

NEWSLETTER

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Seasonal reminders:

- Put a halter on down cows with a prolapsed uterus as soon as you find them. When cows get up and walk the prolapsed uterus stretches and bangs into the cow's hocks.



- Treat dirty cows with metricure early. Dirty cows treated with metricure two weeks after calving are twice as likely to get in calf as those not treated.
- Use Vetrelyte-ZB calf electrolyte for scouring calves. Feedback from calf rearers who use Vetrelyte-ZB is that it is a superior product for treating dehydrated calves.

Keith's milestone birthday

Keith has reached the milestone birthday of 60! We would like to wish Keith a happy birthday!



Vaccines at Lockington shop

Please ring ahead if you would like to get vaccines from our Lockington shop. We carry a limited range at Lockington and sometimes are found short in larger orders.

Uterine pessaries

It seems logical to treat cows with retained afterbirth with pessaries in the uterus to try and reduce the chance of infection. Studies have shown that in many cases pessaries do not help cows with retained afterbirth and maybe even make things worse.

It may be that pessaries can slow the "rotting" process of the afterbirth and increase the time that the afterbirth is retained. It is thought that the presence of antibiotics in the uterus decreases the production of white cells in the uterus as well as reducing the effectiveness of white cells in the uterus.

There is more and more evidence that the best treatment for cows with retained afterbirth is to do nothing unless the cow is sick (has a temperature above 39⁰ C). If the cow is unwell then she should be treated with an injectable antibiotic such as Oxytet. If she is very sick, then she will benefit from veterinary help with anti-inflammatory drugs or fluids.

If you want to use pessaries, we recommend that you: -

- Administer them within the first week of calving while the cervix is open, and they are easily introduced.
- Do **not** use them when the afterbirth is still present.
- Give cows that are not well injectable antibiotics.

In general, we recommend the following treatment protocol for dirty cows: -

- Retained membranes should be left to rot out and not removed with force.
- Pessaries should not be used until the afterbirth has come away.
- Metricures are the best treatment for cows that have an infection in the uterus and should be used between 1 and 6 weeks after calving.

Metacam, mastitis and fertility

Recent studies into the effect of using the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) Metacam in cases of mastitis have yielded some interesting results for cow fertility.

A 2009 study in New Zealand found that cows with mastitis that received a dose of Metacam (along with standard antibiotic therapy) were **42%** less likely to be culled. The most likely reason was that fewer of these cows were empty at the end of the season.

Subsequent studies have confirmed that this reduced culling rate is due to improved fertility - with a **10% improvement in first service conception rate**, a reduction in the number of required inseminations and **increased probability of cows being in calf at 120 days** post calving.

Most of the mastitis cases were at or around calving so we are not sure of the exact mechanism, but it may have something to do with the effect on the oocyte when the cow has mastitis.

It is important to note that in these studies the mastitis was mild clinical mastitis where the cow was not sick.

There is also evidence to suggest that Metacam has positive effects on the outcome of mastitis treatment – Metacam used with an antibiotic was found to result in a 16% improvement in bacteriological cure rates when compared to antibiotic alone. This means more cows can eliminate the causative bacteria from their udders.

It has always made sense to give cows that are sick a dose of Metacam but

now we have good evidence that all cows with clinical mastitis will benefit from treatment.

Hardware disease (Vagal indigestion)

Some season we see several “mini outbreaks” of hardware disease which is technically known as traumatic reticuloperitonitis (TRP).

The most common cause of hardware disease is a piece of wire between 5 and 8 cm long.



We think the main reason for the increase in cases is because feed has been sourced from unusual suppliers. There is more likely to be pieces of metal from old fences in crops that have failed or on land that was fenced off for grazing and then converted to hay. The other risk factor is using a mixer wagon without a magnet. Longer pieces of wire are chopped up to a more dangerous length. When a cow eats a piece of wire most of them sit in their reticulum (stomach 1) and don't cause any trouble, but a percentage manage to poke through. This usually happens in the reticulum which has a honeycomb shaped lining. One end of the wire gets caught in a honeycomb cell and when the reticulum contracts the other end is pushed through into the abdomen. Once stomach contents leak out into the abdomen the cow will develop peritonitis which is an infection of the abdomen (peritonitis). Sometimes this infection is walled off and localised and sometimes it spreads throughout the whole abdomen.

Cows with early-stage hardware disease often show vague symptoms. They are off their milk and not eating, may have a slight fever are reluctant to move and may have an arched back. Many cows improve after a course of antibiotics if they can wall off the infection but other cows with a more widespread infection get slowly worse and lie down and die.

Another group of cows get over the infection but develop vagal indigestion. These cows end up with a

big, bloated rumen that does not contract normally.

In severe cases the wire migrates to the heart and causes an infection around the heart. These animals inevitably die or must be euthanised.

Prevention of hardware disease. It seems logical to treat cows affected with hardware disease with a magnet that sits inside the reticulum. There is some evidence that these do help a percentage (45%) of cows to pull the wire back into the rumen. Another option is to put a magnet into every cow.

During seasons where feed is scarce it is difficult to knock back hay that is from a dubious source. If you are worried that there might be wire in hay it is likely to be safer to feed the hay in a rack rather than through a mixer wagon. If possible, putting magnets on feed out wagons can collect wire in the feed source.

Claire and Frankie get memberships

Both Claire and Frankie undertook a series of examinations to become a member of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists.

Claire did her memberships in Behavioural Medicine and Frankie did her memberships in Sheep Medicine.

Membership of the College should signify the following:

“The candidate is expected to demonstrate a high level of interest and competence in a given area of veterinary activity. This is judged by that standard of knowledge and understanding, practical skills, attitude, methodology and communication which would make the person suitable to give professional advice to veterinary colleagues not similarly qualified on problems or procedures often encountered or used in general practice, in the relevant area of veterinary endeavour”

We congratulate both Claire and Frankie on this mighty achievement!