



The Vet Centre

P.O. Box 16, Maungaturoto 0547
(Trading name of Otamatea Veterinary Club Inc.)

HURNDALL ST, MAUNGATUROTO
PH 0-9-431 8318 - FAX 0-9-431 8554
MAIN ROAD, WAIPU
PH 0-9-432 0693 - FAX 0-9-432 0626
JELICOE STREET, RUAWAI
PH 0-9-439 2506 - FAX 0-9-439 2504
MOIR STREET, MANGAWHAI
PH 0-9-431 4535 - FAX 0-9-431 4532

A note from Sandy

June 2017

When members receive this newsletter the 2016/17 financial year will have been completed. I am pleased to report that the result both sales and profit wise, although not finalised, will be considerably improved on last year and significantly above budget. I remind members that profit is not the main business driver for the Club, but in reality we need profit to maintain the business, more importantly we need profit to develop and grow the business.

I admit that at times the balancing act between striving for profit and delivering services and product at reasonable prices is difficult. We are happy to receive constructive criticism or suggestions for improvement in our business practices, so please do not hesitate to convey your thoughts to me direct or the support staff at your clinics.

June will be an exciting month for the Club as we will be engaging the services of a Sales and Membership Field Representative. Shannon Patterson will commence work for the Club in this role on the 12th June. Shannon has a successful history in the rural sector and her merchandising experience and knowledge will be invaluable in assisting the Club to increase its presence in our region.

There are a couple of delicate issues to communicate to members, firstly the matter of Lepto vaccinations which must be current, especially in the case of dairy farmers. This has been a Club requirement for a long time and lately we are reviewing the status of all farms lepto vaccinating regimes. It appears that some are either not current or are sourcing vaccine from elsewhere, that being the case we still require certification that farms are compliant. Where farmers are not sourcing their lepto from the Club but are using our vets we require their lepto certification to be displayed.

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This is not a case of someone being precious, this is an integral part of the Club's health and safety policy as it should be on farm as well. The wellbeing of both farm and Club staff is really important to us, so please give this serious consideration. Of late there have been several articles in farming magazines highlighting the danger of lepto and also indicating the likely charges being brought against farming operations that are not compliant with a recognised lepto vaccination regime.

Another issue that infrequently raises its head is the matter of 'online vets'. The Vet Centre is a pretty finely tuned business and as such the viability of the business is reliant on a combination of income generated from both product and services. It is no secret that profit generated from product sales subsidises the cost of services. The Club faces a dilemma where a couple of members seek the cheapest one off deals but still expect the comprehensive service the Club offers, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The parties selling these products, particularly script items, are operating close to the line from a legal perspective. It is my opinion that if the guidelines provided by the NZVC are valid then the sale of prescription lines by these parties is in fact illegal. The vets selling such product have a greater duty of care than just writing a script and delivering the product on farm. I will leave this topic for now to allow a couple of our members to dwell on the same but wish to conclude my rant on this matter by thanking the many very loyal members of the Club.

THINGS TO DO

THIS MONTH:

*Vaccinate cows and
heifers against
Rotavirus*

*Check herd for signs
of post dryseal mastitis*

*Prepare calf rearing
facilities*

*Mineral profile blood
tests*

*Drench and copper
young stock*

Calf Rearing Seminar 6:30 20th Tuesday June; do not forget to RSVP by the 9th June. We are restricted as to numbers so do not leave your registration too late as it is filling fast. This evening is being sponsored by our suppliers but the presentations will be undertaken purely by our vets.

Until next month
Sandy

Colostrum Management

By Michelle Stodart BVSc

Calves rely on absorbing antibodies from colostrum to provide protection until their own immune system is up and functioning. Early feeding of good quality first milking colostrum is essential to give calves the best opportunity to absorb antibodies.

A calf's ability to absorb antibodies decreases with time and is virtually lost by 24 hours after birth.

Calves need to be fed 10-15% of their bodyweight in colostrum and ideally receive this in the first 6-12 hours of life. Therefore a 40kg calf will need a minimum of 4L of colostrum given in 2x 2L feeds. Twice daily pick-up of calves is needed to ensure colostrum is given early enough, as calves left on cows do not generally drink enough colostrum to give adequate antibody levels.

