

# FRANKLINvets update

March 2011

## Charlie Wylie

### After-hours agent extraordinaire retires

Ross Beal BVSc, Practice Manager & Director

Charlie Wylie has retired as Franklin Vets after-hours agent after 41 years of service to our clients, their animals and our vets alike.

Charlie started as Franklin Vets after-hours agent in 1970 after an accident that damaged his back and restricted him to a wheel chair. He has been the voice answering our after-hours calls ever since.

During this time Charlie and Nola have raised their family and lived every night and weekend with the phone calls. When Charlie had to be away Nola or a member of their family took over the duties. This has been a great commitment to our clients and their animals, both of whom were often in distress.

The after-hours service became Charlie's connection with the wider world. He developed an encyclopedic knowledge of the roadways of Manukau City and Franklin District and the farmers who lived on them. He could recognise many clients by their voice and mannerisms and got to know them well, without ever meeting them.

In the 1970's, before pagers and mobile phones, vets houses were wired with outside extension bells and the on-call vets needed to stay within hearing distance of a landline phone or their radio telephone. Charlie therefore gained an intimate knowledge of the whereabouts of the veterinary team, especially the younger ones.

The advent of pagers and cell phones freed the on-call vets from landline phones and lessened Charlie's insights a little. For these 41 years Charlie has been a model of discretion on these matters, for several generations of vets.

Charlie's droll wit on the radio telephone has enlivened the life of many vets on dark cold evening calls as he coaxed us through the lesser known lanes and byways of Franklin and kept us abreast of the temperament and temper of clients awaiting a delayed vet.

During my 36 years in the practice, I have failed in several attempts to get Charlie to record the more outlandish and outrageous conversations and behaviours of clients calling the after-hours service. While agreeing that between us we could have written a book to rival James Herriot, Charlie has remained tight-lipped about these, except of course for a choice few.

After recovering from a severe illness in December, Charlie has returned home to enjoy the TV and home theatre system the Directors have gifted Charlie and Nola in thanks for such long and conscientious service.

On behalf of all the vets and clients of the past 41 years, my colleagues and I thank him for making our lives easier and providing a great service to thousands of farm animals, and their owners.

## New Vet for Pukekohe Companion Animals

**Melissa McMiken** will be joining the small animal team of vets at Pukekohe from the end of March. Melissa graduated from Massey University 2 years ago, and since then has been working in Auckland in purely small animal practice. We look forward to Melissa joining us to complete the four vet team, and injecting yet more new ideas and enthusiasm to the clinic. The Pukekohe small animal department has been incredibly busy this year already, and Melissa will be using all the skills and knowledge she has available from the minute she arrives. We are certain she will enjoy the work and challenges at Franklin Vets.

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FRANKLINvets

## Teatseal® eases spring stresses



### Testimonial from David Dean, Mercer

**A milking plant vacuum level higher than it should be helped create an on-going mastitis problem** for David Dean in his first year managing his family's Silverdene Farm, near Mercer, North Waikato, three seasons ago. With infection rates up to 25% through the herd in that first year, David's problems were heightened by the use of a feed pad for holding cows on over particularly wet weather in winter, adding an environmental bacterial challenge to mastitis levels.

**The result was the 600 head herd never dropped** below a BMSCC of 200,000 all year, and was running around the 300,000 mark for much of the last third of the season.

This impacted on David's ability to milk all the herd as long as he would have liked, without risking a BMSCC grade.

By the start of his second season when he commenced share milking he had sorted the vacuum problem. However its legacy was a BMSCC over 300,000 at drying off and starting his first season with a herd already less than ideal. To try and start with a lower subclinical infection rate he followed the advice of his veterinarian Jason Fayers of Franklin Vets. Jason recommended the use of a combination dry cow therapy, using selective antibiotic dry cow treatment in conjunction with Teatseal®.

**All cows were treated with** either short-acting Orbenin or long-acting Orbenin Enduro depending on somatic cell counts plus Teatseal® at drying-off.

**David administered the Teatseal®** after the dry cow antibiotics himself, taking time to ensure hygiene was a priority, and not rushing the process.

**Having treated the milking cows** for two seasons now, he is impressed with the results.

**Last spring kicked off on a far more positive note**, with the mixed-age milkers only recording single figure infection numbers, and a BMSCC that sat around the 130,000 mark for much of the season.

**Vet records reveal** 113 mastitis incidences from calving to the end of September for the 2009/10 season, compared to almost twice that number the year before. This season the results are even more positive, with only 28 cases recorded to mid-November.

**David is confident a decision to treat heifers pre-calving with Teatseal®** early next season will lower the figures even further.

**At the end of the season the lower BMSCC** meant David had far greater flexibility over drying-off decisions, determined by cow condition rather than creeping BMSCCs, which had topped out over 300,000 before using the Teatseal® combination therapy in the 2009/10 season.

**"I would prefer to invest in something that will save you time** at the time of year when you are short of it, which is spring. Using Teatseal® definitely achieved that, even if it did involve some extra cost at drying off."

