



October 2014

## What to Expect From Your Newborn Foal

A healthy foal should:

- Sit up on sternum within a couple of minutes
- Attempt to stand within 30 minutes and be standing within 1-2 hours.
- Within 30 minutes should have active suckle reflex and be nursing within 2-3 hours— colostrum is vitally important for providing antibodies which the foal relies on for a healthy immune system.
- Pass meconium (first faeces) within 8-12 hours. Excessive straining or signs of colic (abdominal pain) could indicate a meconium impaction and requires veterinary assistance. Meconium is dark brown/black in colour and pasty. After passing the initial meconium, the milk faeces is light yellowish brown in colour.
- Foal should be urinating within 6-12 hours after birth. Check there is no urine dripping from umbilical cord. New foals will show signs of drowsiness/sleep 1.5-4 hours after birth, may play as early as 2 hours old and are often galloping around by 6-7 hours.

A foal should consume around 10-20% of its bodyweight in milk per day. They should suckle several times in an hour.

At several days old many foals will be seen to eat their mother's faeces. This behaviour is normal in foals of this age.

Sick foals can go downhill very quickly. Early care is vital if you notice a problem.



With daylight saving now here it is starting to finally feel like spring!

Mating is underway for many of our dairy herds and inside is some information on bull management. We think a lot about the cows at mating time but sometimes not enough thought is put into the bull side of things. Also we have some tips on how to set yourself up for a successful mating period.

This time of the year is also the time that many foals are born so we have some information about what is normal for a newborn foal. It is important to monitor foals and act on any signs of illness early as sick foals can go downhill very quickly.

## I N S I D E

- What to Expect From Your Newborn Foal
- Bull management
- Set Yourself Up for a Successful Mating
- Brief News



## **Bull Management**

With the mating season upon us it is important to think about your bull requirements and management ahead of time.

- Age wise for breeding bulls 15 months to 4 years is ideal
- Minimum 1 bull/25-30 cows not in calf to AI.
- Then double the number to allow for rotation of bulls, especially early on when most cows will be cycling. Allow bulls to rest every few days.
- Size wise bulls should not be less than 2/3 the size of the mature cows and no more than 1/3 bigger.

### **Bull Fertility**

#### *Physical health and disease*

-overall health

-good body condition (BSC 6)

-good leg and foot conformation

-free from disease, it's a good idea to blood test for BVD and EBL prior to the mating season.

-vaccinated for BVD, leptospirosis and clostridial disease and on an appropriate drenching programme. Any booster vaccinations should be given at least 2 weeks before the bulls go in with the cows.



*Semen quality and quantity*—testicle size is closely correlated with semen quantity and quality. You can use a piece of string to measure around the scrotum at the widest point. Yearlings should be at least 32cm, 2 year olds over 36cm and older bulls over 40cm.

### **Bull Management**

- To reduce fighting amongst bulls at mating time, group bulls together well before mating starts. Where possible choose bulls of a similar age and size, from the same mob. Overly aggressive bulls should be avoided.
- Split bulls into two teams and rotate every 1-3 days. This will give them a chance to rest, will help reduce foot wear and lameness and allow them to eat fully.
- Observe daily and remove any bulls that are lame, are not serving correctly, are fighting, are overly aggressive, or are losing condition excessively. Any bull that is sick or has footrot should be treated promptly as high body temperature can cause temporary infertility that may last for several weeks.
- Reduce amount of time bulls spend standing on concrete yards and races (put them straight into a paddock when they arrive on farm and where possible keep them out of the yard at milking time).

## Set Yourself Up for a Successful Mating

This month we are focusing in the Pre-Mating period. This is a time where you get an idea of how well your herd is going to perform once mating starts.

Ensure you make good use of this last opportunity to proactively intervening with your herd's mating performance as it will help you get more cows in calf quicker and capture the benefits of all the good work done to date.

