

## RAMGUARD– INCREASING THE TOLERANCE TO FACIAL ECZEMA IN NEW ZEALAND SHEEP

Facial eczema is regarded as a non issue by many sheep and beef farmers in the far North but recent blood tests have highlighted a higher than expected prevalence of the disease this season. Deaths in mixed aged and two tooth ewes over the previous two months can be attributed to facial eczema in many cases.

Ramguard, a commercial service run by Agresearch provides facial eczema toxin to ram breeders to dose their sheep at a specific dose rate allowing the farmers to mark their farms on degree of resistance.

As the heritability to resistance to facial eczema is high the flocks that have been on this program long term now have animals that are tolerant to all but the most severe outbreaks of facial eczema.

If you are not already buying rams from a 'Ramguard' breeder now is the time to consider it!



## BEARINGS IN EWES

Two recent New Zealand studies to identify the factors associated in ewes highlighted the following:

- Risk of prolapsing in a mixed age ewe was 5.3x higher in a twin bearing ewe and 11.3 x higher in a triplet bearing ewe
- Moderate to steep lambing paddocks
- Multiple lambs detected at scanning
- Weight gain between the start of mating and scanning



Neither culling policies for female offspring of affected ewes or feeding hay or grain in late pregnancy influenced incidence at farm level.

## NEW PRODUCT Switch Fluke10



Switch fluke 10 is new and the only oral combination drench (abamectin and levamisole) with triclabendazole (fasinet) on the market providing high efficacy against all worm types and immature as well as mature liverfluke. TopVets rate this product as the best product on the market for complete liverfluke and worm control.

# TOPVETS

# Moosletter

May 2015

## DAIRY COW LAMENESS SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS.

Pencil in your diaries the 9th and 10th of July.

We are lucky enough to have Neil Chesterton coming to the Far North to run a seminar on lameness prevention on the 9th and hoof trimming workshops on the 10th.

The seminar will either be a midday or early evening affair to be held at the RSA.

Places will be limited for the trimming workshops. A number of people have indicated they are interested, but we will need to confirm actual numbers as soon as possible. At this stage the presentations and workshops will be subsidised by the vet club for its members. A quick check has shown that most of our regular dairy clients are members so there would be no charge. We will be ringing around to confirm numbers closer to the time.



## WELCOME TO THE MAY NEWSLETTER.

Summer it seems has departed, the nights are drawing in and winter is nearly upon us. On the bright side, hopefully most of us can now take a bit of a break before calving starts.

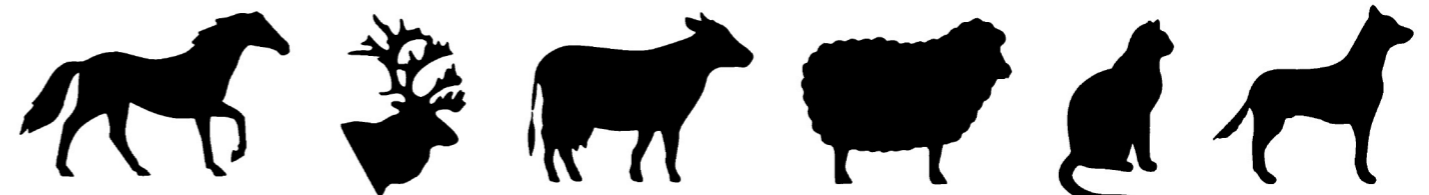


SORRY, SON...THERE'S NO APP FOR THAT

## I n s i d e

- Dairy cow lameness
- Abortions
- Transition Cow Management
- Liver copper levels
- Arthritic working dogs
- New products
- Bearings in Ewes

# TOPVETS



## Abortions

We have had quite few farmers experiencing runs of abortions this year. We have diagnosed fungal infections and Neospora most commonly and in some cases no specific causative agent could be identified.

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 a full investigation of abortion we need the foetus, the placenta and a blood sample from the dam. Even if we have all 3 pieces of the puzzle generally the diagnosis rate is approx. 50%.

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.

## Know your copper status: Liver sampling

Copper is a complex trace element and deficiency is common in NZ herds, particularly over winter. Copper deficiency decreases production and reproduction performance in adult cattle, and limits growth rates in young stock.

Copper is stored in the liver. Only when liver stores are completely depleted will blood levels drop and signs of deficiency be seen. By taking liver samples in late autumn we can predict whether liver stores will be adequate over winter, or whether supplementation is required.

Knowing your copper status can allow you to intervene and supplement your herd before production losses occur. It can also prevent over supplementation, which is not only unnecessary but can lead to copper toxicity, particularly when multiple sources of copper are being used.



There are two methods by which we can measure liver copper levels:

- Testing cull cow livers at the works:** 4-6 liver samples from cull cows is a good method of assessing copper levels in cattle, but it is important that the sampled cows are representative of the herd. If you are sending cull cows this autumn, now is a good time to gain valuable information from cull liver samples.
- Liver Biopsies:** This sounds quite invasive but it is a routine procedure done using local anaesthetic. A small puncture wound is made in the side of the cow and a biopsy punch is used to take a sample from the liver. The cows can then be returned to the herd immediately. With good facilities the procedure usually takes less than an hour to sample 4-6 cows.

Come in and talk to us about copper and trace element testing for your herd. Once we know your copper status we can help you develop a supplementation plan that meets your farm's specific requirements.

## Transition Cow Management

With the calving season rapidly approaching we need to look at transition management. Good transition management (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.



## Arthritis in your working dog

With the winter fast approaching you might start to see some changes in your trusty work companion. These changes might include a hesitance to rise out of bed or to jump on the back of the bike and stiffness when walking. All these signs might indicate your pet is suffering from arthritis. Joint pain/ arthritis is common in dogs and is by no means an 'old dog' problem.



Trocoxil is a new drug in the treatment of arthritis in dogs. It is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) and because of its very slow rate of elimination from the body it only needs to be given once a month!

We think Trocoxil is a great option for treatment of arthritis and has been proven to show an improvement in lameness and quality of life in dogs with established osteoarthritis. So if you have a dog suffering osteoarthritic pain or think they may be, please come in and talk to us about whether this drug may be suitable. Remember your working dog is worth more than an extra set of hands on most farms throughout the district.

We also recommend minimising the ground work they do during the day. This might mean putting them on the quad bike or in a trailer rather than making them run for miles to get to the job.