#### Key Points from David Dean:

**Time:** I am averse to investing in something that does not save time when it matters ie spring time – ie auto cup removers are great, but you are not likely to use them through spring because they will not milk cows out properly, so the claimed "time saved" is not really because you have the extra time at the period in the season when you can use them.

**Versus Teatseal®:** which saves time when time is short.

**A hovering risk of penicillin grades:** (very expensive and professionally embarrassing) is reduced with less need to use penicillin at a time of year when risk of it going in vat is highest (inexperienced staff, busy, stressed and rushed etc....)

**Heifers –** I would have done them this year, but miscalculated the cost (added an extra "0"), so put it off – wish I had done them!!

## Recharging your cows – Optimal dry period length

David Hawkins BVSc & Paula O'Reilly BSc(Agric), BVSc

Dry periods range from as little as 20 days in some parts of the globe and up to several months in extensive systems in NZ. Recent DairyNZ updates, international research and the 2010 International Dairy Federation Conference held in NZ have discussed the question "What is an optimal dry-period length for a high producing cow?"

Essentially recent northern hemisphere research indicates 60 days (54-76) is the optimum dry period length. Dry periods outside of this length were associated with decreased milk production, increased mastitis and compromised reproduction.

We need to be cautious applying these findings to the NZ situation with our significant differences in farm systems. However, increasingly, NZ farms are feeding to high enough levels to investigate application of this data. Where feeding levels enable drying-off times to be dictated by the cow rather than by the environment, farmers may be able to apply this data as follows.

- Drying-off cows in batches based on calving date may be a way of optimising cow (and herd?) performance.
- A 60 day (9 wk) dry period should be targeted.
- Ensure cows are dried off at least eight weeks before expected calving date

#### Drying-off early – decisions and deadlines

Where the environment makes consideration of the above research more of a theoretical concept there are a number of basic considerations to aid your decision making.

#### Who:

**Cow condition and health** throughout the season may help you to make this decision. Chronic mastitis sufferers should be culled. Those cows that have lost condition or never regained condition since calving are candidates for

drying off unless you can feed them preferentially in the herd. Similarly, young cows, low producers and high somatic cell count cows should be dried off early.

#### When:

**Cow condition and your current feed** situation are the biggest factors. Remember that if you can feed your cows well in the late lactation they will put on weight more efficiently than when they are dry. However don't cut yourself short for winter.

**Calving date and Dry Cow Therapy (DCT)** will also impact your decision. Different dry cow antibiotics have different periods of efficacy and therefore withholding times, and it is important to factor this into your planning.

#### How:

**The drying off process can take 4 to 10 days.** This will be determined by the level of milk production when you decide to dry off. Higher producers will take longer. Reduce dry matter intake to maintenance levels 3-4 days before your planned dry off date and change to a low protein diet by reducing pasture intake and feeding low protein feeds such as maize silage, silage or hay.

**When drying off, do not restrict water intake** or make any sudden changes to their diet. Starving cows at drying off can be associated with more mastitis in the dry period and the following lactation.

**Immediately after their last milking, clean the teats** with an alcohol wipe and treat with the appropriate dry cow antibiotic, with or without a teat sealant. Vividly mark and separate these animals from the milking herd. A week or so after drying off, run the cows through the shed and check for mastitis. Teat spray at this time to further minimise the risk of mastitis during the dry period.

## Eprinex: Higher intakes = more milk

Mark Hosking BVSc MACVSc

While it is great to see green paddocks around the district for once, it is important to remember that the same environmental conditions that make grass grow, are also perfect for the development of parasite larvae.

Parasites act as an appetite suppressant. Trials studying the grazing behaviour in cows and heifers, show EPRINEX-treated animals spend more time grazing - up to 47 minutes per day. Heifers on average grazed for 50 minutes more per day!

**With this extra intake it's no wonder New Zealand trials** have shown an

extra 0.03kg MS/cow/day from treated cows, and first calvers conceiving 12.9 days earlier than their non-treated herd mates.

Later lactation cows will also benefit, providing more energy for condition score gain and a longer lactation.

These are all great reasons why treating your herd this autumn will put more money in your pocket.

#### Bsure: A test for parasite levels in your herd.

A bulk milk test is now available to check the parasite levels in your dairy herd, providing some science to help answer the question "Will I get a return from drenching my herd"

Contact us for more information.

**DAMAGE CONTROL**

IS YOUR FAMILY A LITTLE HARD ON YOUR DINNER SET? GET INTO YOUR LOCAL VET FOR SOME EXPERT ADVICE ON CONTROLLING THE DAMAGE PARASITES CAN MAKE TO YOUR HERD, AND PICK UP A FABULOUS NEW DINNER SET WHEN YOU BUY SELECTED MERIAL ANCARE PRODUCTS. \*while stocks last.

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## Zinc for control of facial eczema

For the last 30 years zinc has become recognised as the best means of preventing facial eczema in livestock.

