GREYMOUTH

May/June Newsletter

West Coast Vets

Greymouth Gossip

So starts the wind-down to yet another dairy season.

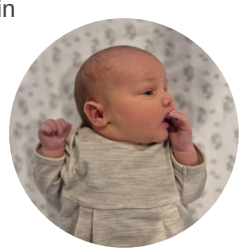
It's been a busy couple of months at the clinic. Alongside our regular autumn work, we co-hosted a 'Lunch & Learn' session about mastitis in March with Sophie from Agrihealth. It was great to see so many farmers there, and there was some good discussion following the informative presentations.

Recently, Beef + Lamb NZ held Wormwise discussions in Reefton and Hokitika. Those who attended found them quite useful. If you'd like further advice on drenching and preventing resistance build-up on your property, please give us a buzz.

Some of us have been feeling quite sporty, with Laurence and Molly both running in the Moonlight biathlon, and Maria marshalling for the walk. It was awesome to see so many farming families also participating in this great local event. Exercise is an important part of wellbeing.

Molly couldn't wait to start teat sealing this year, so she adventured down to Southland for two weeks to lend a hand down there. She particularly enjoyed the experience of teat sealing 300+ heifers through one trailer in 1°C weather one frosty morning.

Lastly, we're excited to let you know that Nadine, who had headed off on maternity leave at the time of our last newsletter, has now had her second child. A little girl arrived at the end of March, weighing in at 8 pounds and 8 ounces. She's been named Taylor Mary Savage. Both baby and mother are doing well.



Checklist

COWS

- Complete dry-off pregnancy testing scans.
- Prepare dry cow script.
- Check trace element levels on cull cows.
- Run a liver fluke and Ostertagia test on bulk milk.
- Drench for liver fluke.
- Treat for lice.
- Any other treatments needed for parasites or trace elements?
- Vaccinate against Salmonella.
- Order Rotavirus scours vaccine.
- RVM consult.
- Dry off herd.

CALVES

- Drench for internal and external parasites, including liver fluke.
- Check weight gain – target weight 40% of mature weight.

YEARLINGS

- Is their copper and selenium supplementation up-to-date for the winter?
- Drench for internal and external parasites, including liver fluke.
- Vaccinate against Salmonella.
- Check body condition scores are around 5.5, ready for calving – target weight 110% (including calf) of mature weight.
- Teat seal heifers.

BULLS

- Keep bulls out of herd, heifers and calves!

Can you vaccinate against mastitis?

By Laurence Cohen

This season has been a tough one for mastitis. We have been seeing higher cell counts on most farms compared to the previous season.

Both clinical and subclinical mastitis impact animal welfare, have significant costs, and lower sustainability.

There are now two vaccines available to help boost cow immunity to mastitis, with the aim of reducing the usage of antibiotics and the amount of milk down the drain.

The **UBAC® vaccine** targets Gram-positive bacteria, including

Streptococcus uberis. It was introduced to the New Zealand market in 2024.

Streptococcus uberis is the predominant cause of mastitis on New Zealand dairy farms, and this is reflected in the Mastatest results we see in-clinic. The usual prevention methods, like internal teat sealant, are not always available as a tool to us here on the West Coast – especially for those wishing to supply colostrum commercially to Westland. The UBAC vaccine can offer protection not just during spring, but throughout the whole year.

International studies have shown that the UBAC vaccine can reduce the incidence of *Streptococcus uberis* infections by up to 50%. Additionally, the cows that do still get mastitis from *Strep. uberis* are not affected as badly and recover quicker (i.e. only taking three days of treatment instead of six), therefore saving on the amount of antibiotic used and getting milk back in the vat faster.

The standard vaccination protocol for UBAC includes an initial sensitiser vaccine, followed by a booster shot four weeks later. Another booster is then required every four months. This schedule needs to be repeated annually to maintain high levels of protection.

For cows, we'd recommend the first vaccination 6-8 weeks before your planned dry off, the first booster four weeks later, the second booster four months later, and then continued four-monthly boosters. However, this vaccination programme is able to be tailored to suit your herd's requirements. You could start at any time of the year when it best works in with other herd management tasks.

For heifers, we'd recommend the first vaccination seven weeks before their planned start of calving, the first booster four weeks later (three weeks pre-calving), and the second booster just before mating.

For another option, there's also the **STARTVAC® vaccine**, which combats *Staphylococcus aureus* and E. coli. It's an inactivated vaccine.

