

## Fungal flourish

The season has been kind to mushroom lovers in Northern Southland but when there is an abundance of mushrooms it is certain that other fungi are flourishing also, some of which are a little harder to swallow.

### Ergot

Ergotism is a devastating disease presenting most commonly as irreversible gangrene of the limbs and resulting in euthanasia. There is no treatment so prevention is key. Check your baleage and ryegrass paddocks for ergot seed now, if you are uncertain get us on farm to have a look or bring a sample into us.



Ergot (*Claviceps purpurea*) is a parasitic fungus that grows on grain and grass plants, particularly ryegrass. The fungus contains toxins that damages the lining and causes constriction of blood vessels which leads to tissue death. This leads to a gangrene of the extremities (feet, tail and ears). The toxin remains when ensiled or made into baleage.

Watch for signs of lameness or foot swelling in your stock (The incubation period for the disease is approximately 7 days). A convulsive form of the disease can also occur, as can abortions as a result from the damaged blood vessels.

### Zearalenone – ‘More dry ewes, less multiples’

This is a toxin produced by fusarium fungi. The fungi can grow on dead litter at the base of pasture particularly in warm dry conditions. After 10 days to 2 weeks of exposure the toxin can reduce ovulation rates despite being on heat more often and for longer. The result is more drys and less multiples. Rams may also be affected with reduced drive, teste size and sperm output.

Pasture samples can find the presence of toxin but not how much the sheep is actually getting. 3mg/ewe/day or more will depress ovulation rates and lower lambing percentages. Urine is tested for exposure, but this must be at the time of grazing the feed. It cannot be tested for retrospectively.

Risk is minimised by using grazing practices that maximise green leaf intake, and reduce dead matter production, and its ingestion.

Exposure to Zearalenone after mating does not affect the number of ewes pregnant nor their lambing rate.

### Lucerne

Lucerne if affected by fungal disease can have high levels of the oestrogen Coumesterol which can effect fertility. As a precaution you are best not to graze Lucerne for at least 14 days before mating. However they can return to Lucerne after tugging.

### While on the topic of ewe fertility...

Note that Red Clover can have a high oestrogen content that can cause ewes grazing it to be temporarily infertile. Ewes will still cycle but fail to conceive. This can be costly leading to more dry ewes, less multiples, and late lambers. Continued grazing of high oestrogen pastures can lead to permanent fertility issues - permanent clover disease (PCD). Grazing management can reduce this risk.

High oestrogen feeds alter the secretions of the reproductive tract hindering sperm transport. Ovulation rate is also reduced (less multiples). PCD may also be associated with lambing difficulty, bearings, and teat elongation.

If using red clover (particularly around mating) choose a low oestrogen cultivar, **graze for no more than 3 days at a time** alternating with low oestrogen feed for the remainder of the week. Pasture levels can be tested as the oestrogen can alter highest in spring and autumn.

Or play it safe and don't graze red clover paddocks within 6 weeks of mating.

Rochelle Smith BVSc MANZCVS



## Sheep Reminders

- FEC ewe lambs
- Record mating data
- Check and change ram harnesses
- Foot conditions in rams
- Teasers out with hoggets 17 days before ram

## VENISON YOUNG STOCK

With strong venison prices this year, our aim for meat producers is to get young stock to a target of 90-110kg liveweight to produce a 60kg carcass weight by November. To do this, it is a battle against intrinsic decreases in voluntary liveweight gain over winter.

Our aim post-weaning is to reduce any growth checks associated with weaning stress. Growth rates over late summer and autumn can be 300g/day when managed well. It is an important time, as weaners growing behind target do not have compensatory growth over the winter period like some other species can achieve with good nutrition. This has been more difficult this year with the dry summer however, now with increasing pasture covers, we should be able to get up to desirable weights.

Consider specialist feeds such as chicory, red clover or lucerne and avoid grazing young stock on pasture lower than 1800kgDM/ha which affects physical ability to achieve intakes necessary for this level of growth. Equally as important is preventing excessive pasture covers where feed quality is deteriorating (above 3000kgDM/ha).

Autumn comes with the potential of high worm burdens. It is important to keep on top of routine drenching to prevent production limitations. To get an animal health plan tailored for your farm or for any advice on drench frequencies and products, give us a call at the clinic.

