Cambridge Veterinary Services (2023) Ltd

(07) 827 7099

www.cambridgevets.co.nz

Welcome to our Christmas Newsletter of 2025!

Important Notes:

December Closures

Although the Clinic doors will be closed for a few days over the Christmas and New Year period, we do have duty Farm / Production Animal Vets rostered for urgent or emergency rural call outs.

Please phone the normal number (07) 8277099 for assistance.

Scanning

With the start of Summer officially upon us, it will be vital to identify your empties and late calvers so excess stock are not being carried in a feed pinch. Scanning is a quick, cheap way of getting this data. Timing is critical though – we recommend scanning at 6 weeks after the end of mating to get as accurate date as possible.

Lepto

A Massey University study showed the importance of vaccinating calves early against Lepto as it significantly reduced the % of animals harboring and shedding the bacteria. Phone us if you still need to get yours done.

Spontaneous Fractures of the Humerus - More research!

Broken shoulders in heifers continues to be an occasional but frustrating cause of loss of 1st calvers. 4500 heifers a year have been estimated to suffer from this spontaneous breaks, mostly seen around calving or in peak lactation..

Matt O' Sullivan recently did a great review of the research, and some rumination on what has changed in the farming systems that may have led to the onset of these cases since 2007 (although I saw one in North Waikato in 2003): 81% of the other (non- fractured) humerus of animals with fractures had osteoporosis – reduced bone mass, mineral content and bone matrix. This was associated with decreased bone formation and increased resorption.

The low copper levels in blood and livers sometimes seen with fractures are probably the result of the body trying to strengthen weak bones (by cross-linking collagen). Copper is released from these stores and deposited in the bone instead.

High fluoride levels in the bone have been seen and this may be associated with reduced bone strength….High intakes of fluoride via soil may occur by grazing muddy winter crops.

The Calcium: phosphate ratio is critical for bone health, and it is possible there is an imbalance in the Ca:P ratio or a deficiency of calcium in the diet around calving and peak lactation.

Too much magnesium may have a negative effect on bone strength by inhibiting hydroxyapatite crystals. Heifers are at very low risk of milk fever, but generally get the same amount of magnesium supplementation as older cows.

Increased milk production may have outpaced calcium intake / supplementation. This may be one factor for those fractures in peak lactation.

In-line water dispensers for magnesium have become more common, and mag chloride and mag sulphate are more in use. This will drop blood pH causing the kidneys to excrete more calcium and the bones to release more calcium.

Olsen P levels in soils have increased since the 90s due to higher SPP application, leading to higher P levels in pasture / crops. SPP fertilisers will also raise the F levels in the topsoil.

Low Soil pH reduces the availability of calcium to plants. Are we seeing this?

In-shed supplements means more of the diet contains grains, maize silage, PKE, which may alter the calcium and Phos rations.

Low Ca:P ratios are often seen in the diet (fodder beet, pasture, maize silage, PKE, wheat and barley can all be low).

If you see any cases, let us know, it would be useful to discuss management strategies.

Worms - Cattle and Sheep

Worms do love a warm, moist climate! There will be a significant challenge for youngstock at the time of writing. Here are a few bullet point reminders on the subject:

- We need to balance animal health (drenching when necessary) with minimizing anthelmintic resistance (we can't fix worms if the products don't work!) A worm burden can cause reduced weight gain/loss, scours, flystrike and even death
- Adult ruminants rarely need drenching
- Worm burden can be reduced with good management:
- Appropriate stocking rate
- Stock rotation (adult ruminants will reduce worm burden, grazing other species will reduce worm burden, running youngstock only will make it a challenge)
- Worm burden can be monitored by dropping off some faecal samples into the clinic for a faecal egg count. You can save money and hassle by not drenching unnecessarily.
- Drench efficacy can be checked with faecal egg counts 10 days afterwards
- Consider not drenching the best 10% of the mob to provide refugia (worms that have not been drenched will dilute and compete with any resistant survivors)
- Do not put drenched animals onto "clean pasture" as any resistant worms will then dominate
- Silage aftermath should be low risk for worms, so drenching intervals may be extended
- Do not drench unnecessarily
- Ensure the dose rate is correct – weigh some of the mob
- Ensure the gun is delivering the correct volume by squeezing 10 shots into a measuring jug
- Product choice - Discuss which products are best to use with which stock at what time of year with our staff in clinic

Sheep - *Mating Vaccines*

Toxovax

Toxoplasmosis never goes away and has been shown to be present on every sheep farm in New Zealand. One shot of Toxovax gives your ewes a lifetime of protection against the devastating abortion storms Toxoplasmosis can cause.

