

# FRANKLINvets update

May 2011

## Control calf scours with Rotavec<sup>®</sup> Corona vaccine

**As we approach another calving season**, it is worth reflecting on one of the challenges of rearing calves. Scours is something most dairy farmers have experienced at some stage, and anybody that has been through a severe outbreak will know it is one of the worst experiences in farming. It can happen to anybody; even the most careful farmers have experienced a scours outbreak.

**Calves are the most genetically valuable** animals on your farm, so every death or reduction in growth rate will reduce your chance of reaching your full dairy potential. When death rates are high, the financial costs can be severe, but even surviving calves often have long-term damage to their gut that will reduce their growth rates, so costs can be ongoing. A severe outbreak can also put strain on the whole family – from the partner who rears the calves to the children, or even grandchildren.

**For the first month of life**, calves that encounter high levels of “bugs” (viruses, bacteria or protozoa such as rotavirus, coronavirus, E. coli or cryptosporidium) have an increased chance of going on to develop scours. With about 70% of farms positive for rotavirus alone, it is quite likely calves will come into contact with at least some of these bugs. During this time, their only real defence is the immunity passed from their mothers through colostrum.

**Unfortunately “damage control”** is about all you can do in the midst of an outbreak, so it makes sense to focus on prevention. Good hygiene and facilities will help to limit the number of bugs calves are exposed to, but it is just as important that calves have good enough immunity to cope with what bugs they do encounter.

**The most important factor** in calf immunity is colostrum. Calves must get 2-3.5 litres of colostrum from the first two milkings within 6-12 hours of birth to maximise their intake of protective antibodies. If they miss out on the full amount or the quality of this colostrum is poor, they will have little chance of fighting off infection.

**So how can you improve** the all important protection calves get from their colostrum and reduce the chances of scours further?

**Vaccinating the herd with Rotavec<sup>®</sup> Corona** stimulates the cows to produce extra antibodies to rotavirus, coronavirus and E. coli. These antibodies then pass into the colostrum at much higher levels than in unvaccinated cows. The result is colostrum that provides far greater immunity to calves, increasing their chances of dealing with any challenges. Of course, it is still crucial that calves get enough of this colostrum at the right time to maximise their protection.

**A single shot of Rotavec<sup>®</sup> Corona** given to the herd 3 weeks before the start of calving will increase the levels of antibodies to rotavirus, coronavirus and E. coli in the colostrum of cows calving in the first 9 weeks.

**In conjunction with good hygiene**, housing and colostrum management, Rotavec<sup>®</sup> Corona will significantly increase the protection your calves receive against the major causes of scours. *Talk to us about vaccinating the herd to maximise your calf health and income and reduce the stress to you and your family.*

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## Electronic Ear Tag Identification, Are you ready?

Most of you will be aware that new NAIT (National Animal Identification & Tracing) scheme takes effect as of 1 November 2011. The system will use RFID (Radio Frequency Identification Device) ear tags.

**There are some basic rules you need to know regarding your responsibilities.** A recent change is that for animals born after 1 March 2011, the primary tag will now be the RFID tag and this will always go in the animals RIGHT ear (right is right). This primary tag will be accompanied with a secondary AHB approved tag, either a visual or brass tag (or both).

**We would suggest tagging new born animals with NAIT-approved tags** before the scheme becomes compulsory to avoid the expense of retagging after 1 November 2011.

**There are two types of RFID tags** (HDX and FDX), we can advise as to which type will best fit your system. As a basic rule most dairy farmers will use HDX and beef farmers FDX tags.

**Because this new scheme makes RFID compulsory**, there is an opportunity to gain advantage by using the information gathered from systems that combine RFID readers with weighing equipment. As an example, it can enable automatic drafting systems based on animal performance; think about how you could use this information in your system.

**Please contact us if you need advice** about which ear tag is right for you. If you are looking to link up with scales or want to know about the different readers that are available, we can help you to determine what will work in your system.



## Mud fever

Mud fever, also known as 'greasy heel', 'mud rash', 'rain scald' or 'cracked heels' affects the lower legs and heels of horses, but can also appear along the crest, back and rump. It is caused by bacteria that penetrate the skin when it has been softened through constant exposure to the wet or mud.

The bacteria is normally present on the skin of horses but becomes a problem in our mild, wet winters/springs and is most commonly seen on white legs of horses living outside in these conditions. Some horses are more susceptible to mud fever than others and standing around in wet, muddy conditions increases the problem.

Mud fever appears as sore cracks and crusty yellow scabs. Quite often, the affected areas are also inflamed and the horse will sometimes be lame.

Check your horse's legs regularly and at the first sign of any cracked heels or scabs, treat immediately with an effective antibiotic wash and an appropriate mud fever ointment. In severe cases clipping the matted hair of the affected area and prompt antibiotic and anti-inflammatory treatment may be required, which will require a visit by your veterinarian. Your horse may also require sedation to allow the painful areas to be treated effectively and safely.



