

**PROTEIN PROBLEM**

It may be a little too early to know what this season will bring but often in a few weeks-time we are met with the issue of cows not milking well, with low milk protein to milk fat ratios (national average is 77%) despite lush feed and high pasture residuals.

Lush grass is usually high in protein. From first glance you would think this is a good thing (and milk protein should be high) however it can be problematic.

Protein is turned into ammonia in the rumen and then urea by the liver. It is then either passed out in urine or recycled to the rumen. All of this requires energy, and a fair bit of it. Essentially in high protein diets, a lot of energy is being diverted to processing the protein and is being taken away from things like actual milk production and cow condition. We need to increase the energy (MJME) in the diet to help balance the protein, and to be able to utilise this protein for milk production.

The primary source of energy for grazing cattle is fibre from plant cells. You can buy energy in the form of carbohydrate such as specialist pellets etc, but these are perhaps best used when energy (feed level) is lacking. Perhaps in many cases it is not that we don't have enough feed but that we can't consume enough of it (water content is too high).

Spring lush feed has a good ME but low dry matter. At 16% DM a cow has to eat say 6 buckets of fresh feed to get one bucket worth of dry matter. Cows can run out of time in the day to eat enough 'buckets' of lush 'wet' feed.

Topping in front of the cow and letting it wilt can increase the dry matter of the plant, so the animal doesn't have to eat so many 'buckets' – it is also easier and faster to 'harvest' as half the job is done. The down side of pre-graze topping is that the cow has lost some of the ability to select the tastiest, highest energy feed but in some cases, now that she can eat more, the net energy intake is higher anyway.

**Note:** Post grazing topping is for pasture quality to remove the unpalatable grass allowing the grazed palatable feed a level playing field to compete again. Adding straw to help 'bind up' the effects of lush protein only lowers the ME of feed consumed.

*Rochelle Smith BVSc MANZCVS*

**Pet Reminders**

- Worm cats and dogs
- Flea prevention and treatment

**Deer Reminders**

- Hinds - pre-fawning clostridial vaccination
- Pre-calving worming & copper
- De-velvetting
- Check copper & selenium in pregnant hinds
- Sort stags into de-velvetting mobs

**METRICHECKING: EARLY VS LATE**

Calving is in full swing, with most herds down to the last quarter left to calve. This time of year means we need to be thinking about the upcoming mating, and one of the considerations is the timing of your metrichecking.

Metrichecking is a way that we can pick up and treat uterine infections such as 'Endometritis'. 'Endometritis' differs from 'metritis' in that in metritis the cow is usually visually ill, dehydrated and must be promptly treated with injectable drugs. When 'Endometritis' is present, it is not easily picked up from the outside, as the cow is in good health.

During Metrichecking we use a scoop to assess the discharge from the cows uterus, where pus is present treatment is required through inserting an antibiotic through the cervix and directly into the uterus.

The optimal time for metrichecking a cow after calving is from 2-4 weeks post calving. This gives us the best possible chance to pick up an infection, and treat it earlier. The cervix must be open in order for us to pick up a uterine infection, and this is usually closed after 4-6 weeks (the period for "uterine involution").

Whilst some animals self-cure after this time and there are less to treat (so less money spent) the downside is that some animals just become a "closed infection" called pyometra where it is not possible to detect an infection until the cow becomes a non-cycling cow and it is too late to treat, resulting in more empty cows. A recent study by Mick Clews from VetOra in the North Island shows cows that are untreated, or treated late, result in a 2% higher empty rate over the season and approximately 8% of the herd calving 2-3 weeks later than they would compared to a clean cow. Metrichecking and curing affected cows earlier, will ultimately result in a tighter calving spread and this will increase the number of days in milk.

*Samantha Edgar BVSc*

**STAFF COMMENT**

Huge congratulations to Tash and Joel who celebrated the birth of Lucas a little earlier than planned at the start of August. Cherise has stepped into Tash's full-time nurse role whilst she is on maternity leave and Melissa McDuff has joined the team in Te Anau to fill Cherise's role – musical chairs really. Jill and Mike T attended an advanced orthopaedic course in Queenstown which both found really valuable.

There have been a few changes at Riversdale since the last staff comment in June. Ashleigh, Shbourne and Tama have all moved on to pastures new. Ashleigh is challenging herself academically with the goal of becoming an accountant, Shbourne is still nursing and Tama has just had a wee baby girl named Frankie. We wish all three the very best and were saddened to have them leave however very pleased for them at the same time.

As always this has opened up opportunities for others and we were delighted to welcome Laura Christensen, Lauren Dempsey and Gaylene Tepu to Riversdale.

Morgan had an extended break in Ireland with the family but not before presenting a paper on equine herpesvirus at the Australia and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists conference on the Gold Coast.

Mike B has given up all hope of the Bledisloe ever crossing the Tasman again and was allegedly even spotted wearing an All Black beanie!!

Rochelle and Andrew both attended the NZVA Sheep and Beef conference (Rochelle as a committee member) and Sam attended the Deer conference.

