Rochester Veterinary Practice July 2025

NEWSLETTER

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Seasonal Reminders:

- Cows should calve in a clean environment, so preparation of this area should start soon. Also make sure calf sheds are clean before the first batch arrives.
- Check dry cows each week for mastitis. Walk around them and look for swollen quarters. Any quarters that have mastitis should be treated as you would treat an infected quarter during lactation. Do **not** touch the other quarters unless they look suspicious.
- Spray paint the leg that is lame if we are coming out to treat lame cows. Sometimes it is not obvious in a crush or when the cow is stirred up.

Vaccines and dry cow at Lockington and Dingee

We stock a limited amount of vaccines and dry cow products at our Lockington and Dingee clinics. We recommend ringing our Rochester practice and placing an order for these products the day before you would like to pick them up. We can then send your order out to Lockington and Dingee.

Q Fever REMINDER

There has been a recent rise in Q fever cases in farmers and farm workers in Victoria, including on properties in our region.

Q Fever posing a serious health risk to farmers, dairy workers and livestock handlers.

The disease is caused by the *Coxiella burnetii* bacteria, which spreads through dust, birth fluids, manure, urine and milk from infected animals.

Cattle often show no obvious signs but can still shed the bacteria, creating a long-term risk for both humans and the herd.

Effects on Cattle

✓ Subclinical Infection – Most cattle show no visible illness but may still carry and spread the bacteria.
✓ Reproductive Issues – In some cases, Q Fever has been linked to abortions, stillbirths and infertility.
✓ Ongoing Shedding – Infected cows may shed bacteria in milk, birth fluids and manure for months, increasing farm contamination risks.

Effects on Humans – More Than Just "Flu-Like"

Q Fever can cause severe illness in humans, often mistaken for the flu, but it can lead to serious long-term complications.
✓ Acute Symptoms:

-High fever, chills, profuse sweating
-Severe headache and muscle aches
-Pneumonia or hepatitis (liver inflammation)
-Extreme fatigue, which may last weeks or months
✓ Chronic Q Fever (1–5% of cases):
-Heart complications (endocarditis, potentially fatal)
-Chronic fatigue syndrome, lasting months or years
-Joint pain & inflammation
✓ At-Risk Groups:
-Dairy farmers, stock handlers, veterinarians, abattoir workers
-Pregnant women (risk of miscarriage or birth complications)
-People with heart conditions or weakened immune systems

Testing & Prevention

✓ Herd Testing:
Bulk milk PCR testing – Detects Q Fever bacteria shedding in the herd.
Blood testing – Confirms exposure in individual animals.
✓ Protecting Humans:
Vaccination – The most effective protection for high-risk workers. Screening is required before vaccination.
It is recommended all at risk personnel should be vaccinated against Q fever. Vets are required to be vaccinated against Q fever during their Veterinary Degree.
Hygiene & PPE – Use masks, gloves, and protective clothing when handling birth materials or working in dusty environments.
Dust Control – Keep yards and calving areas well-maintained to reduce airborne spread.

Lame cow tips

With the recent rain event (which has been great to see) we are starting to see a lot of lame cows.

What can we do to reduce the number of lame cows?

Do not force cows

Put the most relaxed and patient person on the farm in charge of getting cows. Disable the horn on the motorbike and tie up the dog.

As soon as cows are forced, they bunch together and lift their heads and are not able to choose where to place their feet. Slow and steady is better.

Do not force cows on the concrete yard either. If cows are scrabbling on concrete, they will wear out their feet even quicker.

Create a lame herd that does not have to walk far

Keep lame cows in a close paddock and think about milking them only once per day.

Get some rubber mats at critical points in the dairy

This is usually where cows enter the dairy. They often scrabble and fight to get in. Rubber mats will help prevent wear and tear. Cows exit from rotary platforms backwards and then pivot around. A rubber mat will help here as well.

Use Zinc sulphate to help toughen feet

Zinc sulphate can be used as a 5% solution in a footbath or can be used neat on carpet (or even concrete).

Put straw on the tracks

Straw on the tracks will soften the track and reduce the amount of bruising. In many dairies it is only necessary to put straw on the first 100 metres or so. Other tracks, with more cow traffic require straw on the first 200 to 300 metres. The improvement in cow comfort is rapid.

On some tracks it is necessary to replace the straw every week or 10 days.

Other options include rice hulls and old carpet.

When to treat lame cows?

Recent research has shown early treatment of lame cows improves the likelihood of recovery, reduced duration of lameness and reduced culling rates.

If a cow is lame for 2 weeks or more before treatment, only 15% are likely to recovery fully from the lameness event. These cows are also more likely to become lame in the opposite foot and are more likely to be culled from the herd.

Treating lame cows

Studies have shown treating a lame cow by lifting the affected foot, trimming the foot and paring out the lesion, applying a block or shoe to the unaffected claw and giving a NSAID course improves the clinical outcome greatly when compared to trimming alone, trimming and block, trimming and NSAID treatment. Cows treated in the manner are twice as likely to recover from the lameness event by day 35 post treatment.

Wooden blocks or plastic cowslips can be applied to the unaffected claw to lift the sore claw off the ground as well as protect the healthy claw from further wear and tear.

Penicillin **(NOT Excenel)** is the most appropriate antibiotic to use when there is an infection in soft tissues of the foot. A good rule of thumb is if there is any swelling above the hoof then antibiotics may be useful.

Penicillin is cheaper and more effective than Excenel (or Ceftiosan). The only advantage of Excenel is that there is no milk withhold.

Treating cows with an anti-inflammatory such as Ketoprofen or Metacam will improve cow welfare and may reduce duration of lameness.

Guide to withholding periods of Antibiotic Dry Cow Treatment

Product	Minimum Dry Period (MDP) Days	Meat Withholding	Milk Withholding if calving after MDP Days	Milk Withholding if calving ***before*** MDP Days	Calf Meat In cows that calve **before** the MDP	
					For calves that suckle – WHP after the calf's last suckle	**For calves that do not suckle –** WHP after date of dam's DCT
Cepravin Dry Cow	49	21	4 (8 milkings)	49+4 =53 Days after Drying-off	21	21
Juraclox	35	30	4	35	30	30
Cepralock#	0	0	4*	4*	0	0

* Milk or colostrum from freshly calved cows, whether they receive dry cow treatment or not, should not be used for human consumption for 4 days or 8 milkings after calving (at least 10 milkings in induced cows).
# If Cepralock is used in combination with an antibiotic then the withholding period for the antibiotic applies