Holly Walton BVSc

## Do you know your farm's trace element status?

What are the benefits to knowing your animals' trace element (TE) status?

- Low levels can have a negative impact on the coming season's production. Problems can be seen with the in-calf rate, lambing percentage, growth rates and general health
- Optimal levels promote optimal stock performance – timely supplementation of deficient herds will save you money
- If levels are adequate, you can avoid unnecessary supplementation. This saves money long term and minimises the risk of toxicity
- Testing helps to evaluate the effectiveness of previous TE supplementation and ensures that you are getting value from the money you are spending
- When comparing trace element levels between years, the influence that changes in farming practices (feeding more PKE or change in fertilizer) have on trace element levels can be evaluated

Examples that could lead to decreased copper uptake:

- Zinc supplementation to prevent facial eczema
- High molybdenum in water-logged soils during winter
- Muddy pasture containing high iron levels

When the above factors coincide with high copper demands during late pregnancy and peak lactation, it can lead to production-limiting low copper levels.

Animals going to the works at this time of year provide farmers with the opportunity to test the trace element levels in their stock. However, liver biopsies performed on live animals will give the most useful information, as cull cow livers are often not representative of the whole herd.

Contact Franklin Vets to book on-farm liver biopsies or to request works liver biopsy forms.

## Reproduction review – where to from here?

Greg Lindsay BVSc

Constant review and forward-planning is a necessity when managing dairy herd reproduction. At each stage of the dairy cycle, we need to look back at what was done and how it worked, and to look forward to what changes will achieve better results next time around. This season again presented a number of challenges and no-doubt many of you are currently in the process of reviewing how it all panned out.

**With pregnancy testing now all but complete**, we can summarise the local repro performance. This year we saw, on average, a higher percentage of empty cows than in previous seasons; a backwards trend seen across the practice. Average empty rates of 15% in the northern clinics (Pukekohe, Waiuku and Papakura) and 12.5% in the south (Te Kauwhata and Taupiri) were 2-3% up on 2009 figures.

**In general, six week in-calf rates also trended poorly** which is disappointing as this is a very important measure of reproductive success, focusing on the rate at which the herd is getting in calf. Increases in your six week in-calf rate mean a compact early calving pattern; one that not only lessens the need for inductions but also improves production with increased days in milk being the main advantage.

**At this time of year we encourage farmers to review their farm's 2010 reproductive performance and management.** Was nutrition of

the herd a problem? Did the heifers calve at the correct weight? Was heat detection up to par?

**A great place to start looking for answers is Dairy NZ's In-Calf manual.** If you do not yet own a copy of this fantastic resource, please let your clinic know and we will source one for you. The manual forms the basis of the *In-Calf* scheme – an industry-wide initiative encouraging active participation and focus on all things reproduction. Franklin Vets now has six *In-Calf* trained advisors to help you best focus your intentions. We can accurately assess your farm's current performance, determine the size of the shortfall between your performance and target levels, develop solutions that will shrink the gaps and then implement those that will achieve the best results for your farm. With potential financial gains of \$90 per cow on the average New Zealand dairy farm, it makes sense to allocate a good percentage of your time to reproductive management.

**Restrictions on inductions are becoming ever stricter.** Management over the coming seasons will have a huge effect on overall farm profitability. If you are concerned about your current position, would like to see change or just want to work through one area of your reproductive management (e.g. reducing the need for inductions), please don't hesitate to give us a call to arrange an *In-Calf* consultation. Meetings will be tailored to suit your individual situation, so get us on board today and start the ball rolling.

Franklin Vets is pleased to announce that we have 4 more *In-Calf* trained advisors to assist our clients with their herd's reproductive performance.

In March of this year, Jenny McCall, Henni Lock, Greg Lindsay and Paula O'Reilly attended the 3-day Dairy NZ training course in Rotorua. This brings the number of advisors to six over the five Franklin Vets branches.

*In-Calf* looks to improve the key reproductive indices on a New Zealand dairy farm (6 week in-calf rate and empty rate) by assessing several areas of farm management.

**If you are interested in hearing more about *In-Calf*, please contact any branch of Franklin Vets to speak to one of our trained advisors.**

## Did your first calvers get in-calf?

With pregnancy testing wrapped up for the year, now is the time to assess how your young stock fared and to make a plan to improve next year's results if necessary.

**How did your first calvers compare to the rest of the herd?**

Problems with first calver pregnancy results can often be traced back to undergrown heifers at mating.

Dairy NZ's initiative, *In-Calf*, shows us that a 420 kg Friesian heifer will be at least 10% behind her target weight, even if "she looks well-rounded", so at 22 months, she is already costing you in lost future production.