#### In-line water treatment

However the continuing problem has been getting the zinc into the animals at levels high enough to prevent the problem. Various methods have been tried, with daily drenching the best method of keeping the levels consistent. However, with the advent of inline water treatment systems this has changed. With flavouring of water adult cattle are able to be adequately treated this way.

#### Time Capsules®

Young cattle (calves/yearlings) will resist drinking from a treated water supply, as do sheep, whose requirements

for water are much less.

The invention of Time Capsules® got around many of these problems and they have been useful tools for getting zinc into these animals at a regular level for a reasonable period (4-5 weeks). However they have some drawbacks, notably being fragile if dropped and unreliable if the wax coating is chipped.

#### Face-Guard™ zinc bolus

Recently Bomac have launched a new form of zinc bolus in a robust form which has slightly longer protection (6 weeks). More importantly the second treatment, if required, can be tailored to either 4 or 6 weeks depending on the expected challenge.

**We have found this new product Face-Guard™ to be very useful** for eczema protection in our client's calves over the past two seasons, both of which have had high and extended challenge periods.

**As one of our larger users of zinc products,** Graham Coghlan of Emerald Downs comments; "The Face-Guard™ product that Franklin Vets have supplied for the last two years has certainly made controlling facial eczema "easier" and the fact that they are more robust has meant less wastage as they are applied".

We have product in stock and the expertise to advise clients on the best preventive programme for their animals.

#### Zee Tags

Purchase between now and April and go in the draw to win a Powerbuilt Tool Chest



## Succession Plan for Managing Director

Ross Beal BVSc, Practice Manager & Director

After 36 years of working full time in the practice, from the 1st of April 2012 Ross Beal will be stepping down as a director of Franklin Vets, and his role as Managing Director. It is envisaged that Ross will continue a close relationship with Franklin Vets. He will work a four day week with a mentoring and advisory role within the practice, along with continuing his involvement and growth of the Intelact consultancy business.

Mark Hosking will be dropping his clinical responsibilities and taking over Ross's role within the practice. Mark is likely to be based in Papakura three days per week, with two days per week spent across the other branches.

More of the responsibilities for the Te Kauwhata and Taupiri clinics will be taken up by members of the existing teams, with Mark continuing to maintain an overview as Director in charge. Additional veterinarians will be employed to maintain service levels and growth.

During 2011 Mark will be heavily committed to completing the second year of his MBA.

There will be a period of changeover between the Managing Directors running into early 2012, with the plan to make the transition as seamless as possible.

Meanwhile, it is business as usual and the directors will keep you informed as the succession plan unfolds.

Franklin Vets are proud to present our sponsorship prizes for the Franklin Vets Future Aims & Attitudes Award at the NZ Dairy Industry Regional Finals

## Preparing for autumn calving – it's nearly that time again!

Paula O'Reilly BSc(Agric), BVSc

After an unusual season that has thrown everything (and the kitchen sink) at the farming community, the long balmy summer days are starting to cool down in the evening and it is not hard to believe that autumn is knocking on the door.

For those of you that will soon be entering your busy time of year, planning ahead is the best tool you have in your toolkit.

### Vaccinations:

**Most herds will be up-to-date with annual leptospirosis** vaccinations by now, but it is not too late to get this job done. Remember that vaccinating the herd is the best way to protect you and your workers from the nasty symptoms associated with leptospirosis.

**Rotavec® Corona vaccine** (Intervet Schering-Plough Coopers, P.A.R class 1) stimulates the cow to produce antibodies that are then available to the calf via the colostrum. These antibodies may reduce the incidence of rotavirus, coronavirus and E.coli K99, and help to reduce the severity of diarrhoea should infection occur. The vaccine is given between 12 and 3 weeks prior to calving.

### Equipment:

While your planned start of calving may be the middle of March, every year a few cows will surprise you, so it pays to have your equipment on hand and ready to go before Daisy decides to drop.

- **Metabolic** treatments
- **Cow cover** – TLC can make the difference as to whether a down cow recovers or not
- **Hip lifters** – new or old, now is the time to get them

oiled and ready to crank again

- **Calving gear** – whether you prefer chains or ropes, calving jack or pulleys, make sure they are in working order and easy to find
- **Calving lubricant** – have plenty on hand as calves may be big this season with all the available feed around
- **Calf tube feeder** – ensure adequate colostrum intake in the first 12 hours of life. If in doubt, tube them
- **Navel spray** – avoid the hassle and stress associated with navel and joint ill by keeping the umbilicus clean, dry and disinfected

### Calf Shed:

Regardless of whether you are planning on rearing 20 calves or 200, their housing is vital to ensuring good outcomes.

An ideal shed is:

- Well ventilated without being drafty
- Dry and warm
- Sloped from back to front to encourage drainage
- Pens no smaller than 15m<sup>2</sup>
- Solid separations between pens to isolate different mobs
- Isolation pen for sick animals
- Smooth surfaces that can be cleaned easily and sprayed with disinfectant
- Fresh ground cover
- Sawdust best, followed by wood shavings (post-peelings a distant third)

If you have any questions about how to make the autumn as drama-free as possible for you and your cows, contact any branch of Franklin Vets.

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