

Farm First Newsletter November 2017



10th Anniversary Party Don't forget the party on 17th November at 7 pm at the Hogs Head. Any funny stories about the vets will be gratefully received before the date and don't forget to register with the office that you will be attending.



Care of the Downer Cow Some recent research from Australia has shown that high quality nursing care has a significant effect on whether there is a positive outcome for a downer cow. There are numerous reasons for recumbency in adult cattle, more often seen in dairy animals but also relevant to beef cattle. Metabolic causes include milk fever and staggers; whereas musculo-skeletal conditions include calving paralysis, peripheral nerve damage, hip dislocation and limb fracture. Other causes include toxic mastitis and acute grain overload.

A thorough clinical examination of the cow in the early stages of recumbency will help to determine the primary cause of the problem and enable the correct treatment to be given. This is particularly important in cases of toxic mastitis. Equipment for lifting the cow will enable a thorough examination of all four quarters of the udder and allow the vet to examine each limb and check for nerve damage.

The Australian research by Poulton *et al* investigated 218 downer cows from 96 farms under field conditions. Cows had been recumbent for more than 24 hours and were bright and alert. Clinically important secondary damage, such as muscle and nerve damage, was found in 79% of the cows and the results showed that it was very significant, as cows with no secondary damage were 8 times more likely to recover than cows with secondary damage.

Many of the common secondary conditions arise from cows sitting on hard surfaces without being rolled, predisposing them to pressure damage to the muscles and nerves of the hindquarters. Sawdust, sand or deep straw can all provide a good surface for these cows, ideally in a small space, as crawling has been shown to cause femoral nerve injury in the hind limbs. If cows are left flat on their sides for a period of time this can cause fore limb nerve damage and aspiration pneumonia or choke. It is rare that weather conditions are perfect for these cows to be nursed outside, because if it is warm enough for them, the ground will be too hard or they can suffer heat stroke. These cows need much higher temperatures than cows which can walk around, so cold weather they will predispose them to pneumonia or exposure. Good udder hygiene can be difficult, increasing the risk of mastitis including toxic mastitis.

In the study high quality nursing care increased the chances of cows recovering from the primary cause of their recumbency, decreased the chances of them suffering clinically significant secondary damage and improved the chances of recovery from such damage, if it occurred.

High quality nursing care is a complex task requiring dedication and a caring attitude by the stock people. The animal must be confined on soft, deep, hygienic bedding in a small, sheltered, conveniently located area. They must be well fed and watered, rolled regularly if unable to swap sides by themselves (every 3 hours), and only lifted if they can stand 'effectively' whilst under supervision. If there is no improvement in a cow after 48 hours and this level of nursing care cannot be given, then euthanasia may well be the best option.

Further information is available by contacting Farm First Vets on 01873 840167 or by going to <https://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/farm/animal-management/animal-welfare/cow-welfare> where there are useful factsheets and some excellent videos on nursing downer cows.

Prevent Calf Scours This Winter We tend to see an increase in scouring calves from January onwards due to as build-up bacteria and viruses in the housing period. Many of these cases can be prevented by vaccinating the cows between 12 weeks and 3 weeks before calving. Virbac's calf scour vaccine Bovigen Scour is now registered for use as a 1-shot vaccine in both cows and heifers, regardless of previous vaccination status. The vaccine, boosts the dam's colostrum antibody levels to rotavirus, coronavirus and *E. coli* K99 – the major viral and bacterial causes of calf scour. Immunity is transferred to calves via the colostrum and protection depends on the calf ingesting an adequate amount of colostrum from the vaccinated dam soon after birth. Bovigen Scour (3ml dose) comes in 5 and 30 dose bottles and is now available through the practice. We can also offer blood sampling of calves using a cheap in-house test, to check whether the calves are getting enough good quality colostrum. Calves need to be tested at 2-10 days of age. If you are interested in this, please contact us at the office. Common causes of scour in young

calves can also be tested for cheaply and rapidly using our in house calf scour test (between 14 and 11 pounds depending on numbers).

Farming Connect Funding There is a new round of funding of £150 per farm for anything veterinary that involves testing – e.g. fertility testing bulls and rams, parasite testing, post mortems, trace element testing, mastitis bacteriology. If you want to take advantage of this then the farm must be registered with Farming Connect and an application made before the testing is done. Please ring us for more information.

New Products for Dairy – Bovicalk Dry Two of these boluses given 8-12 hours before drying off will support the natural reduction in milk yield at drying off, resulting in reduced udder pressure and increased lying times. Udder engorgement at drying off has been shown to increase milk leakage, so a reduction in this will reduce the risk of mastitis.

Vigophos This product is indicated for the supportive treatment of cows with secondary ketosis. It contains Vitamin B12 and an organic phosphorus compound and works by enhancing the efficiency of energy production from carbohydrates. It is only licensed to be given by the I/V route and has zero milk and meat withhold.

Blood test for SheepScab When purchasing stores or replacements it may be possible to check whether sheep scab treatment is required by testing a proportion of the sheep to check for evidence of exposure to the mites. If buying from multiple sources and mixing then wait at least 2 weeks before testing. Also in the autumn many flocks undertake a precautionary treatment for sheep scab, whether that is with an injectable macrocyclic lactone or using OP plunge dipping. For many low risk flocks (those with good biosecurity, no contact with neighbouring flocks and appropriate quarantine measures for purchased and returning sheep) the 'just in case' treatment for sheep scab may not be necessary.

One way of deciding if treatment is necessary is to screen for exposure to sheep scab mites using the ELISA blood antibody test. Testing 12 sheep from the flock/group, including any itchy sheep in those to be tested, can be used as a screen to detect sheep that have met sheep scab mites. Lab costs for testing 12 sheep would be approx £90. The Farming Connect funding discussed above can be used to fund the vet work and lab fees. Flocks testing positive can treat to eliminate disease, whereas if all sheep test negative the flock is considered seronegative and treatment can be avoided.

As we are aware, there are sheep scab mites that are resistant to some treatments and it is really important to only treat when necessary. This also makes sense financially, as flocks stand to save over £800 on labour and drug costs if they test clear and can justify leaving the sheep untreated (based on a 500 ewe flock, ADAS 2013).

Parasite Control A comprehensive dosing regimen after housing cattle is critical to remove worm and fluke infections, ensuring freedom from disease and maximum productivity of animals throughout the winter housing period. In 2018, the UK has experienced a late spring and an unusually hot and dry summer. The risk of liver fluke and gastrointestinal (GI) worm burdens this autumn/winter is currently unclear, however if we start to see a large amount of rainfall this could pose problems. **Closamectin Pour On** provides broad spectrum efficacy against liver fluke, GI worms, lungworm and ectoparasites, kills triclabendazole resistant fluke and has a short meat withhold of 28 days, so it is a useful product at this time of year. Be aware that to kill all stages of liver fluke, the treatment should not be given until 7 weeks after housing, so please contact us to discuss the best strategy for your herd and a competitive quote for the right wormers for your cattle at this time of year.

Staff News We would like to welcome our latest TB tester to the team. Jose Risueño Iranzo, from Spain, has now completed his training and we hope that he will enjoy working with us, despite the weather!

Joke

A little old lady got on a city bus, and sat down behind the bus driver. After a couple minutes, she asked him, "Hey, mister! Want some peanuts?", and held up a bag full. "Sure!", he said, and popped a handful in his mouth. After eating several more, he asked, "Hey...don't you want to have some of these yourself?" "Nope," the old lady replied, "Ain't got no teeth! I just likes the chocolate on the outsides!"