Staphylococcus aureus is a highly contagious mastitis-causing pathogen, and often leads to chronic infections that are difficult to cure.

A study conducted across 15 farms in three key dairy regions of New Zealand investigated the role of STARTVAC in managing mastitis. The findings suggest that vaccination with STARTVAC positively influences udder health, making it a valuable component of mastitis management strategies in New Zealand dairy herds.

This vaccine requires an identical vaccination protocol as the UBAC vaccine, and we'd recommend similar timings.

As part of our rollout of the UBAC vaccine, we are offering the third booster FREE for all animals enrolled this season on the 3-shot UBAC vaccination programme!

Have a chat with your KeyVet about whether it would be worth doing on your farm, and the best vaccination timings for you and your stock.

Rounding up repro results

Thank you to everyone who came along to our Repro Round Up dinner and discussion.

It was an enjoyable evening with fantastic food, cheerful company, and some striking stats. There was great interaction throughout the presentation, and the audience asked some really insightful questions.

Overall, it was a poorer season on-farm from a reproductive standpoint, with a median empty rate of 12% (compared to 10% last season) and a six week in calf rate average of 66% (compared to 69% last season). These results are likely due to the abysmal spring weather and low-quality grass growth.

On a positive note, heifers performed better this season, with an empty rate of 5.8% (compared to 8% last season).

If you'd like your farm's data included in the benchmarking graphs we shared, book a scan with us next season.

Our 'Yes/No' scanning is $2.40 per cow (about $1.60 cheaper than the milk test), and aging scanning is $2.74 per cow (still cheaper than the milk test and provides you with a lot more information).

See our next newsletter for a full breakdown of the 2024/25 season's repro results.

Thanks for being awesome clients this dairy season!

Preparing them for dry-off: Multimin Evolution

By Marjan Sprock

Zinc and manganese are two essential microminerals for dairy cows and calves.

Animals deficient in these trace elements can have problems with health and immunity, making them more susceptible to disease.

Zinc is often associated with the prevention of facial eczema, but it's also very important outside the eczema season for growth, production, reproduction, and hoof health.

Because most feeds contain at least a marginally adequate level of manganese, we don't often see clinical manganese deficiency – but that doesn't mean there's no subclinical deficiency present.

Manganese absorption depends on the calcium and phosphorous concentrations in the diet. Diets over winter and around calving (transition diets and colostrum cow diets) often contain different calcium and phosphorous levels than usual. This can alter manganese absorption, and not always in a good way.

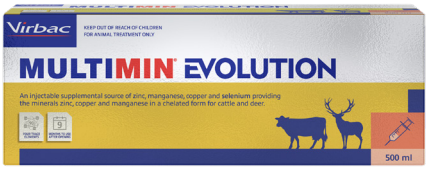
Calves born to cows low in manganese can show malformed bone structures, such as enlarged joints, twisted legs, and shortened front legs.

In cows, manganese deficiency can result in more services required per conception, and irregular or absent oestrus (heats).

In bulls, manganese deficiency is associated with less developed tubes in the testes, leading to reduced sperm production.

An easy way to top up zinc and manganese in your stock is with an injection of **Multimin Evolution**. It also contains copper and selenium, two other key trace elements.

Depending on the planned winter diet for your cows and their current copper and selenium levels, Multimin Evolution could be a simple way to help prepare them for the stresses around the dry off transition. It will also set up unborn calves for a strong start.



Take a break from the farm and join us for a fun, social quiz night!

THURSDAY 19TH JUNE, FROM 6PM

Union Hotel, Greymouth

Light supper and refreshments provided

RSVP essential by Monday 16th June to secure your team's spot (teams of 4-6). Email mariav@wcvets.co.nz or call 03 768 0370.

Protect your future herd

By Molly Kells

Farmers across New Zealand are turning to teat sealing as a key strategy to protect the health and productivity of their replacement heifers.

Teat sealing has become an increasingly popular and effective method to reduce the risk of clinical and subclinical mastitis in heifers.

Heifers are particularly vulnerable to mastitis before they even enter the milking herd. Studies show that up to 50% of heifers may already have a teat infection at calving, often caused by environmental bacteria like *Streptococcus uberis*. These early infections can impact future milk production and increase somatic cell counts, affecting both animal welfare and farm profitability.

Teat sealing involves the application of a non-antibiotic bismuth-based sealant into the teat canal. This physical barrier mimics a cow's natural keratin plug, preventing bacteria from entering the udder in the weeks before calving.