Vaccination can increase lamb numbers by an average of 3% as well as decreasing the number of dry ewes by 14% on average.

Ewe hoggets and two tooths are most at risk, but any susceptible ewe that contracts Toxoplasmosis during pregnancy is at risk.

Infection causes:
¨At early gestation – embryonic loss or reabsorption¨ Mid gestation – fetal death, mummification and abortion ¨ Late gestation – birth of weak, non-viable lambs.

The life cycle of Toxoplasmosis involves wild birds and rodents who have cysts in their muscle and are then eaten by cats. Cats then pass out the infective stage of the life cycle directly onto pasture or hay via faeces.

Sheep grazing on this contaminated pasture or hay can pick up the disease, and if this occurs for the first time during pregnancy, abortions can occur. Often the farmer sees a reduced scanning percentage and a lot of late or dry ewes. Abortions are not always seen.

Toxovax is a live vaccine, has a short shelf life and is made to order. Please order your Toxovax from us at least four weeks before you need to use it, which should be at least 4 weeks before mating, to ensure supply.

Campyvax

Campyvax equires a booster pre-tupping and a sensitizer 4-8 weeks earlier for ewe lambs Vaccinating with Campyvax® improves lambing performance and prevention of Campylobacter abortions. Flocks that are vaccinated have lambing percentages on average 9% higher than flocks that are not. Vaccination should happen 4-8 weeks prior to mating. Hoggets need a sensitizer dose 4 weeks before this shot (ie 8-12 weeks before mating).

- Campylobacter is present on 88% of New Zealand farms.
- Maiden Ewes hoggets or two tooths are most at risk but mixed age ewes who have not been previously exposed (up to 50%) are still at risk too.
- It is the most common infectious agent causing abortion on New Zealand farms, with 60% of sheep abortions diagnosed attributed to Campylobacter.
- Occurs when susceptible animals ingest contaminated feed or water, or by direct contact with infected fetuses or fetal membranes. Scavenging birds such as the Black Backed Gull may spread the disease between paddocks and even farms.
- After infection, the organism is present in discharges for up to six weeks, with some ewes becoming longer-term carriers.
- Infection can persist for a number of years in carrier sheep without overt signs of disease.
- Signs are not just aborted lambs, there may be reduced scanning and lambing percentages too.

Facial Eczema

Every year we see cases of FE, where the animal is losing weight or is showing skin signs. Pithomyces chartarum is a fungus in the pasture whose toxin sporidesmin poisons the biliary tract of the liver in deer, cattle, alpaca and sheep. This may be obvious and seen as red peeling skin and photosensitivity as the chlorophyll cannot be processed, or it may just be vague sick weight loss signs. You can also get redwater as the red blood cells break down.

Unfortunately there is no great treatment.

- Provide shade
- Manderson's Mixture
- Vitamins
- Zinc cream

So prevention is the best option.

Interestingly chicory, plantain, legumes and tall fescue are less prone to Pithomyces, but zinc is the mainstay of prevention.

We generally see spores rising in February to peak in March and continuing past April.

Drop off grass samples at the clinic and we can do a spore count to see the risk profile on your farm. We publish these on our Facebook and website, so keep an eye on these for your area trend.
If you are using zinc in the water to protect against Facial Eczema, you may need to start at half rates in the new year. We find adding flavouring helps mask the bitter taste, either aniseed or apple.
Zinc levels need to be in the Goldilocks zone – high enough to protect the liver from the oxidative damage cause by sporidesmin, but not so high as to cause poisoning which damages the pancreas and causes the animal to look sick, potentially with redwater, and fade away.

Check your dose rates carefully—check out our website:
https://www.cambridgevets.co.nz/farm-animal-services

You can call us to take some blood samples to confirm zinc levels are right in the animal.

Options for zinc administration are:

- Zinc oxide in the feed or drench
- Zinc sulphate in the water
- Zinc bolus e.g. Time Capsule, FaceGuard (cattle, sheep) – these last 4-6 weeks depending on brand, so mark on your calendar when the next one is due!

An alternative is spraying paddocks with fungicide e.g. Mycotak, this needs to be done before the spore count rises.

Mo-Vember

Well done to Becs for organizing our Movember fundraiser. Our community raised over $2100, mostly to get rid of the facial fuzz on display! This will be donated to Men's Health, so thanks to all donors!

Farewell

At the end of November we said farewell to one of our Production/Farm Animal Vets Patrick Taylor. We wish him all the best in his next chapter.

Facebook

Did you know that Cambridge Vets are on Facebook? We have a page for both the Companion Animal and the Production Animal Departments. Follow our pages for topical news, offers and clinic Newsletters:

Cambridge Vets Page

Cambridge Vets Farm Services Page

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