

# NEWSLETTER

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## **New vet Carly**

We are pleased to have Carly Brownlow join our team of vets. Carly graduated in 2017 from Wagga and has been working at Border vets in Cohuna. She decided to work with us so that she could do more cattle work.

Carly hails from NSW, just north of Sydney. She brings with her a real interest in dairy medicine and a can-do attitude. She has very quickly shown herself to be a valuable member of our team.

## **Theileriosis**

Theileriosis is a disease of cattle caused by a parasite that invades blood cells. It is thought to be mainly transmitted by the cattle tick (Haemophysalis) or possibly by the native bush tick. As far as we can work out, we do not have the cattle tick in northern Victoria which leaves the bush tick as the most likely culprit.

We have seen odd cases of Theileriosis in milkers in wetter than usual years and all our confirmed cases up until now have been around Nanneella and Koyuga.

The latest case has affected a group of recently joined heifers that were happy and healthy until two weeks ago when one of the heifers was found dead. A further three heifers died over the next few days and another dozen or so heifers were noticed to be losing weight, not eating and lethargic.

Theileriosis affects cattle by destroying red blood cells, so cattle are anaemic, jaundiced and have a high fever (>40° C). They are lethargic and lose weight quickly. When cows are jaundiced the easiest place to see if they look yellow is to look inside the vulva.

Treatment with oxytet seems to help these heifers but the main strategy is to reduce stress as much as possible by reducing handling and unnecessary movement.

## **Seasonal reminders:**

- Vaccinate spring calves with 7-in-1 vaccine from 6 weeks of age followed by a booster 4 to 6 weeks later.



- Bulls should be fertility tested and vaccinated against vibrio and pestivirus (BVD) at least 2 weeks before you plan to use them.
- Autumn born calves may benefit from a fluke drench now. It is not usually necessary to treat spring calves until January.
- If you have used a bull at the end of the autumn joining watch out for the possibility of early spring calving cows and heifers getting pregnant when they have only been calved as little as 3 weeks.

These heifers had not been out of the district and there had been no cattle introduced to the farm. Theileriosis is a bigger problem in coastal NSW and in Gippsland and the Western District in Victoria, so it is a bit of a mystery how these heifers became so severely affected.

Theileriosis is usually associated with stress, but these heifers were living a fairly stress-free existence.

The best way to diagnose Theileriosis is to take a blood sample from an affected animal. We can examine the blood smear under the microscope and if we are suspicious, we will send the sample off for confirmation with a PCR test.

## Synchronisation Programs

There is no *'one size fits all'* synchrony. We encourage you to talk to one of our vets about what program might best suit your needs.

Synchronisation programs can be confusing – there are many to choose from and lots of different terms used. We have been using Synch programs (and its variations) for many years with reasonable results.

## Bull testing

When we test bulls, we find that about one in every five or six fails. The reasons vary but most often are related to poor semen quality. The bulls that we fail usually look otherwise normal.

Sometimes the bulls that we fail have problems that allow them to fertilise a cow but for the pregnancy to then fizzle out. These **non-compensable** bulls are worse than no bull at all as they stop other bulls from getting cows pregnant.

At current chopper prices it makes a lot of sense to get your bulls checked and to turn them into meat if they are duds. There may never be a better

time to get rid of bulls that are not able to do their job.

In order to test bulls, the main requirement we have is a good sturdy crush and yards. The job is made easier if there is some shade where we can set up the microscope to examine the semen.

It is also a good opportunity to vaccinate bulls against vibrio and pestivirus if they are in the crush.

## Bulls and BVD

As we have mentioned in earlier newsletters, we have found that most local dairy herds are either currently infected with bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) or have a history of BVD.

Bulls usually spend their lives in small groups when they are young where it is unlikely that they will be exposed to BVD. If their first exposure to BVD is while they are first put with a group of heifers or cows, then they will suffer from temporary infertility.

There is not likely to be any obvious outward sign of infection with BVD in a bull. All you will notice is that there are more empty or late calving cows.

We recommend that all bulls should be vaccinated with **Pestigard**. Initially bulls should receive two doses of vaccine 4 weeks apart. After that bulls require a booster vaccination a month or so prior to joining. If you use bulls twice a year, we recommend that bulls be vaccinated before each joining.



## Other bull diseases

We also recommend that bulls should be vaccinated with **Vibriovax**. Vibriosis is a venereal disease that causes early abortions that are usually not detected. It is a difficult disease to diagnose so we are not sure how much vibriosis is about. We think that there might be more vibriosis around than there was previously because more herds are split calving and carrying cows over.

The same rules apply to **Vibriovax** as **Pestigard**. If bulls have not been vaccinated previously, they require two injections followed by an annual booster.

It is probably a good idea to vaccinate bulls with **7-in-1** or at least **5-in-1** at the same time. Do not forget to worm and fluke drench bulls. Now is a good time to do all these things.

## Lame bulls

Bulls are less likely to go lame if they do not go on the concrete and do not eat the milker ration. Because bulls are rotated in and out of the herd, they only get fed grain in bursts and are much more prone to getting acidosis and subsequent feet problems.