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## ***A note from Sandy***

***May 2017***

Another month has flown by and the weather has improved significantly. I am not sure I can recall growth like this - long may it last.

We have farewelled Meredith and an enjoyable evening was had by all. It is always sad when an energetic, intelligent young person leaves your employment. I am sure all of us wish her well in the future, who knows we may one day see her back in the North, I can assure you all that the invitation has been extended.

On the positive side, we will be inviting applications for possibly two new graduates this coming year. The candidates that will be invited to apply have mostly seen work experience with the Club over the last year or two. I am confident that we will have an excellent array of young talent to select from, thanks mostly to our scholarship and how Meredith, Andrea Dooley and Nena have managed this scheme.

We will be advertising The Vet Centre calf rearing seminar over the next few weeks. As I have previously reported, we will be limited to 150 persons so first in best dressed. If you wish to attend with your partner and/or staff, please RSVP by 9<sup>th</sup> June to your nearest clinic. The list is starting to grow so please do not be disappointed, get in early as we will not be increasing the available spots.

Sales for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017 look very positive and as a consequence the Club will be investigating the feasibility of a couple of projects. We have this month installed a new digital X-Ray at the Mangawhai clinic which will facilitate faster and improved imaging.

### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

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*Post Mortems*

*Body Condition Scores  
and the Dry Period*

*Introducing Dairy  
Antibiograms*

### **THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH:**

*Herd Mineral Profiles*

*Review your calf  
rearing facilities*

*Drench cows and if  
necessary treat for  
liver fluke at dry off*

The Ruawai new build project is progressing in a considered manner. The Executive Committee are adamant that this project will be completed on budget and the plans once agreed upon will not be subject to alteration. The Executive want no justification for a budget blow out, so we are still finalising details connected to the construction and the floor plan.



As I write this article it is evident that many of our dairy clients are considering drying off for the season. This last season has been a pleasant change from the preceding two where both our farming clients and Club staff were subject to stresses that none of us enjoyed and hopefully will not be repeated in the future.

In conclusion, I hope most of you manage some time away over the winter months.

Until next month  
Sandy

# Drying Off cows

By Liam Bawden

Winter is just around the corner and for most of you drying off will be on the radar. The 2 main focus areas around drying off are mastitis treatment and prevention, and body condition score (BCS).

Key points:

## BCS

- Ideally dry cows off at BCS 5 or allow enough time to reach this before calving.
- Cows generally will not put on any condition 2 weeks after dry-off and 2 weeks pre-calving.
- Between this period, on pasture, they can expect to gain 0.3-0.5 of a BCS per month.

## Mastitis

- Ensure you have completed a dry cow consult with us before you are thinking of drying off.
- Be prepared, make sure everyone knows the correct procedure (disinfect, apply, teat spray, paint).
- Drying off cows in batches reduces the stress of doing it all on one day and generally results in better hygiene when treating with dry cow and teat sealant.



## General

- DO NOT reduce access to water.
- Do not put cows straight onto a herd home or stand-off pad to avoid them sitting in muck.
- Reduce feeding levels to maintenance for 7-14 days after drying off (around 8kg/DM at ME 11 for a 500kg cow or 10kg of Kikuyu pasture) or until gross udder swelling subsides.
- If feeding concentrates and cows are still producing over 1kgMS/day then reduce feed intake 1 week before and only feed maintenance for 7-14 days after.
- Keep away from the shed 1-2 weeks to prevent oxytocin release (milk let down).

# BCS and the Dry Period

By Nena Nepia

Next seasons' lactation does not start at calving, it starts at drying off. Cows require the dry period to gain body condition, meet the increasing needs of the growing foetus, and repair and regenerate spent udder tissue. If you rob some body condition during this season it has to be put back on and if not, you simply transfer the loss to next season. This may then compound into poor production, poor reproductive performance and other health issues as well.

Dairy NZ studies have identified targets of body condition score (BCS) 5.0 for mixed age cows and BCS 5.5 at calving for first and second calvers. These targets are a balance of maximising energy efficiency for milk production, avoiding an excess that contributes to increased metabolic issues at calving, and ensuring reproductive performance. Dairy NZ has shown that the gain in milk production by calving cows at BCS 5.0 instead of 4.5 was 5.2kgs of MS - worth about \$30 per cow.



The good rainfall and subsequent grass growth during March/April allowed many farmers to delay dry off and gain some additional income. With around two months to go until calving, ensuring adequate body condition and achieving a gain prior to PSC is now a priority. At this stage of the season, it is a good idea to individually BCS cows to get a clear picture of where your herd is at as well as identify individual at risk cows. Low BCS cows of 3/3.5, if not already dried off, should be separated and fed preferentially over and above the main herd.

There are a couple of 'rules of thumb' when planning condition gain. Note that even if cows are well fed, they rarely gain more than 0.5 BCS units in 30 days. Don't plan for any additional gain in the month before calving – the demands and size of the foetus take any energy excess. Where generous intakes can be achieved with a mixture of pasture and good quality supplement 1.0 BCS unit gain can be achieved in 45-60 days. Cows will **not** achieve these levels of gain solely on a pasture diet.

Body condition scoring is an essential farm management tool. Some farmers can do it themselves, but getting the help of a trained and unbiased person is a good idea. All our Vet Centres have BCS accredited vets that can assess your herd and help with the dry period management decisions.

# Post Mortems

By Meredith Love

One of my favourite lecturers taught me this while at university. He was reassuring the class that while studying and knowing lots was important we would quickly miss the obvious if we didn't look hard and observe carefully while examining animals. These words have stuck with me ever since especially when it comes to an animal autopsy, or post mortem examination.