Rochelle and Kate attended a training day on digital radiography in advance of our new machines and software arriving next month.

Megan will be back on board from the middle of October just in time for the horse stud season.

**Horse Reminders**

- Selenium & Vitamin E to new born foals
- Watch for founder in ponies

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

While we are flat out lambing and calving it is worth while taking some time to reflect on how the new season is panning out. What covers did I have going into lambing, could that be affecting lamb survival and lamb growth now? What could I have done differently to ensure you had more cover? Did lambs stay on too long last season? Did I run out of winter crop or supplements? Did I have to hold stock back or was I forced to set stock too early, putting pressure on pasture covers? Was the feed at set stocking nailed by start of laming? Should I be putting in more winter crop? Has the spring growth kicked in yet? Did I get the fert on in time? How am I shaping up for summer? Should I be looking at specialist finishing feeds for next year, should I perhaps be lambing on these? Am I prepared to be flexible on my weaning date if feed is tight before Christmas? What condition are my ewes in now? Do I need to get my hoggets out grazing so that I can get condition back on my ewes by mating?



*Rochelle Smith BVSc MANZCVS*



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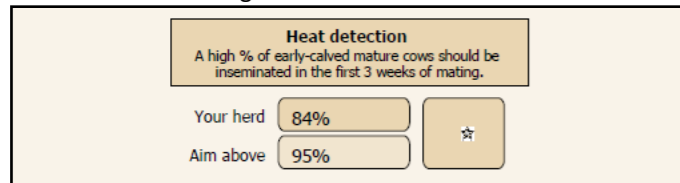
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## HEAT DETECTION

The 2016 national statistics showed that only 4% of herds hit the 95% Heat Detection target on the DairyNZ Fertility Focus Report. This shows there is room for improvements to our heat detection skills and practices. Here are some tips to help you identify an issue.

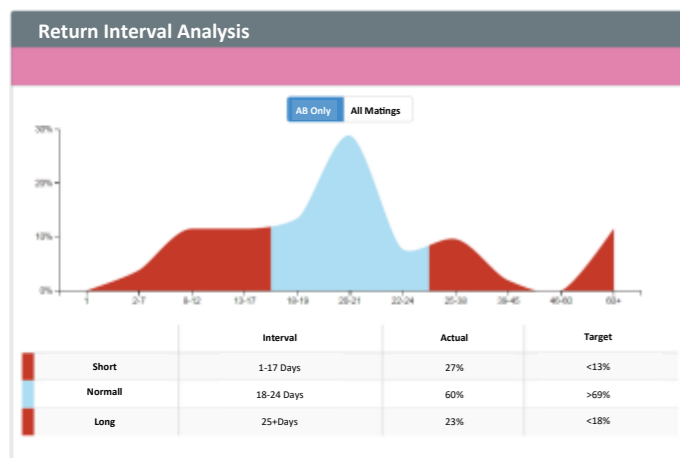
### Missing Heats?

Look at the Heat Detection box on the Fertility Focus report. If the Heat Detection box is 5% or more below the 95% target, it is likely that heats are being missed, or your cows are not showing heat.



### Have I been correctly identifying heats?

Look at the Return Interval Analysis graph (Mating tab in the Reproduction section of MINDA® Live). If the graph is red for short returns, cows may have been submitted when they were not actually on heat. If it's the long returns that are red, heats may have been missed, cows may have stopped showing heat, or pregnancies may have been lost.



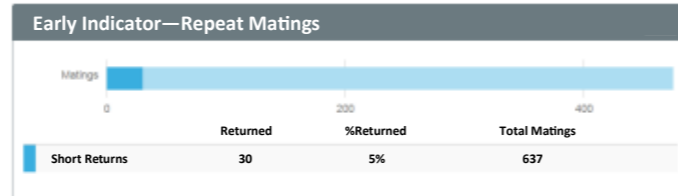
### How am I tracking this year?

Use the Early Indicator – Repeat Matings graph (Mating tab in the Reproduction section of MINDA® Live) to help identify if there is an accuracy problem early on, so there is still time to correct the problem. As we are only looking at matings that occurred within the first 17 days of mating, if a cow has more than one mating during this time it is likely the cow was mated when she wasn't on heat for one of those matings, i.e. heats have been invented. The target is to have 13% or less repeat matings on this graph.

### Heat Detection Aids?

Most heat detection aids will give you good accuracy for identifying cows on oestrous. However, they need to be

applied in the right place, in the right way and be maintained to work properly. Combinations of aids (Tail paint, scratchies, flashmates etc) help increase the likelihood of identifying cows that are on heat. All of the aids have pros and cons, so it's a matter of working out what suits your farm routines, budgets, and goals.



### How do I manage my bull team?

For the natural mating period you will need (in the paddock) one bull per 30 non-pregnant cows, plus a 2nd team of the same size for rotation. Two teams are needed as bulls need a rest to minimise the risk of fatigue and reduced fertility. It's best to rotate the bull teams every other day to keep them fresh and rearing to go. You'll also need a couple of spares so that any injured or lame bulls can be swapped out.