As a direct result of being undergrown at her first mating:

- Her 6-week in calf rate will likely decrease by 5% - later calver
- Her chance of being empty as a second calver will increase by 2%
- She will produce 8kg fewer milk solids
- **This all adds up to a cost of \$88 per heifer**

If there is any question that your R2 heifers are not meeting their target weights, weigh them now to enable you to make changes in time for their first mating. This job has often been put in the "too hard basket" until now.

Jessica Kingsland, Franklin Vets' rural technician, can make this a quick and easy job for you, providing valuable information as you head into winter and feed management becomes even more important.

Contact your local branch of Franklin Vets today to make an appointment and avoid disappointing pregnancy test results next year.

## Teatseal® update

Mark Hosking BVSc MACVSc

A recent study combining Teatseal® and dry cow therapy (DCT) in adult dairy cows showed a significant drop in clinical mastitis and reduced somatic cell counts (SCC) well into early lactation, when compared to DCT alone.

This trial backs up work done in the 1990's by Bryan McKay, which indicated that up to 30% of bacteria that caused mastitis at calving actually entered the udder in the early drying-off period. Both studies give weight to the argument that bacteria are capable of living in the udder for long periods before resulting in a clinical mastitis.

Two critical times for bacterial entry into the udder are the early dry period and at calving, so you need to look at protection over **both** of these periods in order to minimise your clinical and subclinical mastitis rates in the following lactation.

The take-home message is that Teatseal® is still having a significant effect on your mastitis incidence well after it is gone from the udder.



# FRANKLINvets update

## Community support

Franklin Vets are proud to extend our sponsorship of Pukekohe, Papakura & Waiuku netball into the 2011 season, along with Waiuku Rugby, Taupiri Rugby & Squash clubs, and Te Kauwhata Rugby. We have a long history of community involvement through schools, local A&P shows and mentoring and support to work experience programs.

The directors and staff of Franklin Vets would like to wish all the teams good luck for the coming season.



Sponsors of Netball Counties Manukau Region supporting the Netball communities of Papakura, Pukekohe & Waiuku



## New Vet at Taupiri : Quirien Domper

Hi, my name is Quirien most people call me Quinny. I grew up in sunny Hawkes Bay and have just moved back to New Zealand after nearly four years travelling in the UK and Europe. I am an avid rugby fan and enjoy most outdoor activities and have recently started taking an interest in power kiting and paragliding. I am looking forward to getting to know the Waikato area and being part of the team at Franklin Vets.

Regional Sponsors of Auckland/Hauraki Dairy Industry Awards 2011



## New product for Fleas on dogs

Paul Eason BVM&S MACVSc (Surgery; Emergency and Critical Care Medicine)

Most of you will be aware that this summer was a bumper season for our old friend the cat and dog flea. Long periods of warm humid weather resulted in massive numbers of fleas everywhere. Standard topical treatments have struggled to control the problem in some dogs due to the sheer numbers of fleas getting on to the dogs all day long.

**It is well recognised** that the effectiveness of these products decreases with time, and that in conditions such as we have had they may still result in fleas being seen on some dogs. This is of particular concern in dogs that are allergic to flea bites.

**There is good news however.** A new treatment has become available in the form of a tablet given each month to dogs. *Comfortis*<sup>®</sup> contains a highly effective flea killer called spinosad. *Comfortis*<sup>®</sup> is the fastest flea killer on the market, starting to kill fleas within 30 minutes of the dog having the tablet. The results are dramatic, with dead fleas falling off before your eyes. It also lasts the whole month.

It cannot be washed off, does not leave a sticky residue on the coat, and is highly palatable so dogs will eat it in their food or out of your hand. *Comfortis*<sup>®</sup> is best given with food or at the time of eating.

Like most flea products for animals, *Comfortis*<sup>®</sup> does not treat the environment, so it is essential to treat the kennels with a suitable product such as a flea bomb to kill the eggs and larvae.

***Comfortis*<sup>®</sup> can be safely given to puppies** from 14 weeks of age. And before any of you ask, there is currently no licence for cats, but watch this space...

**This is an extremely exciting development in the battle against fleas.** *Comfortis*<sup>®</sup> is likely to be the leading flea product next year, and we strongly recommend it as the most effective way of treating fleas in all dogs.

Ask our staff today about *Comfortis*<sup>®</sup>, or simply check out their website on [www.elancopet.com.au](http://www.elancopet.com.au).

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Veterinary Hospital  
Farm Services and Supplies  
Ph 0-9-235 9101  
Farm A/H 0-9-238 2471

[www.franklinvets.co.nz](http://www.franklinvets.co.nz)

## Annual Dairy Client Appreciation Dinner & Seminars

Dairy clients please keep these nights free for some education and entertainment:

**June 8th** Counties Function Centre, Pukekohe Race Course

**June 14th** Te Kauwhata Rugby Club