Some farmers struggle to see the benefits of an autopsy - the animal is dead, and it's potential value gone, so why spend more on it? However I argue that what you can learn by knowing the cause of death, by looking further, is invaluable. More deaths can be prevented and herd wide treatments or management strategies can be put in place all off the back of one post mortem. Or just knowing that the death was a one-off and not a herd issue can give some very beneficial peace of mind and prevent unnecessary spending from guessing.

Just this week I autopsied a dead ram to discover it had died from a massive burden of Barber's Pole worm; the handful of worms I scooped out of its stomach, and its pale organs, were evidence enough of the cause of death. Unfortunately the rams had been missed when it came to drenching as they were out the back of the farm. A quick post mortem meant the rest were quickly mustered and drenched and there have been no further deaths of these valuable animals.



A different autopsy of a sick yearling revealed an intussusception; a type of gut blockage where the intestine telescopes up on itself. This was also likely due to internal worms and the mob, which had been left a bit long between pour-ons, were quickly drenched. (An underlying message here is that worm burdens are still really high this autumn so double check your drench plan!)



Abortions can also be an issue this time of year - we can autopsy the foetus but also need afterbirth (placental membranes) to help make the diagnosis of what caused the cow to abort. If you find a foetus in the field and a cow with membrane hanging out then put a 20x20cm section of membrane with the foetus into a bucket and bring it down to the clinic asap (can overnight in the fridge if necessary).



One of my favourite parts of a post mortem is that ta-da! moment when you come across something gross that shouldn't be there (farmers either like this also or by this part have left me to it...) However sometimes it isn't obvious exactly what the cause of death is. In this case we take samples from all the organs to send off to the lab for them to be checked under the microscope. The level of detail they can see is amazing. The only need here is that animals are freshly dead; anything that died more than a day ago could be too far gone to get answers.

Cost wise a post-mortem typically costs about \$120 plus farm visit and mileage. Lab testing is approximately \$180 if needed.

If an animal is really sick and past treating then we can euthanase it and carry out a post mortem straight away. This gives fresh samples, quick answers, and most importantly prevents unnecessary suffering. All our clinics have captive bolts for on farm euthanasia. This option is often used in disease outbreaks, such as bad calf scours, where the sickest animal is euthanased to get answers to treat the rest.

I would never wish dead animals on anyone but the old saying 'livestock deadstock' still holds true. Although it is always gutting to loose an animal, there is still so much value in finding out why it died. The blood and guts of it is what we live for, so don't just worry on what you don't know, get us in to do the looking for you.

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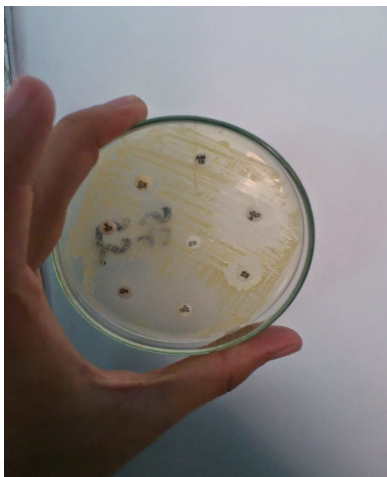
# Introducing Dairy Antibigrams

By Dana Marais

Dairy Antibigram is a new test that is performed on the bulk milk tank samples which detects and monitors antibiotic resistance in mastitis bacteria on your farm.

With all the new antibiotics on the market and the over-use of antibiotics in the world, antibiotic resistance has become a serious animal and human health problem. Resistance occurs when bacteria are exposed to repeated antibiotic treatment over time and become harder to kill/control.

The Dairy Antibigram uses a bulk milk sample collected at the milk company (with the farmers permission) or can be collected from the milk vat. This sample is then cultured to see what bacteria are present in the milk. The bacteria cultured from the sample is used as an indication of what bacteria are likely responsible for the mastitis seen in your herd.



The cultured bacteria are then tested against 6 selected antibiotics, and resistance to these antibiotics are measured. The vet then receives a report of what the antibiotic resistance is on the farm and can discuss this with the farmer.

The value of the Dairy Antibigram to your farm:

- Plan to use effective mastitis treatments. Knowing what the resistance is on your farm will allow you to use drugs that have been test effective against the bacteria on your farm.
- Know the resistance status of your herd, how this compares to other farms around the country
- Avoid using expensive treatments if cheaper options are shown to be effective
- Monitor how the resistance status of your changes from year to year

If you would like to get a Dairy Antibigram done on your farm just contact one of our vets and we will be able to sort this for you.

## Eprinex Pour-on



**Zero milk, meat and bobby calf withholding period**

For the treatment and control of major internal and external parasites of cattle, and internal parasites of deer

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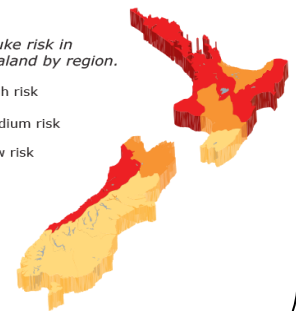
## Flukecare Plus Se

All three stages of liver fluke with superior control of early immature liver fluke



Liver Fluke risk in New Zealand by region.

- High risk
- Medium risk
- Low risk



**35 day milk withhold**

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### YOUR FEEDBACK IS WELCOME:

If you have any suggestions for improvements, or you would like to discuss service received, we would appreciate the opportunity.

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