Good quality colostrum needs to be fed, so this is colostrum that has high levels of antibodies, specifically IgG and also contain low levels of bacteria. IgG levels can be measured using a Brix refractometer - good quality colostrum measures at least 22%. Colostrum also needs to have low levels of bacteria especially coliforms, as high bacterial levels in colostrum can interfere with IgG absorption by the calf. Antibody levels in the colostrum decrease in the udder once a cow has calved and also when colostrum is stored. To preserve antibody levels colostrum needs to be collected quickly from the cow after calving and fed fresh to calves, otherwise refrigerated or preserved with potassium sorbate added to retain antibody levels and also prevent bacterial multiplication.



Collection and storage containers need to be washed with hot water and detergent and scrubbed after each use to remove fatty residues and reduce bacterial counts.

First milking colostrum should be sourced from healthy cows. Older cows (6 years and up) have higher levels of antibodies in their colostrum compared with heifers so are a better source of quality colostrum for calves. Cows producing less

than 8 litres of colostrum at their first milking also usually produce colostrum containing higher levels of antibodies. Vaccinating cows pre-calving with scour vaccines produces an increase in the antibodies present in the colostrum in all ages of animals including heifers.

Cows producing colostrum containing blood (pink colostrum) should not have their colostrum fed to calves or stored as blood is a great nutrient for bacteria.

Calves which do not receive adequate amounts of good quality colostrum early enough have failure of passive transfer (FPT) which makes them less able to defend against disease and are four times more likely to die. They also have reduced growth rates, poorer feed conversion ratios, have higher rates of scouring and produce less milk in their first lactation. IgG blood levels of calves can be measured on farm using a Brix refractometer in at least 12 healthy calves up to a week old to assess the level of FPT on a farm.

Unfortunately New Zealand studies have shown that a large numbers of calves have had insufficient amounts of colostrum and therefore received insufficient levels of antibodies.

Colostrum management is the single most important factor in improving calf health.



SUMMARY

Give colostrum to calves

- Quickly – in first 6-12 hours (milk cow and feed calf ASAP post calving)
- Quantity – 10-15% of calf's bodyweight
- Quality – first milking only (gold colostrum) with low bacterial counts

- Select first milking colostrum from cows milked soon after calving, preferably older cows producing less than 8 litres at their first milking

- Ensure all equipment and storage containers are secure and cleaned after every use

- Feed colostrum fresh and at body temperature within 12 hours of collection or refrigerate or preserve with potassium sorbate

- Brix value of first milking colostrum for newborn calves = 22% or higher

- We can check the prevalence of failure of passive transfer on farm by testing the IgG levels in the blood of at least 12 healthy calves (0-7 days of age) with a Brix refractometer.

Optimising your calf growth with Optiguard

By Erin Grundy BSc (Hons) BVSc (dist)

Spring calving is on the horizon and with that comes calf rearing. If everything goes according to plan there will be no scours. If you're reading this thinking "what plan?" contact your local vet centre about the upcoming calf rearing seminar or have a chat with a vet about what you can do to help mitigate calf scours.

If part of your plan was to use bentonite in its powdered state as a preventative then you might be thinking you are out of luck this year, but have no fear as a new veterinary-only product is out on the shelves of your local Vet Centre branch, called Optiguard. This is available in the highly palatable powdered form.



Optiguard is an aluminosilicate mineral compound found in lava rock deposits in the Taupo volcanic zone that acts as an absorbent in the digestive tract. The compound has a very fine particle size but has microscopically small pores resulting in a larger functional surface area. The total surface area of the particle is so great that just four tablespoons has enough total absorptive surface area to cover a rugby field. This surface-gut interface allows for faster and better absorption of water, slowing the digesta down through the intestines.

The slow movement through the guts allows for better uptake of the all-important colostrum antibodies and other nutrients in the feed and drier faeces in the end; it can also absorb and release minerals helping maintain the electrolyte balance.

There is also evidence showing that Optiguard can bind with bovine rotavirus and other bacterial toxins lessening the damage and impact from rotavirus and other types of scours.

Optiguard can be fed as a set amount every day at 1 gram per kg of bodyweight. It can be mixed in with the colostrum, milk or calf meal or it can be fed continuously ad lib.



Since it is a mineral, calves generally will only eat what they need so there is no worry about overdosing. Most farmers have said their calves like it and they have grown to weight quickly and have weaned earlier.

Optiguard is also a BioGro certified input for organic farms. This product is now available at The Vet Centre so contact your local branch for more information if this sounds like a product you could use on your farm.