### Managing CIDR/synchrony returns?

If you have CIDR'd or synchronised your cows/heifers, you will need to have a plan to cover the returns of the cows that did not get pregnant because these returns will all happen in a concentrated time frame. Options include extra bulls or use of AI at this time potentially with short gestation semen to help tighten the calving pattern.

## DO YOU HAVE A PLAN FOR BVD?

Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) is a viral disease and in New Zealand an estimated 15 % of dairy and 65% of beef herds may have active infection at any one time. Persistently Infected (PI) animals threaten the health, fertility and productivity of the herd.

A good plan is key.

### Is your farm at risk?

Do any untested or pregnant animals ever come onto your property? (eg. Grazing stock, cows, heifers, calves, bulls, freezer beasts)

Are any heifers, cows or carry overs away from the home farm during pregnancy?

Is contact possible between your cows and cattle from other farms, such as a neighbours?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, your herd is at risk. Implementing a well-managed vaccination programme is key to staying in control.

**TEST YOUR HERD ➔ ELIMINATE PI'S ➔ ASSESS BIOSECURITY  
➔ VACCINATE ➔ MONITOR YOUR HERD**

## OBSESITY IN PET DOGS

Whilst working dogs often find it difficult to keep weight on, many of the pet dogs we see are obese. Many of the health problems we can get from being overweight can also be a problem in dogs. Lack of exercise and over-eating can result in conditions like diabetes mellitus, heart disease, liver dysfunction and reproductive failure. The excess weight also puts more stress on bones and joints and because of this, obese animals tend to suffer the effects of arthritis a lot earlier in life. Certain breeds can also be prone to developing painful debilitating conditions such as vertebral disc disease and cruciate ligament tears.

From a veterinary perspective, overweight animals are not good surgical candidates. Many of the anaesthetic drugs we use are processed by the liver, and if this organ is not functioning correctly, the animal is at risk of delayed recovery. The excess weight also puts stress on the heart and lungs, making the anaesthetic more risky.

If you are worried about your pet's weight, there are a few basic changes you can make to promote weight loss.

### Diet Changes

Getting a balance between calories-in and calories-out can be difficult for animals that are food driven. There are two main ways to change your dog's diet; (1) decrease the quantity of your current feed or, (2) change to a less calorie dense feed. We have a range commercial diets available, such as Hill's and Royal Canin, which have been specifically designed for animals with weight issues. These diets generally contain fewer calories than other brands but they will keep your dog fuller for longer.

### Increase Exercise

Light exercise can be beneficial for most dogs. Even a twenty minute walk can get the heart rate up, strengthen muscles and promote good mental health. This time of year is perfect for starting regular exercise, particularly for those dogs that may have been more inclined to sit by the fire all winter!

### Monitor Weight

You cannot change things you don't measure! Feel free to drop into our Riversdale and Te Anau clinics for regular weigh-ins to see how your dog is tracking. Remember getting your dog to a healthy weight can take time and you might not necessarily see changes immediately.

*Kate Taylor DVM, BSc-Hons*

## OCTOBER - PET SLIMMERS MONTH

Phone our Riversdale or Te Anau clinic to book in you pet for a FREE weight check and diet advice today.  
Rvd (03) 202 5636 TA (03) 249 7039

## Sheep Reminders

- Tailing
- Feeding prioritisation
- Pulpy kidney vaccination
- B12 injection lambs
- Scabby mouth vaccination of lambs
- 'Flockcheck' blood test on wet dries
- Blood test rams B Ovis

## ANTIBIOTIC TRAFFIC LIGHT

In July 2015 the New Zealand Veterinary Association took leadership on antibiotic stewardship stating "By the year 2030 New Zealand Inc. will not need antibiotics for the maintenance of animal health and wellness."

Antibiotics will still be able to be used as animal welfare is the overriding factor, however, the aim is to lower the risk of drug resistance, to ensure that antibiotics remain valuable weapons not only in animals but also the human medical profession. If there are alternative options before antibiotics these should be used first.

Antibiotics should only be used when absolutely necessary, and the need for them should be counteracted, whenever possible, by preventative measures.



You may be surprised to see where some of our more known drugs fit in this system.

First Line Therapy	Restricted to specific Use	Last Choice – individual animals by vet diagnosis
Intracillin, Depocillin, Bovipen, Engemycin, Bivatop, Alamycin	Gentamycin, Amphoprim, Betamox, Clavulox, Lincosin	Excenel, Excede LA, Baytril, Marbocyl, Tylol/Tylan, Mastalone (with neomycin)

## Cattle Reminders

- Dairy - pre-mating check of 'at risk' cows
- Pre-mating trace element check
- Tail paint - 4 weeks before PSM
- Organise mating programme - cows and heifers
- Treat non-cyclers one week before PSM
- BVD booster bulls & cows 4 weeks before PSM
- Metrichick late calvers