

**Ergot Warning**



Figure 1 Ergot looks like black seeds on this rye grass plant

There is a lot of ergot around this year. 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.

Ergot (*Claviceps purpurea*) is a parasitic fungus that grows on grain and grass plants, it particularly likes 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 of damaged blood vessels.



Figure 2 Notice the line of gangrene near the claws on the top leg, and the shin on the bottom leg. The limb below these lines is cold and necrotic.

**Troublesome Toes**

We often see troublesome toe injuries. The most common is in summer due to barley grass penetrations, but we also see dislocations, fractures and nail bed infections that seem to flourish in June/July.

One theory is of course the extra wet and mud that is around at this time of the year. Also a lot of yard work (scanning time) can increase the risk. The dirt can get in around the base of the nail and cause pain, redness, heat and swelling. Sometimes due



to trauma, the toe nail itself is torn, dislocated or missing altogether, giving bugs a clear path up into the bones. If left untreated nasty bone infections (osteomyelitis) may set in. In severe cases, toe amputation is required.

Consider ways to keep your dogs' toes clean this winter, such as hosing/washing (and perhaps drying) feet prior to going back into the kennel. Use raised kennels with clean safe gratings and dry housing.

Rochelle Smith BVSc MANZCVS

**Horse Reminders**

- Hoof care reminder
- Check for lice
- Boost pregnant mares diet
- Arrange brood mare consorts for coming season

**Mycoplasma Bovis**

Recently a disease previously not confirmed in NZ has been diagnosed in a dairy herd in South Canterbury. At the time of writing it was unknown how the disease *Mycoplasma bovis* entered the herd. The herd has been contained so further spread is unlikely however **do contact us if your cows show unusual levels of mastitis, abortions or present with arthritis or pneumonia, or head tilting, and isolate affected animals until further notice.**

**Drug With-holding Reminder**

Remember that any cow that calves within her **meat** with-hold period passes the remaining meat with-hold onto her calf. Similarly any calf that has access to a cows milk while she is within her **milk** with-hold will incur a default 91 day **meat** with-hold. This means these calves can-not be bobbied.



**Mossburn Clients**

Great news—we will now have the Vet coming to Mossburn each week day as a trial. Please phone Bev 03 248 6053 to make an in clinic appointment or Riversdale 03 202 5636 to make a farm appointment.

1. Situation Comment, Grooming Service
2. Changes to De-Velvetting Facilities - An Opportunity for Kiwi Ingenuity?
3. Blindness caused by Parasites, Colostrum Close Up
4. Ergot Warning, Troublesome Toes, Mycoplasma Bovis, Drug With-holding Reminder

**Situation Comment**

Winter had been reasonably kind until July when for a few days it arrived with a vengeance. Since then the mud has built



up and the roads have at times been treacherous. We have until now managed to avoid the worst of it and it is better to have winter in winter rather than spring.

Stock have handled the weather quite well to this point and body condition seems to be slightly better than in recent years. We have had quite a few cases of abortion in cattle – mainly owing to mouldy silage and baleage. We have also had a good few cases of lactic acidosis in all classes of stock in July. Don't forget that not all crop is equal and some transition is needed to change from swedes to kale, kale to fodder beet and even one paddock to the next.

We once again held our Winter training Seminars, both sheep and dairy. Andrew has begun a discussion group for sheep and beef farmers and the first meeting was held at the start of July. Give the clinic a ring if you are interested. This season we are promoting better colostrum management as a way of improving lifetime milk production for cows. The first few weeks of a calf's life are critical and what they eat in that time plays a big part in their ongoing health.

On the sporting front, the Lions tour made Morgan and Jill as unhappy as everyone else in New Zealand although Jill was a bit happier with some other results that do not need to see the light of day ever again, useless \*\*\*\*\* Wallabies.

We hope all of you have a great spring!

