

Caring for Calves

The city based public of New Zealand are now even more concerned regarding the care and welfare of young dairy calves following the recent prosecution of a bobby calf slaughter man at Meremere. People are watching what is happening and everybody has a camera with them all the time now. You need to ensure that what you are doing is not only legal but "looks" good.

Leaving down cows, or worse still dead cows, in paddocks in the view of the road is not a good idea even though the animal may be receiving good care. Walking lame cows across the road to milking is also asking for trouble – keep them in a handy paddock beside the cow shed. Sheep can also be a cause for concern with lame or thin sheep being reported to the authorities.



The care of young calves is very emotive, especially bobby calves, but also replacements. Sick animals must be treated promptly, animals must be handled gently and provided with shelter and feed.

How calves have their horns removed is another source of concern. Although legally horn buds can be removed from calves by farmers without pain relief up to 6 months of age, think about how the job would look to an outsider, or on the Six O'clock News?

Dehorning is one of those jobs that is never nice and only gets worse as the stock get older. We offer the best solution available. We sedate the calves, give a local anaesthetic and burn the buds. No pain, no bellowing, no fighting, no stress. Research data has shown that calves disbudded this way do not have a growth check due to pain. As an added advantage to you, we do not need your assistance, so you can get on with all the other jobs you have to do in the Spring. All you need to do is have the calves penned up and leave us to get on with it. At the same time accessory teats can be removed and the first 7 in 1 vaccine can be given to start the Lepto vaccination programme.

Mark Anderson

Restricted Veterinary Medicine

All antibiotics & anti inflammatories are restricted drugs. This means they can only be dispensed and sold by a Vet. To enable you to legally pick up products from the Clinic front desk staff, a vet needs to create an RVM for these products, or to personally authorise them.

This is something we have done with the dairy farmers for many years as it was required by Fonterra & the NZFSA. We now need to extend this to all commercial farmers. As of July 1st next year all commercial farmers will need to meet with one of the farm vets to set up their RVM list for the upcoming year. They will then be able to pick up antibiotics as they need them from the counter. This will cover us all from the requirements of the NZFSA and your supplier quality assurance schemes. On the same lines we are now recording all batch numbers & expiry dates on all commercial products sold.



Calf Club Lambs & Kids

We provide a service to dock, tail, vaccinate & dehorn (goats) calf club lambs and kids in the Clinic. The lambs should be two weeks old and will get a lamb vaccine for tetanus, a rubber ring and pain relief. Goats to be dehorned must have horns less than 1cm long. They will be anaesthetised, local, dehorned with a hot iron and pain relief.

Cost:	Docking	\$51 for the first lamb. \$10 for each additional lamb.
	Dehorning	\$79 for the first kid. \$25 for each additional kid.

On a separate but related topic, we also ring and castrate pet piglets in Clinic. They are anaesthetised, castrated, given a Stainless Steel nose ring, pain relief and a leptospirosis vaccination.

Cost -	\$107 for the first piglet. \$60 for each additional pig.
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Drenching Stories

One day last week I completed post mortems on three commercial farm animals. All three animals had died as a result of being drenched!



Although this is not common it did bring home the message that things we do every day for the supposed benefit of the stock do carry risks, both short term and long term.

A surprising number of young stock die each year as a result of drench toxicity (poisoning). Ivermectin, a very common component of double and triple combination drenches is very toxic to young and thin animals. The drench relies on having body fat to move into once it is given. It then leaks out of the fat back into the blood to give it a longer time of action. If there is little fat then too much accumulates in the blood and poisoning happens (shaking, unsteady, fitting, death). As a result many Ivermectin drenches carry the warning not to be given to calves under 120Kg or to lambs. Toxicity can also result from just giving too much drench (getting the dose wrong) so check the dose first.

Stock die from being injured at drenching time. Drench gun injuries to the back of the mouth are often fatal. Make sure staff are trained, the gear is not damaged or sharp, and that the job is not rushed.

Although the short term immediate deaths are the most obvious, the long term silent damage is more costly. Chronic under dosing of stock by either faulty equipment (when was the last time you checked the accuracy of your drench gun?) or miscalculation, will result in poor stock performance and the early loss of drench chemicals due to resistance. Equally, excessive over drenching of stock will also lead to drench resistance.

30% of sheep farm income is due to the availability of effective drenches, so parasite control is the single most important thing you do. Do it properly, do it well, don't try and do it cheaply or it will cost you more in the long run.

Mark Anderson



Opportunities & Options

The yearly cycle has started again with dairy calving and no sooner than the first calf hits the ground then you need to start thinking about mating time. **Recording and observation is the key.** Record metritis risk cows and get them seen early to improve conception rates. Record all pre-mating heats to improve submission rates. Monitor body condition score regularly as this is a key driver of cycling activity.

Money is tight but recording costs you very little. It gives you information so you then have options, and then you have choices and can make decisions. The decisions may or may not involve spending money but they put you in charge.



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Farmer Christmas Party

23rd November

Please keep this date free



Further details on our 2016 annual event will be out next month

Farm Drop Off Service

Chelsea is running this delivery service every fortnight. Currently the South Head run is fortnightly and the Kaukapakapa run is as requested. If you are interested in this free service, the best method of contact is to phone the Helensville branch or email your requests to chelsear@vetsnorth.co.nz.