Lepto Vaccinations

Lepto is a topical matter currently with several articles in farming magazines highlighting the dangers and the responsibility of employers to protect staff and contractors on farm. There are in fact a couple of prosecutions being pursued by Work Safe NZ. The Club has always actively advocated lepto vaccinations being undertaken on farm. Dairy farmers in particular are encouraged to vaccinate their herds as both farm employees and Vet Club staff are more exposed to risk on dairy farms than other less intensive farming regimes.

The Club recognises zoonosis (animal borne disease) as a potential hazard and as a consequence such risks are identified in the Club's Health and Safety Hazard Register. Lepto is the most common of these diseases and as such the Executive Committee and Management must show genuine intent to minimise the exposure to staff of this serious disease.

Our members must similarly share this responsibility. If farms are not current with their vaccination regime then the Club must consider either not attending calls or implementing a surcharge to cover the increased costs of mitigating possible risk.

Thanks for giving this serious matter your genuine consideration.

Sandy

Works Cert - Why are vets so picky!

By Nena Nepia BVSc

Throughout the year vets are asked to assess and certify cattle as fit for transport to the meatworks. It's a job that causes some trepidation on the vet's behalf because the outcome is not always what the farmer wanted and is potentially a significant loss of income for them, and at times has resulted in some heated discussion.

As a vet, the primary role for certification is ensuring the debilitated animal can be transported free from pain and distress and arrive in the same condition as when it left the farm. Alongside this, vets are also required to be aware of conditions that would make the animal unfit for human consumption and should avoid certifying such animals as they would be rejected at the meatworks.

Here are the most common conditions we are asked to certify that we simply can't;

We are frequently asked to certify large bulls or steers that have had an obvious limb fracture. The actual break often occurred a year or so prior and is left 'to heal naturally' with a serious deformity. There are two reasons such animals can't be certified for transport. Though by the time we see them they are generally free from serious pain, the deformity leaves them with a mechanical lameness that means they are *not* "able to bear weight evenly on all four limbs" - the general requirement for lameness certification - but more importantly, the untreated fracture is an Animal Welfare concern in that it indicates the animal was not provided appropriate treatment to manage pain and distress at the time of the break. Unfortunately 'appropriate treatment' for an adult steer or bull with a serious limb fracture is almost always immediate euthanasia.

Cows with significant cancer eye. Cancer eye occurs as a knobby growth either on the third eyelid or the eyeball itself. A cow with cancer eye can only be transported if the growth is smaller than a NZ\$1 coin, confined to the eyeball or eyelid, and has no discharge (blood or pus). For lesions more significant than this, the cow cannot be transported, but we do have the option of surgically removing the third eyelid or the entire eye, provided the cancer is not so large that it has spread to the surrounding tissues. Beware that cancer eyes can grow very rapidly so it's always best to call us out as soon as you notice the lesion.

Lameness, generally due to unresolvable foot conditions, can be tricky to judge as fit for transport. The guidelines state that cows must be able to bear weight evenly on all four limbs, but that mildly lame cows can be transported with certain conditions (e.g. lower deck, alone, closest works). If the lameness is obvious to even an inexperienced eye or the animal stands with the affected leg held up, it cannot be expected to handle the journey and we will not be able to provide a transport certificate.



A fairly broad category termed "discharging". This includes any kind of blood or pus from unresolving wounds, 'dirty' cows (with metritis or retained membranes), cows with black mastitis and rotting tissue, or any other kind of discharge that is not present on a healthy cow. Such an animal is deemed unfit to travel, and would also be rejected at the works by the inspecting officer.

As vets, we want you to be able to send your animal. The ability to certify animals for transport is guided by an eight-page document that clarifies most conditions. If we are called to see an animal that we cannot certify, we will always try to give you a treatment solution or help you make the most economical decision on

CONTACT US:

Hurndall Street **Maungaturoto** 09 4318318

Main Road **Waipu** 09 4320693

Jellicoe Road **Ruawai** 09 4392506

Moir Street **Mangawhai** 09 4314535

PO Box 16 Maungaturoto 0547,

www.thevetcentrenorthland.co.nz

YOUR FEEDBACK IS WELCOME:

If you have any suggestions for improvements, or you would like to discuss service received, we would appreciate the opportunity.

Please contact:

General Manager: Sandy Brown 09 431 8318

sandyvetcentre@gmail.com