**Sheep Reminders**

- Order lambing requirements
- Blood test ewes metabolic profile
- FEC ewes
- Vaccinate ewes clostridial vaccine
- Reassess ewe feed levels
- Vitamin E/selenium to brassica fed hoggets
- Assess spring feed budget
- Drench ewes iodine
- Anthelmintic treatment of ewes
- Ensure PAR/RVM authorisation is current

**Grooming Service**

We offer a grooming service to keep your furry friend looking their best! We can tailor their groom for whatever style you want, groom includes; a shampoo, condition and a nail clip.

Whether they need a brush and demat or an all over groom we cater for any breed or shape! We also have a range of grooming brushes and shampoos that will help with home care.

Ring the Riversdale clinic to book an appointment with Janeece.



**Cattle Reminders**

- Magnesium supplementation
- Yearlings - worm drench
- Vitamin A, D, E to milk fever prone cows
- Worm cows post calving
- Booster dose BVD vaccine to heifers
- Monitor conditions post calving
- Blood test bulls for BVD & vaccinate



## Changes to De-Velvetting Facilities - An Opportunity for Kiwi Ingenuity?

By now most velvetters will be aware of the changes to velvetting requirements. While this has been met with some resistance (from vet and farmer alike) the fact is velvet is a food product that needs to be harvested in a way that meets export requirements. We wouldn't process meat in the conditions that - in the past - we have removed velvet.

While not all farms will be selling export, as vets we have been advised to presume this possibility and therefore work under the new requirements. It is our role to guide you in this process, but not to police the changes. Many of you have facilities that are almost

up to speed but for some there is a little way to go. However I have no doubt that given the fantastic skill sets that our farmers have, ingenuity will come to the fore and ideas will roll to help to come up with clever, cost effective solutions.



The requirement is based around having **clean-zones**, and velvet can only be removed, stored, handled, hung up, weighed, transported, tagged or recorded in these clean-zones. There has been plenty of discussion around 'big ticket' changes like flooring for example but the little points must not be forgotten, some of which are mentioned below.

Flooring and surface coverings of walls is a big point but don't forget this extends to the floor under the crush, and even low roofing in some cases, as well as anywhere velvet may touch e.g. where you hang the velvet and the floor it may fall on if knocked!

Bare plywood will need to be painted, or varnished, or covered with washable board or plastic sheeting. Note that while reddish brown paint may help hide some of the velvet signs, bird poo will show up brilliantly!

As well as removing the velvet in a clean zone, and storing it in a velvet only clean-zone freezer (that you can prove freezes down to at least -15 °C), the way we get it from A to B needs to be considered also. A sack on the back of a truck going up the gravel track is no longer appropriate. Consider perhaps a chilly bin, or a washable cover made to go over your plastic bins. Disinfectants used must be on MPI's food safety approved list. Some very good veterinary disinfectants must not touch food products and should be rinsed off saws etc with potable water before touching velvet. New Velvet Status Declaration forms will be sent out and it is you as the farmer that is responsible for signing the forms (not the vet doing the velvetting).

An alternative for some farms may be to not velvet at all. If this is your chosen option you need to consider how you are going to manage these potentially difficult animals.

For more information phone us at the vets or contact the NVSB or DINZ.

### Deer Reminders

- Copper as required
- TB test
- Supplementary feed stags
- Weaners - check parasite levels
- Sort stags into velvetting mobs

### Intelligence Test

Donald Trump met with the Queen of England and he asked her, "Your Majesty, how do you run such an efficient government? Are there any tips you can give me?"

"Well," replied the Queen, "the most important thing is to surround yourself with intelligent people." Trump frowned, and then asked "But how do I know the people around me are intelligent?" The Queen took a sip of tea. "Oh, that's easy; you just ask them to answer an intelligent riddle." The Queen pushed a button on her intercom. "Please send Theresa May in here, would you?" Theresa May walked into the room and said, "Yes, your Majesty?"

The Queen smiled and said, "Answer me this, if you would, Theresa. Your mother and father have a child. It is not your brother and it is not your sister. Who is it?"

Without pausing for a moment Theresa May answered "That would be me." "Yes! Very good." said the Queen. Trump went back home to ask Mike Pence the same question. "Mike answer this for me. Your mother and your father have a child. It's not your brother and it's not your sister. Who is it?"

