Feed budgeting** will predict feed deficits (or surpluses) in advance which in turn will allow you to respond by means of feed conservation or purchase of more feed, cropping or nitrogen application. In doing this, solutions to match your feed supply with animal demand can be found. The aim of a feed budget is to maintain pasture covers at around 1000-2500kg DM/ha so that ideal pasture quality, and hence optimal animal performance, is achieved.

**Energy requirements** in the first 100 days of pregnancy are similar to that of a dry ewe being fed to maintenance. Now is a good time to be identifying lighter body



conditioned ewes (especially those carrying multiples) and prioritising their feeding. The lighter ewes will need to be shifted before post-grazing covers drop below 1000kg DM/ha (2cm sward height).

Over winter aim to have the ewe flock going onto pre-grazing pasture covers of 1000-1200kg DM/ha (minimum 2-3cm sward height) and leaving post-grazing covers of around 800kg DM/ha. It is important however that you limit the time that ewes are grazing below 800kg DM/ha (1cm sward height). This will also allow pastures to recover in time for the next grazing.

Ewes can be restricted to a maintenance diet (or lower for short spells) until later in pregnancy. If there is a need to save feed for late pregnancy, ewes can be fed sub-maintenance until four to six weeks prior to lambing. Up to a nine kilogram loss (unless ewes are already light) can be tolerated without detrimental effects on ewe survival, barrenness, twinning rate, lamb birth weight, lamb survival, ewe milk yields and weaning weights. However, ewes (especially those carrying multiples) **must not lose body condition 35 days out from lambing.**

About 80% of lamb growth occurs in the last 50 days and hence the ewe's energy requirements increase by 150-200% of maintenance requirements at this time. However, in reality, ewes in late pregnancy will seldom be able to eat enough to meet their total requirements. Some degree of under-nutrition at this stage can be tolerated without lowering birth weights, but **sudden restrictions must be avoided.** Provision of high quality feed is essential during this time.

Normal practice is to set stock ewes one to two weeks before lambing but, where pasture covers and growth rates are low, it is better to wait as long as possible before set stocking the ewes. This will avoid ewes with lambs at foot running out of feed in the first month when the ewe's feed requirements are at their peak.

**If you have questions or would like further advice then give your vet a call.**

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are up to speed with the new regulations regarding bobby calves, particularly in regards to their transportation, and plan your approach to disbudding – **article P4.**

## SHEEP and BEEF

- **Winter ewe management** – monitor body condition score of ewes as winter progresses as if they're under or over-conditioned there may be problems come lambing time – **article P2.** Consider mid-winter shearing and plan for pre-lamb vaccinations.

- **Iodine supplementation** – preventative treatment of ewes is best given at eight and four weeks pre-lambing if not having been done earlier. Have a discussion with your vet as to which option (e.g. oral potassium iodide or iodine injection) would best suit you and your flock.

## EQUINE

- **Wet weather** – now is the prime time for foot abscesses so keep an eye out for any signs of lameness and act quickly if a problem is detected. Wet conditions can

also result in skin infections/irritations so, again, seek help sooner rather than later as, if caught early, most conditions are cheaply and easily treated.

- **Clipping** – to save your horse's summer coat aim to clip by start of August.
- **If out-of-sight ensure not out-of-mind!** Monitor turned out horses regularly, including removal of rugs, to check for lice and also to keep an eye on body condition and/or any other problems such as cover rubs.

# Calving tips

Juan Klue

Spring calving is upon us so it is timely for a quick refresher on the basic approach to an assisted calving. Following the steps below may save you, the cow and the calf some time, energy and pain.

Regardless of if the calf is showing or not, follow the steps below:

### STEP ONE

Assess the demeanour of the cow. If she is obviously ill with sunken eyes or if she is down in the paddock then call the vet. Their examination will provide vital information and allow a likely prognosis to be given that will assist in your decision on whether to treat her or not.

### STEP TWO

Clean the back end of the cow AND your hands/arms. Use plenty of lube (both into the vagina and on your arms/hands). Ideally wear long sleeved gloves to protect yourself against any potential infections, such as leptospirosis, through broken skin.

