Rapid Mastitis Test

The somatic cells of milk are made up of white blood cells and udder tissue cells. Udders with mastitis have a massive increase in numbers of white blood cells.

The RMT estimates the somatic cell count (SCC) by measuring the degree of thickening when the reagent is added to the milk sample. The reagent ruptures the somatic cells and causes them to thicken into a gel. The test is simple, quick and relatively easy to do and is, in our opinion, more practical and reliable than the conductivity meter

With a bit of practice you can learn to differentiate between slight, slight-moderate, moderate and heavy gelling in the test tray. These correspond to somatic cell counts of approx. 300, 900, 2700, +8000 (x1000).

Points to Note:

- Colostrum contains very high somatic cells so should not be tested.
- After 8 full milkings for cows and 10 for heifers, all animals should be RMT tested before being milked into the bulk milk tank. Quarters showing heavy gelling are likely to be infected.
- Also note that somatic cells can remain high for at least two weeks after a cow has been treated for clinical mastitis. This doesn't mean that treatment has failed, but that it takes time for the inflammatory and tissue cells to be cleared.

Metabolic Conditions Around Lambing

With the favourable weather conditions we have had a lot of feed around and consequently there are lots of well conditioned (or over-conditioned) ewes (and cows) around.
To avoid metabolic problems we need to try and avoid falling planes of nutrition in late pregnancy, or any sudden feed restrictions.

Pregnancy toxaemia in sheep is a metabolic condition that occurs late in pregnancy, particularly in twin-bearing ewes. Signs include dullness, not eating, nervous signs, recumbency and eventual death. The most common precipitating factor to this disease is a falling plane of nutrition in the last 2 months before lambing or a sudden restriction in feed supply e.g. during yarding or bad weather. Older and multiple bearing ewes are most susceptible.

Milk fever (low blood calcium) is another metabolic condition that can affect pregnant ewes late in pregnancy. Again sudden feed changes can be a predisposing factor. Affected ewes show neurological signs, first appearing wobbly and hyperactive but rapidly becoming recumbent and comatose.

The take home message is to avoid sudden changes of feed, avoid unnecessary yarding and avoid stressful conditions as much as possible in heavily pregnant ewes.
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TOPVETS

TOPVETS Moosletter

June 2012

After Hours

After hours weekends will return to the normal roster from July to September in order for us to provide prompt service over the calving period. From October the shared roster with Kaitaia Vet Services will continue.

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Be prepared!

Here's a quick checklist of the supplies to have on hand for the start of calving.

- Lube
- Calving ropes/pulleys
- Metabolics e.g. Calpro 375/Calpromag
- Starter plus
- Oxytocin
- Mastitis treatments
- Penicillin
- Sterile syringes/needles
- Disinfectant
- Iodine spray for calf navels
- Calf scour supplies e.g. electrolytes
- Calf pen disinfectant e.g. Trigene/Virkon

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.Calf de-budding

We will be offering calf de-budding again this year. With the new calf crush we have the option of de-budding with just the local anaesthetic rather than the full anaesthetic.
The ideal age to be de-budding calves is from 2-6 weeks of age.
Call us at the clinic to book in.

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PAR Consultations

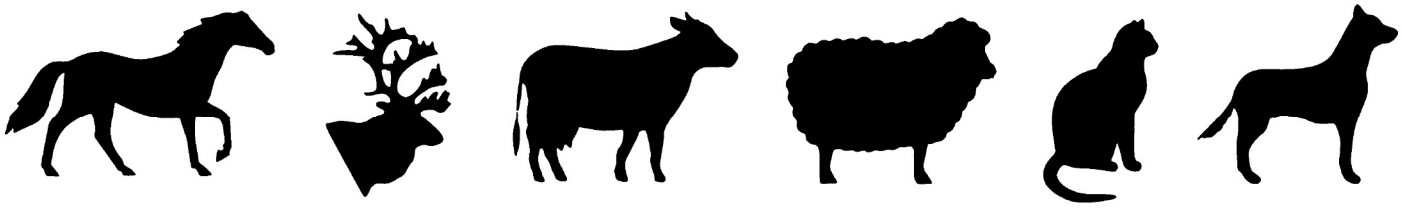
Please remember to get your forms back to us and book in for your PAR consults. Time is running out before calving! If you are popping into town or into the clinic to collect something ring ahead and see if you could do your PAR consult at the same time. It really is quick and painless, most take about half an hour.

Hi and welcome to the June newsletter.

Winter has arrived and calving is again upon us so it's time to get prepared. Don't forget to top up your supplies before you start calving to save any late night panic. There is a checklist here to help you.

We are endeavouring to email all our newsletters rather than print them so we would appreciate your email address if we haven't already got it. We will soon also be sending the statements by email.
We know that a few of you are computer phobes so we will continue sending you printed copies.

Inside



Abortions

Although a low rate of abortion e.g. 1-2 per 100 cows can be normal, abortions that occur in clusters or at a higher rate are not.

The most common causes of abortion in New Zealand cows are Neospora, BVD, fungal causes (e.g. eating mouldy silage/hay), leptospirosis and Macrocarpa ingestion.

The cause of abortion is often difficult to diagnose. The more information we can get, the more chance we have of finding the cause. For investigation of aborted foetuses we ideally need the foetus itself, along with the placenta. A blood sample from the dam can also be helpful.

