

What's Up Doc?

By Jackie Davies

The season is shaping up well so far. Last year's great mating period, plus good body conditions at the beginning of calving, has led to some production being at record levels for this time of year, and the mating period is also going well.

Calf scours in the older calves are starting up, and mastitis problems are causing issues on some farms, but otherwise cow health is generally great.

Many farms will have had their BVD bulk tank results back, and if they are sitting at similar levels to previous years, there is usually little to be concerned about. So, why should you continue doing it?

BVD stands for Bovine Viral Diarrhoea and it is caused by a virus. It can lead to major issues when naive cows suddenly encounter the virus during mating, or while pregnant; causing a variety of problems, including abortions,

and early embryonic loss. This is seen as long returns to heat, and high empty rates at scanning.

The major risks are, therefore, when it is introduced to the herd just prior to mating, or in the mating period. This is usually through a P.I. (persistently infected) heifer or bought-in cow, or the bulls spreading it around.

The bulk tank test is designed to catch any new P.I.'s in the herd by testing all cows, after they have calved, using a milk sample taken from the vat. Hopefully everyone remembers to check for a certificate that your bulls have been blood tested and vaccinated for BVD.

If there has been a change in your BVD status, or you are unsure of what your results mean, please have a discussion with your vet.

If the weather remains relatively kind,

What's happening on-farm?

- ✔ Mating continues
- ✔ Bulls in
- ✔ Calf vaccinations
- ✔ Trace elements in calves

and if we can keep the grass quality up, we may have a fantastic season! It could be a good opportunity to find an animal health area to work on, such as great calf growth rates, lowering bulk tank somatic cell counts and mastitis levels, or culling for poor hoof conformation or Johne's disease.

A look at internal parasites

By Jackie Davies

Internal parasites take up some time and energy to manage in calves and cattle, so here is a little bit of information to help you understand what you are treating.

In general, worm larvae are swallowed from contaminated pasture once calves start grazing it. The larvae have overwintered in the pasture or cowpats,

from the previous cattle/calves on the pasture. They then complete their lifecycle inside the calf, either in the gastrointestinal tract, or, in the case of lungworm, they burrow into the body and let the blood carry them around to the lungs.

Depending on the type of worm, the lifecycle may take about 28 days, from

egg to egg-laying adult. They lay from 100 to 1000's of eggs per day, which means the larval challenge increases rapidly once the young animals are exposed by grazing the pasture. The high challenge can cause clinical disease – often seen as lack of weight gain, diarrhoea, or, in the case of lungworm, coughing.



There are four main internal parasites in cattle that cause problems in this area:

1. *Ostertagia ostertagia*

This causes two types of disease. Primary Ostertagiosis occurs due to adult worms in the stomach causing disease. Cattle usually develop resistance to it by 15 months old, but, during the autumn and winter, changes in the diet make the immature worms burrow into the stomach wall and hibernate. When spring comes, a sudden change in diet to lush grass can cause these worms to all break out of the stomach wall at the same time, and if there are a few thousand of them, they can cause type 2 Ostertagiosis.

The 'mectin-family type drenches are effective at treating *Ostertagia*, and an early winter and early spring drench is usually enough to prevent type 2 Ostertagiosis.

2. *Cooperia onchophora*

Ostertagia Cooperia never used to be thought of as a problem, as large numbers of worms can be present with no visible effect. However, it can and does cause disease, because it is mostly resistant to the 'mectin-family drenches. Calves usually develop resistance to it by 12 months old.

3. *Trichostrongylus axei*

Trichostrongylus, which live in the fourth stomach and small intestine, often causes disease later in the autumn or winter. It can burrow into the stomach lining, causing irritation.

4. *Dictyocaulus viviparus* (also known as lungworm)

Lungworm usually causes disease 2-3 weeks after infection. Shallow, rattly breathing and coughing may be seen. Infectious pneumonia may also be seen secondary to it.

Drenching

The method of drenching can affect its efficacy. Pour-on drenches have the most variability in absorption due to the conditions of the skin and coat. Mud, rain, and thickened skin can all reduce how much drench is absorbed.

Oral drenches must be given as a drench (there are reports of people adding it to the milk for calves). If it is added to milk to be fed, the sucking reflex means it goes to the fourth stomach instead of the rumen, which can increase the risk of toxicity. Plus, the dose cannot be controlled, so there is a greater chance of under - or overdosing and toxicity.