### STEP THREE

Examine the vagina and see if it feels normal. If you are unsure and/or you identify a tear, or a twist is suspected, then vet assistance is required. If what you are feeling is uncertain then do NOT spend too much time (NOT more than 10 minutes) trying to figure it

out as this can cause trauma to the vagina which leads to bruising/swelling of the tissue, making a subsequent vaginal delivery a lot more difficult.

### STEP FOUR

Examine the cervix. How open is it and do you think you can pull a calf through the space presented? If you're unsure call the vet.

### STEP FIVE

Determine if the calf is alive by gently seeing if it reacts to:

- Your finger in its mouth
- Pinching it between the toes
- Applying gentle pressure on its eye

Response by the calf to any of the above indicates the calf is alive so continue to calve the cow and be careful with chain/rope placement around head and feet so as not to cause injury. If there is no response to any of the above the calf may have died.

### STEP SIX

How is the calf presented? **Make sure you know what you have before you pull!** You need two front legs and head OR two hind legs – if you have you have no idea what you are feeling CALL the VET as potential presentations are many and varied.

### STEP SEVEN

Will it fit through the pelvis? This is a judgement call that gets easier with experience but points to remember are:

- Feet and head must fit in the pelvis at same time – don't pull if it won't fit!



- For traction, use pulley or calving jack – do NOT use uncontrolled force (i.e. tractor, bike)
- Risk of calving paralysis rises with increased duration of calving

Lastly, but most importantly, remember the **TEN MINUTE RULE!** It applies to all stages of the process but particularly for pulling - **more than 10 minutes is taking too long so call your vet if:**

- **No progress** in 10 minutes
- **Very slow progress** in 10 minutes
- **Not ready to pull** in 10 minutes

**Hopefully these tips are of some help, and remember, we are here to support both you and your cow(s) if you need us!**



# Disbudding

Mark Eames

Horned cattle are dangerous to other cattle, as well as people, especially when they are confined during mustering, yarding and transport. For this reason, if cattle are not naturally polled, disbudding or dehorning should be carried out.

Disbudding is the process of removal of the horn bud, before it attaches to the bone of the skull, and is preferable to dehorning which involves a much more invasive and unpleasant amputation procedure.

Therefore, in the vast majority of horned cattle, we recommend disbudding at between two and six weeks of age. The New Zealand (NZ) Veterinary Association has written a set of guidelines that matches Tararua Vets aspirations.

- Disbudding and dehorning should only be performed after effective "blocking" of the cornual nerve with local anaesthetic.
- Disbudding should be carried out between two and six weeks of age.
- Disbudding using the cautery iron is the recommended method.
- All calves should be observed for a period of two weeks after disbudding to detect any which become infected.
- As well as local anaesthesia, appropriate long acting analgesia should be given at the time of disbudding and dehorning.

While these guidelines go further than the minimum requirements set out in the Animal Welfare Act 1999, Animal Welfare (Painful Husbandry Procedures) Code of Welfare 2005 ([www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/animal-welfare/codes-of-welfare/](http://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/animal-welfare/codes-of-welfare/)), we believe that farmers should consider the best possible standards of welfare for their animals. Be aware that the minimum requirements of the code do stipulate that dehorning of animals over nine months old must be performed with pain relief.

At Tararua Vets our preferred method of disbudding involves general anaesthetic (as well as local) which makes the job much less stressful on the animals and handlers. It also provides a perfect opportunity for other animal health procedures such as vaccination (excellent timing for initial shot against leptospirosis and clostridial diseases), ear tagging, DNA test sampling, detecting and removing extra teats, castration and hernia treatment.

**Call your clinic now to book in your first batch of spring calves!**

**Did you know that endometritis cows don't self cure?**

Identify your cows and book in your first batch for metrichecking now!

 Assisted calvings	 Dead calves/ stillbirths
 Retained membranes	 Vaginal discharge
 Down cows	




**Did you know we offer minimal stress, pain free calf disbudding?**



Book in with your nearest clinic now to make sure you don't miss out on your window\* of opportunity!

Local anaesthetic is administered and anti-inflammatory/pain relief can be provided post disbudding on request.

Other tasks that can be undertaken include:

- extra teat removal
- non-surgical hernia repair
- 7-in-1 vaccinations
- tagging

\*If calves are dehorned by us between 4-8 weeks of age and horns regrow we will revisit at no extra cost to you.