Consider weighing deer in early June, as this shows good correlation of carcass weights in spring. Weights of 72kg Red or 88kg WapX will indicate good ability to reach target slaughter weight come springtime. Being realistic of achievable winter growth rates will prevent disappointment come the springtime slaughter period. 50-70g/d is achievable for all weaners, with 100g/d + in top genetic animals. In Southland most will be on crop so consider your protein levels and supply a good quality supplement of baelage.

Suggested allowances are 4-6kg DM/weaner/day on crop but this will depend on the crop type fed and quality.

When feeding on pasture, young deer can be fussy so frequent shifts can prevent refusal to eat muddy pasture on offer. Aiming for post-grazing residual of 1000kgDM/ha over winter will allow the conservative liveweight gain to be achieved.

Samantha Edgar BVSc MANZCVS

## Deer Reminders

- Drench weaners
- Check copper and selenium status and treat if necessary
- Put chaser stags out

## SITUATION COMMENT

The dry summer came to an end with the Pyramid Bridge. Since then grass growth has been great but getting to Otama has been more difficult. Feed levels are good in most areas.

There are still a few challenges which may cause issues over autumn and into winter.

Mycoplasma Bovis is still a factor in the area, please be mindful of biosecurity on farm and off farm. The damp, warm weather has allowed for a huge number of mushrooms to pop up everywhere but another fungus, Ergot, likes the conditions too. This fungus lives in grass seeds and can cause devastating damage to all stock. It is unsafe whether grazed or stored. Swede seed may have an impact for winter grazing management, please get in touch if you have any concerns you want to discuss.

We have said goodbye to one of our long serving vets in Riversdale, Megan is moving on after 10 years with us. She is not leaving the area which is great but is moving jobs to pursue her interest in horse work. We wish her well but are hopeful she will still pop in from time to time.

## Pet Reminders

- Worm cats and dogs
- Duck dog WOF

## Contents

Pg 1 – Venison Young Stock

Pg 2 - Tales from the catwalk

Pg 3 - Dry off decisions

Pg 4 - Fungal flourish





## TALES FROM THE CATWALK

If I told your average urban dweller that my time is currently spent walking up and down a catwalk, they'd be forgiven for questioning my modelling credentials. With dirty overalls, gumboots and accessories including a long rectal glove and an ultrasound probe, there is very little in the way of glitz and glamour.

Beef cow pregnancy testing however, is well under way. Having taken over from their dairy cow cousins it is the time of year that sees us almost permanently attached to the rear end of a cow. It is also the time of year that can spark some awkward conversations following poor reproductive performances, in which somehow as a scanner you feel responsible.

Results so far are as varied as we learn to expect, typically ranging from 85 – 100% pregnant. Conversations usually begin with BVD status and progress to trace elements and bull performance before invariably ending with the condition of the cows and feeding over mating. Responses are varied and puzzled facial expressions are not unusual, particularly if BVD is not well understood.

The role of the beef cow can also vary, with some farms having an intensive beef herd that is well fed and managed, whilst others are substantially more extensive and cows scrape by on browntop and tussock. Understanding first what a farmer expects from their cows is critical when deciding on the magnitude of the perceived problem. If they spend most of their lives as second class citizens, performing a role of cleaning up pastures and roaming marginal hill country, what can one expect as a satisfactory mating performance?

The importance of nutrition and condition of dairy cows is well understood and emphasised during reproduction consults. The same rules, in general, apply to beef cows and whilst many are in condition that would be considered too fat for dairy cows, the opposite also applies, particularly in extensive hill country operations. The critical time when condition (and therefore nutrition) matters most is pre-calving to mating. It is during this time that the cow goes through her most stressful period, her demand for feed is at its highest and her uterus has to transform from a gravid state carrying and supporting a 40kg calf to being ready to accept a new embryo. It is not unexpected then that condition is likely to be lost during this period, but ensuring that she has condition to lose and limiting the degree of loss should be the focus.

As calf prices once again hit all-time highs, getting nutrition and body condition of cows right can be one of the simplest ways to improving your farm productivity and bottom line. Cow body condition and nutrition not only impact reproductive performance, but calf growth rates and weaning weights can also be improved through increased milk production.

