



Cow Vets' Chronicle

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Fonterra Co-Operative Difference

By now, those of you who are Fonterra suppliers should be familiar with the requirements for the upcoming season should you wish to be part of their 'Co-operative difference' programme. Part of the requirements ask you to have and implement an animal wellbeing plan, written in conjunction with your vet. We see this as a great opportunity to sit down with you and your team over a coffee, assess last years performance and set some goals for the coming season. While these health plans can be completed at any time during the season we think the most value would be in completing them NOW!... Before the start of the next calving season and while you have a moment to pause and gather the required data.



Please speak to one of the team if you would like to get this booked in the next month or so.

Latest News

Welcome to our new newsletter!

We hope to keep you informed of the latest news and views from in and around the clinic!

Thank you to everyone who came to our client race night at Cambridge raceway at the end of May. It was great to catch up with so many of you off farm and we hope you enjoyed the evening as much as we did!

Despite having a number of winners on the night it would be safe to say no one won enough to retire from dairy farming any time soon!

Winter management tips

Low BCS cows

Ideally cows should have been dried off in calving condition or very close to it. If condition score was not at target at drying off, do not go all out to gain the missing condition during the late dry period. Fat cows that have gained weight quickly while dry are a liability at calving time if not managed properly. It is better to ensure they do not lose any condition during the dry period and concentrate on transition management, ensuring springers and calving cows have increasing energy intakes.

- Use hay or straw for the "fill effect", and to help keep lighter conditioned cows warm during winter.
- Aim to feed milkers as much as possible to minimise condition loss.

How to avoid nitrate poisoning

- Test for nitrate levels in 'at risk' crops, especially grass crops before first their grazing, or in cloudy conditions — kits are available at the clinic
- If there is a risk of high nitrate levels then ensure cows are fed before grazing the crop
- Only graze risky crops for 1-2 hours, preferably in the afternoon when the crop has had maximum exposure to sunlight to help decrease the nitrate levels.



✓ To do this month

- Enjoy a well earned lie in!
- Get your animal health plan updated for the season ahead
- Plan for magnesium supplementation
- Consider doing some pre-calving bloods to check your mineral supplementation is working
- Get your herds scour and leptospirosis vaccines booked in
- Have a pre-calving meeting with your team



Magnesium Supplementation.

Magnesium is the most important element for dairy cattle in NZ, and the most commonly occurring major nutrient deficiency seen on farms. Of primary concern is the fact that low magnesium levels predispose cows to milk fever. Deficiency is often due to a combination of seasonally low concentrations in herbage, low retention of magnesium by animals, restricted feed intake and increased requirements in winter and early lactation. It is important to remember that cows cannot store magnesium in their systems, so they are totally reliant on the magnesium they ingest each day from pasture and supplements to maintain normal levels.

The key factors that inhibit uptake of magnesium by the cow are high protein, high potassium and low dry matter grass, more or less the conditions we have at present.

Cows that are fed well and are in reasonable condition will achieve optimum magnesium levels with a quality magnesium supplement. Conversely, with restricted feeding levels magnesium quality becomes more important as cows will struggle to uptake adequate amounts. If cows calve down at lower condition scores combined with low feed intakes before and after calving, then metabolic problems are likely to be an issue. With poor storage ability and poor gut absorption purity and mesh size of Magnesium products becomes critical.

Good quality magnesium is worth the investment. Magnesium Oxide for dusting should be a minimum 94% purity and a minimum 150 mesh size. Dust at a rate of 70-90 grams/cow per day, increasing to 120g/day in wet weather. Make sure that the entire break is evenly dusted. Magnesium Oxide for drenching should be a minimum 98% purity and minimum 250 mesh size. Cows should be dosed with 30-40 grams per day, preferably in split doses.

Magnesium For Trough Treatment

Instead of dusting, magnesium may be added to the cow's drinking water via an in-line dispenser or trough dispenser. One drawback of this system is the risk of low uptake if cows have access to other sources of water or during rainy weather, as cows won't drink much trough water – in this situation dusting should be employed as well.

For trough treatment use either magnesium sulphate or magnesium chloride. Start with a low dose of mag-c, as this has a higher magnesium level, increasing over 2-3 weeks to the desired dose. Remember that higher dose rates are unpalatable, so a flavourant should be added to the water to maintain intakes. We have found that apple based products work best. The recommended dose of mag-c is about 100-120 grams/cow/day however at this rate the cows may not drink the water and damage to the gut may occur. Doses above 100 grams of mag-sulphate/cow/day can also result in scouring. Therefore a combination of the two is the safest option with most herds opting to use 60g of each. Ask your vet about the correct rates for your farm.

Assessing your herd

Pre-calving bloods are a great way to see if your transition mineral management is working and can help us to find a potential issue before the down cows appear! As few as 10 blood samples from a mob can give us a good idea of herd status so speak to one of the team if this is something you would like to check out.