



NEWSLETTER

In this issue:

- ◆ **Seasonal reminders**
- ◆ **New Vet Dr Ebony Davis**
- ◆ **Farewell Drs Frankie and Eve**
- ◆ **Lungworm in Calves**
- ◆ **Mesenteric Torsion in Dairy Cattle**
- ◆ **Uterine Torsion in Cattle**
- ◆ **Getting the Bull Team Ready for Spring Joining**

Seasonal reminders:

- Cows joined to calve in the autumn should be preg tested soon. We are better able to age pregnancies early on
- 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.



- Time to disbud the spring born calves. The ideal age for disbudding is 2 to 8 weeks
- 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.
- Spray paint the leg that is lame if we are coming out to treat lame cows. Sometimes the cow that is very obviously lame walking along the track can mask that lameness once she is stirred up and on concrete.

New Vet Dr Ebony Davis

This month we will be welcoming Dr Ebony to our vet team. Dr Ebony is originally from a dairy farm near Cobden, Southwest Victoria, but completed the Bachelor of Veterinary Biology / Bachelor of Veterinary Science at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga in July 2025.

Dr Ebony's veterinary interests include cattle medicine and herd health. Outside of vet, Dr Ebony loves spending her time playing netball, socialising with friends, and going home to help on the family farm.

Farewell Drs Frankie & Eve

After four years with our practice, Frankie, and after seven years, Eve, will be moving on to the next chapter of their veterinary careers.

Both Frankie and Eve have been highly valued members of our team. They will be greatly missed by colleagues and farmers alike.

We wish them every success as they take on new opportunities, and we look forward to seeing all the great things they will accomplish in the future.

Lungworm in calves

Lungworm disease is due to invasion of the respiratory tract by the worm *Dictyocaulus viviparus*, which may lead to bronchitis and pneumonia. Infection with *D. viviparus* occurs primarily in calves younger than 10 months of age but sometimes older cattle are affected.

Dairy calves are most vulnerable to lungworm disease, as they are often placed on paddocks grazed each year by successive groups of calves. Affected calves are usually bright and alert and continue to eat but lose condition rapidly. The calves may breathe more rapidly and often have sudden attacks of coughing.

Severely affected calves may breathe with their mouth open, extend their head and neck and stick out their tongue each time they try to cough. Secondary bacterial infections are common.

Treatment of affected calves generally involves drenching them as well as giving them anti-inflammatory drug (Metacam or ketoprofen) and an antibiotic to prevent secondary bacterial infections.

Lungworm is best prevented by



ensuring all calves are drenched appropriately

Mesenteric Torsion in Dairy Cattle

Mesenteric torsion is a rare but very serious condition in adult dairy cows. It occurs when a large section of the intestine twists around the mesentery (the tissue that supplies blood to the gut). This cuts off blood flow and quickly leads to tissue death.

Cows affected often present suddenly with severe abdominal pain, rapid deterioration, distended abdomen, and signs of shock. Unfortunately, the condition progresses rapidly and is usually fatal without immediate surgical intervention. The exact cause is not always clear, but sudden movements, calving, changes in feed intake, or excessive gas and gut motility may be contributing factors.

Veterinary Management

Diagnosis typically involves a physical exam, rectal palpation, and often exploratory surgery (laparotomy).

Treatment requires emergency surgery to untwist the intestine and remove any non-viable sections. Supportive care with intravenous fluids, pain relief, and shock management is also critical. Despite prompt care, the survival rate is low, but rapid recognition and veterinary intervention give the best chance of saving the cow.

****If a cow suddenly shows signs of severe colic or abdominal distension, urgent veterinary attention is essential!****

Uterine Torsion in Cattle

Uterine torsion is a serious calving problem seen most often in late-pregnant or calving cows. It occurs when the uterus twists along its long axis, usually during the onset of labour. This twist prevents normal delivery and, if not corrected, can compromise both the cow and the calf.

Cows with uterine torsion may show prolonged or difficult calving (dystocia), restlessness, straining with little progress, or may go off feed. On vaginal examination, the birth canal may feel tight, twisted, or closed.

Veterinary Management

Diagnosis is usually made by rectal or vaginal examination. Treatment involves carefully correcting the twist — this may be done by rolling the cow, using obstetrical instruments, or performing a caesarean section if correction is not

possible. Prompt intervention is important to maximise the chances of a live calf and to protect the health of the cow.

Key Point: If a cow is calving but making little or no progress, or if the birth canal feels abnormal, contact the practice. Early recognition and correction of a uterine torsion give the best outcome for both cow and calf.

Getting the Bull Team Ready for Spring Joining

It is common practice for artificial insemination (AI) to be used for the first few weeks of joining, with bulls being introduced afterwards to “mop up” empty cows. In synchrony programs, a high proportion of cows will be cycling together, which can place heavy demands on the bull team in the first week or so. Making sure bulls are fertile, fit, and ready is critical to achieving a tight calving pattern.

Pre-Joining Preparation

Timing: Bulls should be checked 6–8 weeks before joining to allow time for any corrective action. Remember that semen production takes around 6–7 weeks, so problems picked up too close to joining may not be correctable in time.

Body Condition and Fitness: Bulls should be in working condition — not overfat, not run-down — with access to good quality feed leading up to joining. Well-grown 2-year-olds should be introduced gradually to heavier workloads.

Feet and Legs: Lameness or poor mobility reduces serving capacity and conception rates. Treat and trim well before turnout.

Health: Vaccination status should be up to date, particularly for vibriosis, 7 in 1 and pestivirus (ideally ear notched as well). Worming and drenching may also be required.

Socialisation: Running the bull team together ahead of time reduces fighting and injury once they are introduced to the cows.

Veterinary Bull Breeding Soundness Evaluation (VBBSE)

A VBBSE is strongly recommended before every joining season. This veterinary examination checks:

- General health and physical soundness
- Reproductive anatomy

- Semen quality (motility and morphology)
- Identifying sub-fertile or infertile bulls before use is far better than discovering fertility issues after a poor return to calving. Studies show that around 1 in 5 bulls may be sub-fertile, making testing an excellent investment.

Bull Power Requirements

Teams of bulls are preferred over single sire use as this spreads workload, reduces injury risk, and provides backup if one bull fails.

There are some rough rules when it comes to using bulls in dairy herds:

- Young bulls (yearling/ 2 y old) - 1 Bull : 25 Cows
- Mixed-aged bulls – 1 Bull : 30 / 40 Cows
- Oestrus synchrony programs being used – 1 Bull : 9/10 Cows

Other tips include:

- Observe bulls closely during the first two weeks of joining to ensure they are working and not lame, sick, or being dominated by more aggressive bulls.
- Rotate bull teams regularly to prevent bulls becoming overworked
- Keep bulls off concrete (reduces the risk of lameness)
- Don't allow bulls access to grain (reduces the risk of acidosis and laminitis)

Action List – 5 Key Jobs Before Joining:

- Book bulls in for a VBBSE at least 6–8 weeks before joining.
- Check and correct feet, legs, and body condition.
- Make sure bulls are vaccinated and drenched as required.
- Run bulls together before turnout to reduce fighting.
- Plan for higher bull power if using AI or synchrony programs.

Preparing bulls well ahead of joining, with attention to health, soundness, and fertility testing through a VBBSE is the best way to safeguard herd conception rates and ensure a tight spring calving pattern.