

# NEWSLETTER

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**Seasonal reminders:**

- Check cows for early signs of eye cancer when drying off. Eye cancers can progress to a state where they are beyond treatment during the dry period.



- A long dry period will help cure existing infections in the udder. Consider drying off high cell count cows a few weeks earlier to maximise their chance of a cure.
- Disbudding calves – a good age to have them done is between 2 and 8 weeks of age.

**Gabe's Milestone Birthday**

Gabe, our wonderful practice manger has reached the milestone birthday of 60! We would like to wish Gabe a happy birthday!



**Cepravin v Juraclox dry cow**

We are convinced that Sureseal together with antibiotic dry cow is the best treatment to prevent mastitis at calving.

When cows are treated with a combination of Sureseal and antibiotic dry cow the reduction in cases of clinical mastitis is so significant that most farmers have continued using a combination treatment.

Cepravin DC is more expensive than Juraclox and has a 49-day milk withholding period compared with 35 days for Juraclox. It is essential that you have accurate calving dates before you use Cepravin DC. Otherwise, there is the risk of cows calving within the withholding period. The best way to get accurate calving dates is by pregnancy testing early. It is too late now to get accurate calving dates for most spring calving cows.

We have good evidence that Cepravin DC alone is better at preventing mastitis at calving than Juraclox alone. We do not have good evidence either way to say whether Juraclox combined with Sureseal is better than Cepravin DC alone.

We do know that Juraclox combined with Sureseal is less likely to give you residue problems than Cepravin DC alone.

We do **not** have any evidence to say that Cepravin DC is better than Juraclox at curing existing infections and there is no reason to treat high cell count cows with Cepravin DC and expect to get better cure rates. The Pfizer mastitis survey that recorded the cause of clinical mastitis on five of our herds in the 2011

calendar year found that *E coli* mastitis was much more prevalent than we thought. The antibiotic in Cepravin DC is effective against *E coli* but the antibiotic in Juraclox is not.

If you suspect that you have an *E coli* mastitis problem at calving, then the most rational dry cow treatment is Cepravin DC plus Sureseal. The best way to determine if you have an *E coli* problem is to culture cases of clinical mastitis in fresh cows.

## Mastitis in dry cows



A recent case of mastitis in freshly dried off cows highlights the importance of good hygiene. Three out of 25 cows died from mastitis between 2 and 4 days after drying of.

The bug that caused this outbreak was *Pseudomonas* which we see only very occasionally. Unfortunately, *Pseudomonas* infections do not respond to any of the antibiotics that we are able to use in cows.

In this case tubes of Sureseal were left in an open bucket in the dairy where they were contaminated with manure. The tubes were washed with cold water and left to dry.

We know that pseudomonas is found in water and not in cow manure, so it is likely that the source of the infection was the water used to wash off the manure.

It is good practice to only get out as many tubes as you need for that day and leave the tubes inside next to a heater or fire to warm them, rather than placing them in warm water.

## Paspalum Staggers

We have seen one case of Paspalum staggers in some calves this Autumn. Three of 9 calves were affected.

Paspalum staggers is a neurological condition affecting cattle of all ages,

but mostly seen in calves and yearlings.

This condition emerges when cattle graze on paspalum grass infected with a specific fungus, *Claviceps paspali*. While paspalum grass itself is a common forage in many regions, the fungal infection transforms it into a toxic hazard for grazing animals.

The fungus produces ergot alkaloids, potent neurotoxins that disrupt neurotransmission in the brain and spinal cord. As cattle ingest contaminated grass over time, the cumulative effects of these toxins lead to the characteristic neurological symptoms observed in affected animals.

The affected pastures seed heads initially have a sticky yellow-grey appearance (so called 'honeydew' stage). Later the seed appear black and become hard, round and roughened (2-4mm in diameter).



Affected cattle stagger and may fall over, have generalised muscle tremors and have changes in behaviour (more excitable). If cattle are stressed in anyway, for example moving them from one paddock to another, these signs may become more severe, and some affected animal may collapse and convulse. Death is uncommon, with most deaths occurring through misadventure (such as getting caught in a fence or dam).

Diagnosis is usually based on the clinical picture and the presence of infected seed heads in the pasture. There are no specific diagnostic tests available.

There is no specific treatment for Paspalum staggers. Affected cattle should be removed from the affected pastures as soon as possible and recovery is generally fast and uneventful. The affected calves on the

farm we diagnosed Paspalum staggers recovered over approximately 7 days.

Prevention is based on pasture management. Frequent grazing or topping of paspalum pastures will reduce the development of fungus-infected seed heads. Ideally, paspalum pastures should be regularly inspected for ergotised seed heads prior to cattle being turned out to the pasture.

## Dislocated hips

Dislocation of the hip is usually traumatic in origin (bulling injury or slipping over on concrete or trying or struggling to get up).

For the best chance of getting a successful outcome it is best to see the cow within 8 to 12 hours of dislocation. This is because if a cow is left longer, it is likely a blood clot and debris builds up in the joint space which makes it difficult to replace the hip.

It should also be noted that cows that are able to stand have a better prognosis than cows that can not stand.

Diagnosis of dislocation of the hip joint and the direction of the dislocation is determined by feeling the site of where the top of the femur is in relation to the pelvis. Most often the direction of the dislocation is forward and upwards (cranio-dorsal) in relation to the hip joint.

Treatment consists of heavily sedating the cow and apply traction to the affected leg using a pulley or calving jack. Once the hip has been replaced, the cow is left in the sitting position and left undisturbed to get up in her own time.

If we find the hip pops in and out very easily when the leg is manipulated, it is likely that the acetabulum (socket part of the hip joint) is fractured or badly damaged. The prognosis is therefore very poor.

All cows that have had their hip replaced should be given pain relief, either Meloxicam or Ketoprofen.