Here are 6 tips to help you get started and achieve success for your pre-mating period:

**Monitor pre-mating heats** - If you track where your herd is at before mating starts you can make informed and proactive decisions that can ensure you hit your 90% 3 week Submission Rate target and help improve your herd's 6 week in-calf rate for the upcoming mating season.

**Check At-risk cows** - Calving difficulties, diseases, lateness of calving and BCS below target are factors that can affect your cow's ability to become pregnant faster so get these girls examined by your vet.

**Have a plan in place** - If 75% of your herd have not had a heat by 10 days before Mating Start Date you need to take action. Having a clear strategy to achieve mating target, communicating it to staff, vets and AB providers and ensuring implementation is crucial for 6 week in-calf rate success!

**Consider preferentially managing cows at risk of becoming a non-cycler** - Identify which groups are commonly non-cyclers in your herd and minimise stress in these groups by either increase feeding or once a day milking. Timing is very important as these options need to be implemented well before mating in order to show any effect on in-calf rates.

**Ensure staff are fully competent in picking cows on heat** - The pre-mating period presents a great opportunity to have a refresher on heat detection to ensure all key staff are capable of picking cows on heat even if it is not part of their usual responsibilities. One never knows when the main heat detection person will be unavailable. Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) and written plans are necessary to cover off risk on your farm.

**Ensure staff get a break between calving and mating** - Exhaustion is a common reason for lack of focus, interest and mistakes. Make sure staff get a break!

For more information on the mating period management go to chapters 10 and 11 of the DairyNZ InCalf book, pages 77 to 104 (available from <http://www.dairynz.co.nz/file/fileid/35348>).

For one-on-advice and support specific to your farm, phone the clinic to make an appointment with one of the team.

You might also be interested in LIC's 6 Week Challenge - a free programme which provides farmers with a year-round guide to improving herd reproductive performance.

Visit [www.6.weeks.co.nz/register](http://www.6.weeks.co.nz/register) to register and receive a range of information and tools to get more cows in-calf quicker at mating time.



## Cancer Eye

We are frequently asked to examine cattle with cancer eye, often for certification for transport. Frequently the lesions are too far advanced to be certified for transport or for treatment to be undertaken.

Please, if you notice a cancer eye lesion, get us to look at it as soon as possible. Lesions often look like a red spot on the eyelid, third eyelid or sometimes the eye itself. Early intervention is crucial and owners/persons in charge can face prosecution under the Animal Welfare Act if they are not proactive either in seeking veterinary treatment or culling.

In many cases, if only the third eyelid is involved with a small lesion, we can remove the cancer along with a piece of the third eyelid. Another treatment option suitable in some cases is to remove the whole eye including the eyelids.

Even if you are just wanting to send a cow with a cancer eye to the works, there are strict criteria it must meet in order for it to be certifiable for transport. Only cows with early stage lesions can be certified and lesions must only involve the eye/eyelid and be up to the size of a \$2 coin. If lesions are likely to bleed or are more advanced they cannot be certified for transport.

The take home message is get any suspected cancer eye cases checked early!



## Brief News

### Pre-Mating Blood Profiles

Checking the trace element status of the dairy/beef herd prior to the breeding season will help us recognise any deficiencies or problems and correct them before mating.

This helps to ensure that your cows have the best possible chance to cycle and conceive early in the mating period.

Give us a ring at the clinic to book an appointment.

.....

### Dog (and Cat) Vaccination Run

We will be doing the annual dog (and cat) vaccination run again in November. If your animals were vaccinated on the run last year we will be in touch with a day and time for this year. If you haven't been part of the run previously but would like to be, please contact us at the clinic.

.....

### Merial-Ancare Cattle Spring Promotion

Purchase selected Merial Ancare drench and receive gardening tools from Fiskars or Joseph Bentley. Until 31st October or while stocks last.



# TOPVETS

17 Matthews Ave  
PO Box 409  
Kaitia

Phone: 09-408-2838  
Fax: 09-408-2839

E-mail: [admin@topvets.co.nz](mailto:admin@topvets.co.nz)