Key benefits

- **Reduces mastitis at calving,** by preventing infections from establishing before lactation begins.
- **Improves lifetime udder health,** as heifers with fewer mastitis cases early on tend to have better lifetime performance.
- **Better milk quality and lower cell counts,** leading to fewer penalties and a stronger start to lactation.

With clear benefits to udder health, milk production, and overall herd performance, teat sealing is a practice well worth considering this season.

Get in touch with us now to book your heifers in for teat sealing, if you haven't already – you won't regret it!

Down cow prevention

By Marjan Sprock

"Down cows? That's something that I don't need to worry about happening until spring..." you might be thinking, but now is the time to start planning how to prevent the impacts of those down cows.

Not only will there be many costs and potential losses, cows who go down with milk fever also have a higher chance of having metritis, mastitis, and reproductive issues going forward.

So, if you treated more than 2% of your herd for milk fever last spring, or you just want to have less problems during the coming spring, prevention through nutrition might be the solution.

During any transition period for dairy cows, appropriate feeding and supplementation can make a big difference. Transitioning from being dry to lactating is particularly critical.

Many of you will be supplementing magnesium to prevent grass staggers. But is this magnesium in a form that decreases the DCAD (dietary cation-anion difference) in the diet? In other words, is it helping to prevent milk fever as well?

There are many options for minerals available. These include options for feeding in the milking shed or feeding over baleage/hay.

Supplementing this way means cows increase their own blood calcium levels around calving, when the demand on their bodies is at its highest, without going down from milk fever – and without needing a calcium bag treatment from you.

Call the clinic today to discuss more about how to prevent costly down cows on your farm this spring.

WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER?

HEIFER TEAT SEALING

68% reduction in mastitis

Teat sealing heifers ahead of calving leads to a 68% reduction in clinical mastitis in the first few weeks of lactation. Book in with our team.

TRANSITION PLAN

14-21 days to transition

Transitions should not be rushed! Take 14-21 days to complete your dry off transition. Aim to have 0 down cows during this transition period.

Are lice a problem on your farm?

By Marvin Wiens

As we head into the colder months on the West Coast, lice infestations can become an increasing concern.

While common across New Zealand, the West Coast's unique climate – cool, moist, and often wet – creates ideal conditions for lice to thrive.

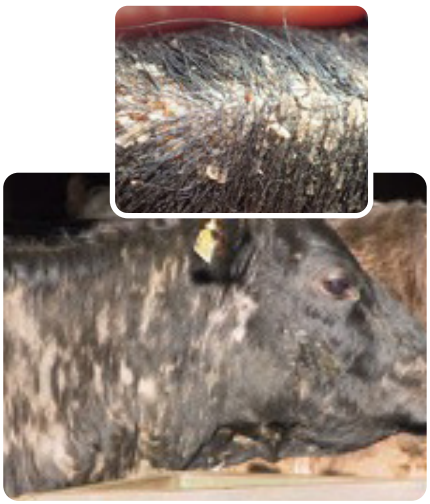
Why should I worry about lice?

Lice aren't just a nuisance, they can be a considerable stress factor. They can cause:

- **Skin irritation** – Cows will be constantly scratching and may experience hair loss, particularly around the neck, shoulders and spine.
- **Reduced milk production** – Discomfort can lead to stress and a decrease in milk yields.
- **Secondary infections** – Scratching opens the door for bacterial infections.
- **Stunted growth** – Calves can experience poor growth due to lice-related stress.

How do I control lice?

1. **Regular monitoring** – Look out for signs amongst your cows and calves.
2. **Effective treatments** – You can use pour-on treatments (pyrethroids or macrocyclic lactones), injections (such as ivermectin), or spray-on products. Be sure to follow guidelines and rotate drug families to avoid resistance.
3. **Dry, clean housing** – Ensure wintering barn and calf shed bedding is kept dry and buildings are well-ventilated to reduce lice prevalence.
4. **Quarantine new stock** – Isolate and inspect all cattle who arrive on farm before introducing them to the herd.



A note about pottles

Just a friendly heads-up – we'll soon be introducing a small charge to our use of pottles.

Going forward the yellow top ones will be NON-STERILE and will be intended for faecal samples when doing worm egg counts.

The smaller blue top ones will be STERILE and will be intended for milk samples when doing mastitis testing (these smaller tops will hopefully collect less dust and muck, so will lead to fewer mixed/contaminated samples).

Our clinic

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HERE for GOOD