"I'm not sure," said Pence. "Let me get back to you on that one." He went to his advisers and asked everyone, but no one could give him an answer. Finally, Pence ran into Sarah Palin in a restaurant the next night. Pence asked, "Sarah, can you answer this for me? Your mother and father have a child and it's not your brother or your sister. Who is it?" Sarah Palin answered right back "That's easy, it's me!"

Pence smiled, and said, "Thanks!" Pence then went back to speak with Trump. "Say, I did some research and I have the answer to the riddle. It's Sarah Palin!"

Trump got up, stomped over to Pence, and angrily yelled, "No, you idiot! It's Theresa May!"

### Blindness Caused by Parasites

It may seem hard to believe that a migrating parasite can lead to blindness in dogs, but this condition is recognised, and has been diagnosed, in working dogs in Southland (the scientific name is ocular larval migrans). The larvae of canine roundworm (*Toxocara canis*) migrate through the retina of the eye, causing multifocal retinitis that may result in permanent blindness.



One study found rural dogs to be almost 6 times more likely than urban dogs to have this inflammatory eye

condition. Clinical signs will vary depending on severity of the damage and whether both eyes are affected but include running into objects, having difficulty jumping up and judging distances, missing stock and acute blindness. The reason rural dogs have a higher incidence of this disease is because there are often large groups of dogs housed together, the kennel environment is heavily contaminated with dog faeces (which may contain *Toxocara* eggs) and uncooked meat may be fed that contain migrating larva of *Toxocara canis* that continues migrating once ingested by the dog. Unfortunately there is no treatment for this disease as the damage to the eye has already occurred. However, it is 100% preventable with strict worming practices! We recommend worming puppies every 2 weeks until they are 3 months old (12 weeks) with an all wormer, as well as having all working dogs on a strict worming programme. Children may also get this disease by accidental ingestion of *Toxocara* worm eggs and so this is important from a human health perspective.

Rebecca Morley BVSc BSc

### Pet Reminders

- Check teeth and clip nails

### Colostrum Closeup

Rearing of replacement dairy heifers is an important job that can be challenging at a busy time of the year! It is important to get right as poor heifer rearing can lead to reproductive failure, failure to reach growth targets at appropriate times, reduced lifetime milk production, increased animal health costs

and reduced longevity in the dairy herd. The bottom line is, it can cost you \$\$\$!

All calves are born "aggamaglobulinaemic" which means they are born without any antibodies naturally in their blood for fighting infection. They need to absorb the immunoglobulins or antibodies across the gut wall passively from the colostrum supplied by the mother. They can only do this for the first 12-24 hours of life, so it is a race against time! Failure of passive transfer occurs when they do not receive enough of these antibodies in this time either through not enough, or enough of a low quality (low antibody) colostrum. Calves with failure of passive transfer are more likely to be sick (scours and other diseases like pneumonia, navel and general infections).

It all starts at day one, and managing your colostrum quantities and feeding newborn calves is paramount. Ensuring "colostrum donor" cows are milked rapidly after calving and choosing appropriate cows is important, as is getting enough colostrum into the calf fast enough!

We want to help you to ensure that your calves are getting the best start. Our colostrum closeup program will consist of a Veterinarian coming out to your farm (or alternatively you can bring in samples of colostrum if you just want to assess this) and following the colostrum collection to feeding process, making recommendations for cleanliness (colostrum of low bacteria count), storage and quality. We have a Brix refractometer that we can use to instantly test several buckets of colostrum intended for first day calves. This is a proxy measure for antibody (immunoglobulin) levels in the colostrum to check it's suitable to provide enough immunoglobulins to the calf. If we find poor colostrum quality, we can check some

young calves (2-7d) for failure



of passive transfer by taking blood tests from 12 healthy calves and checking protein levels at the clinic. We can then discuss our findings and recommendations for getting all calves to have sufficient colostrum of good quality.

Testing will cost \$20 per sample, with a \$10 per additional sample brought in on the same day.

Samantha Edgar BVSc



### Disbudding

Future regulations require the use of pain relief when dehorning cattle of any age. Talk to us about our local anaesthetic training and disbudding service.