Neospora caninum has become one of the most common causes of abortion in NZ and recently we have seen some cases of this. Neospora is a protozoa and cows become infected from infected dog faeces. Not a lot is known about the disease and currently there is no treatment or vaccination available. Usually pregnant cows abort around 4-6 months gestation. Neospora positive cows can pass infection on to their calves before birth. Neospora positive cows are 2-3 times more likely to abort than Neospora negative cows. Aborted cows have a 5% chance of aborting again. The current recommendations for control/prevention include:

Removing aborted calves and placentae from paddocks.
Do not allow young dogs or pregnant bitches access to the farm.
Control stray dogs
Control BVD. BVD suppresses the immune system of the cow and is linked with Neospora abortion.

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NAIT Tagging

The new NAIT tagging system will be compulsory for cattle from the 1st of July 2012 and for deer from March 2013. We have been hearing a lot of mumbling and grumbling about the new system but there will be many benefits.

What does NAIT do?
The National Animal Identification and Tracing scheme will link, people, property and animals by tagging every cattle beast and deer with an electronic NAIT approved RFID (Radio Frequency Identification Device) ear tag.
The database will meet animal tracing requirements for NZ in a way that is consistent with the guidelines of the World Organisation for Animal Health and will provide lifelong animal traceability which will enhance NZ's biosecurity response and safeguard the NZ brand and farmer's income.

There are on-farm benefits of RFID tagging too such as:

- **Automated drafting of animals**
- **Accurate recording of production details about individual animals and using this data to support management decisions including:**
  - **-Regularly weighing animals to sell at optimal individual weights**
  - **-Tracking treatments**
  - **-Recording breeding information**
  - **-Measuring milk production**

Every person in charge of animals at a given location must register with NAIT and get a NAIT number (this is different to an AHB or dairy participant code, you will need to provide these numbers when you register).
You will need to:

- **Tag your cattle and deer with NAIT approved RFID ear tags**
- **Register with NAIT and get a NAIT number. Any properties within 20km of each other where the same person is in charge of the animals can be registered under the one NAIT number.**
- **Register your cattle with NAIT...you can do these things now.**
- **From July 2012 you will need to : Record all movements of cattle and deer off or onto your farm or property with NAIT (unless they are going direct to a NAIT accredited meat processor or NAIT accredited sale yard in which case stock movement swill be recorded for you).**
- **Record all deaths, losses or exports of live cattle and deer.**

Much more information can be found on the website www.nait.co.nz or by calling the NAIT contact centre on 0800 624 843.

Transition Cow Management

With the calving season rapidly approaching we need to look at transition management. Good transition manangement (3 weeks before and after calving) sets the herd up to achieve good milk yields and fertility, however poor management at transition time can adversely affect production and fertility.

The focus of the transition period is to prepare the cow for the change from dry to lactating. The most important part of transition management is to maintain appetite. In the 1-2 weeks before calving, cows experience a reduction in appetite which unfortunately coincides with an increase in energy demand. A cow requires 11-12 kgDM of a high quality ration up to calving, after which intake should be ad lib.

Here are a few guidelines for transition management:

- Avoid sudden changes in diet around calving. Be sure to get animals used to different feeds gradually, prior to the crucial period so their rumen is prepared to get the best out of the feed and the animals become accustomed to the taste. Introduce Palm kernel / maize silage 3 weeks prior to calving (springers) if it is to be fed to the milkers.
- Maintain high fibre levels in the diet to prevent sub-clinical acidosis.
- Make sure trace element status is monitored and adequate. Copper and selenium are most important.
- Magnesium chloride or magnesium sulphate are suitable for supplementation prior to calving. They are best delivered mixed with the feed by diluting the required amount (60-100g/cow/day) with water and molasses for palatability, and spraying this solution on silage or hay. Remember cows have a daily requirement for magnesium and do not store it in the body, unlike calcium
- DO NOT give additional calcium prior to calving.
- Draft off cows from the dry mob to the springers weekly and accurately.
- Immediately post-calving give a starter drench to each cow such as “Starter Plus” to help prevent milk fever and ketosis. Most cows experience some degree of metabolic disturbance at calving time and are often in a state of negative energy balance. Drenching with a starter drench helps balance the energy requirements, stimulates appetite and improves metabolic function giving them a head start in
- counteracting negative energy balance. We can organise Starter Plus drench for you and have it delivered directly to your farm.
- After calving when cows are in the colostrum mob, supplement magnesium. The best form of magnesium after calving is magnesium oxide (MgO, Causmag). It can be drenched at 40-70g/cow/day or dusted at 70-100g/cow/day.
- Calcium may be supplemented after calving. Limeflour is a good source and can be mixed with MgO and dusted on feed.
- Treat any disease conditions promptly and appropriately.

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Calf Testing For BVD

Testing replacement calves for BVD is an important tool in managing/preventing BVD in cattle herds. The options for testing include blood sampling or ear notch testing.

We can come out and take blood samples, this can be done at any age, including newborn calves before they leave the shed allowing for early diagnosis of persistent infections.

Another option is to use the ear notching kit (we have one you can borrow or you can purchase your own through LIC) and collect the samples yourself. This method is currently recommended for calves 5 weeks old and over.

Cost wise the ear notch testing works out around $15 per animal and for a pooled antigen PCR test on blood it works out at around $9 per animal (there will also be a visit fee).

Please contact us at the clinic for further information.