Our recommendations for drenches are as follows:

Turbo Intitial is the oral drench recommended for the first drench of calves, as it is a double-action (*Eprinomectin* and *Levamisole*), plus it has *Diclazuril* to aid in controlling *coccidia*, which the calves are also getting infected with while grazing pasture for the first time.



Calves develop immunity to *coccidia* faster than they do to worms, so it is only recommended for the first drench, unless there is a *coccidia* issue known on your farm.

During summer, a change to **Turbo Advance** is a little more cost effective than continuing with the Turbo Initial, with the same double-action oral drench.



Once the calves are larger in the autumn, and following spring, we recommend a change to **Turbo pour-on**, which still contains the same double-action ingredients to ensure both 'mectin-resistant *Cooperia* and overwintered *Ostertagia* are treated for.



Turbo triple mini-dose is a triple-action drench that can be used for a quarantine drench, or where drench resistance is known or suspected.

If you do suspect drench resistance, have a chat with your vet to create a management plan.

Introducing your enhanced dairy team

We're excited to announce the addition of two highly knowledgeable dairy veterinarians to our team!

This means our skilled team is now even stronger, ready to support you with greater capability and expertise. Boasting well over 60 years of combined experience, our five seasoned dairy vets have a lot of cow know-how and are committed to your success.



Dr Richard Mason

Our seasoned veteran, Richard has 30 years of experience with us. He knows the people, the land, and, most importantly, the animals. Clients often say that having him on their farm feels like having a trusted friend by their side.



Dr Jackie Davies

A key team member, Jackie has been a cornerstone of our clinic. She boasts over 20 years of experience, primarily in NZ, but also in the UK. She thrives on diverse challenges and is passionate about delivering top-notch care for her clients.





Weaning tips

By Oscar Porras

Weaning your calves based on weight and meal intake ensures their successful transition towards becoming healthy heifers.

To meet their weaning weights, calves need the appropriate amount of feed and to be properly prepped.

Weaning can be quite a challenging, transitional time for calves since their main source of food changes from liquid (milk) to solid (pasture) and they are going to be exposed to new bugs when they go into new areas of the farm.

Before weaning, some factors need to be considered:

- Is the calf eating enough?
- Has its rumen developed properly?
- Is it meeting its weight targets?
- Is it the right age?
- Is it able to compete with the other calves?

Rumen development is the most important aspect to consider when weaning calves. The rumen must not be rushed when transitioning the calf from a milk-based diet to a full pasture diet.

Allotting at least a 2-week gap between the diet change, with a gradual or stepwise process of removing milk slowly, allows the rumen to adjust to the change in feed. Always monitor calf behaviour



Dr Gus Condie

New to our clinic, Gus has 17 years of vet experience from the UK and NZ. Now dairy farming himself in the district, he understands the job from a farmer's perspective. He is dedicated to helping his clients optimise their farming systems.



Dr Alvin Stanley

Recently joining us, Alvin has four seasons of experience as a dairy vet and is enthusiastic about supporting dairy farmers. Trained in Ireland, he brings great expertise and capability – which we're sure will be welcomed by his clients.



Dr Oscar Porras

Brimming with knowledge, Oscar graduated from Massey Uni in 2022. With the latest industry learnings and two years of hands-on experience under his belt with us, he has built strong client relationships and delivers exceptional vet care.

and meal intake and identify calves that may be struggling.

If meal has been a part of their calf diet, continue to give this for at least another 2 weeks after weaning from milk to reduce growth checks while their rumens are adapting to the high pasture intake.

Weaning weights

Replacement calves should meet a minimum weight before they are weaned. Each farm will have a different target weaning weight, which will be dependent on what type of rearing system is being run.

Minimum weaning weights are:

- 70kg for Jerseys;
- 80kg for Friesian X Jerseys;
- 90kg for Friesians.

However, heavier weaning weights will translate to better grown heifers. It is recommended to weigh the calves again 1-2 weeks after weaning to make sure they have gained weight since being transitioned. If they are still struggling, continue to offer meal.

Other things to consider

Pre-weaning drench – as calves start to go into the paddocks, they are likely to come into contact with new worms and bugs. Drenching them before starting the weaning process will ensure they do not get overwhelmed by these new parasites. We recommend Turbo Initial, as this not only has a novel active ingredient, but it also contains a coccidiostat which will help protect them against coccidiosis, which is common during this transition period.

Trace element supplementation – calves will be undergoing a lot of stress at weaning, with the change in diet, change in environment, and change in groupings. We recommend an injection of Multimint, pre-weaning, as this will not only keep them up to date with their trace element levels, (especially copper, which helps with growth and development), but also boosts their immune system to cope with the transition.

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