Management decisions that make a difference can be as simple as calving or weaning date and as complex as fertiliser and supplement selections. Bringing weaning forward 6-8 weeks can allow cows to go into winter in better condition, particularly when feed is tight. This can also have positive spinoffs for calves, with less competition for grass. Calving date adjustments can also create more feed by simply better aligning the start of calving with pasture growth.

The role of the beef cow is unlikely to change on most properties, but with rising returns from beef, expectations or hopes of cow performance can. Where once an 85% calving was tolerated, suddenly this wastage becomes disappointing. In most cases an honest appraisal of how these animals are managed is needed. Too often the cow will spend long periods of her life in controlled starvation, is lucky to receive any trace elements and is then served in a 100 ha tussock block by a 5-year-old bull with early signs of arthritis. If this approach isn't working for you, a new one may be needed.

Beginning with the simple things and doing them well will go a long way in achieving the performance you hope for—getting the nutrition and condition of cow's right should be the first priority.

*Andrew Cochran BVSc*



## Cattle Reminders

- Pregnancy test
- Beef weaners—drench
- Review mastitis control—plan dry cow therapy
- Vaccinate for Salmonella
- Liver biopsy check for copper and selenium or check cull cow livers at works.
- Lepto herd
- Drench cows at least 4 weeks pre dry off
- Dry off poorer condition cows and culls
- Lepto booster for calves vaccinated early

## DRY OFF DECISIONS

The season has managed to turn itself around and hopefully a growthy autumn is in order. However now is the time to really start looking after some cows rather than wringing them out to (the) dry (period).

The aim is to get cows calved well and back in calf quickly, delivering more early season days in milk each year and BCS is the main driver of cycling success and higher 6 week in calf rates. Look at your 6 week in calf rate (and your fertility focus report) to assess how well you have done at this.

Two things are needed to reach BCS targets FOOD (quantity and quality) and TIME. It is difficult in most winters for a cow to gain more than half a score in the dry period (even though the herd average may lift) so for those under calving targets the clock has to start now.

Dry off **NOW**:

- Lamé cows
- Cows BCS 3.5 and less
- First calvers 4.0 and less (at least)

Aim for:

- A BCS 5.0 at dry off. (The majority of our farms are around a 4.2 to 4.3 as of mid March)
- No more than 15 % below the 5.0 target at calving
- Heifer target is higher at 5.5

Utilise us:

- We have five accredited BCS vets.
- We can assist with interpreting your FFR
- We can assist with winter feed plans.
- We can work with your grazier.

*Rochelle Smith BVSc MANZCVS*

## FREE PPID TESTING

Equine PPID (formerly Equine Cushing's Disease) is a common and often under diagnosed condition of older horses and ponies.

Characteristic signs of the disease include

- recurrent episodes of laminitis, "cresty necks"
- Abnormal or excessive hair growth patterns and bulging fat pads above the eyes.

Starting April 3rd, Boehringer Ingelheim is offering free testing for this disease. The test is relatively non-invasive and simply involves getting a single blood test from the horse at any time of the day. If you are interested in getting involved, please notify us at the clinic as soon as possible.

For more information please head over to [www.talkaboutlamintis.com.au](http://www.talkaboutlamintis.com.au)

## DUCK DOG WOF



Duck shooting is rapidly approaching, bring in your shooting companion for their annual warrant of fitness this April and make sure they are in tip top shape for May! This includes a full physical exam and is a good chance to make sure your dog is up to date with worming and vaccinations, especially if going onto sheep and beef farms. One lucky dog will go in the draw to win the cost of their consult back. Ring the clinic now to book an appointment!

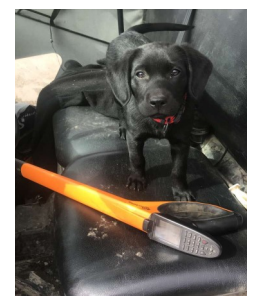
## DUCK SHOOTING HAMPER

The team at MSD Animal Health have kindly put together this duck shooting hamper! Simply purchase any Bravecto flea treatment and go in the draw to win!



## PIP

The newest four legged companion to Julia Molloy here at NSVets, Riversdale. Pip is a purebred Labrador who is a real charmer. When Pip isn't hot at your the heels, she's often found carrying round her toy duck, baiting the cats or digging up pot plants. Pip is not one to be gun shy and hopes to one day make it as a duck dog.



*Julia Molloy*