

Six “hot” Animal health items for tough times

Dry Cow Therapy

In low payout seasons it can be very tempting to reduce dry cow therapy (DCT) use or in some circumstances, not to use any DCT at all. Although we need to be minimising the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals, it is also important to treat chronic mastitis cases and we know that the use of DCT will minimise the amount of antibiotics needed to treat mastitis in early lactation. Herds where no dry cow treatment have been used will see more cases of mastitis during the dry period and are at extremely high risk of a dramatic increase in the number of cows that have mastitis detected in the colostrum mob and there can be the risk of grading when these cows go into the vat.

Financial savings from not using DCT are usually outweighed by the increased use of intramammary & injectable mastitis treatments.

Facial eczema prevention

Avoid getting “hit” by facial eczema late in the season. Cows that have just been dried off are particularly at risk if they are grazing short or bare paddocks.

In facial eczema prone areas it is important to keep zinc supplementation going whilst spore counts are elevated. Prevention may be required until mid May in some geographical areas.

Magnesium Supplementation

This is vitally important in the winter and spring when pasture magnesium levels are very low. This results from the very low uptake of magnesium from the soil when ground temperatures drop below 12°C. Pasture dusting with causmag (magnesium oxide) is a very effective and cost efficient way of increasing the levels of magnesium in cows and will help prevent cases of grass staggers as well as subclinical production losses. Supplementing with magnesium precalving for 3 to 4 weeks will also help reduce the risk of milk fever. Further information on magnesium supplementation can be found at

www.dairynz.co.nz/media/253848/3-1_Magnesium_supplementation.pdf

Leptospirosis vaccination

The herd leptospirosis vaccination is an essential part of the animal health plan. Lepto antibody levels need to be boosted every 12 months. It's vitally important to protect your own health and that of your staff. Lepto infection in people is very debilitating and can have long term effects.

Monitor Body condition score regularly

Information about Body Condition Scoring (BCS) including how-to guides, videos, and certified assessors is available at

www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/herd-management/body-condition-scoring/

Good body condition score will result in better milk production and reproductive performance, both of which will have financial benefits so this really is a no-brainer.

Mating plan

Review the 2015 mating season and your recent scanning results now. What went well? What could be improved for the next mating season? Money and effort spent on maintaining a good herd reproductive performance is an investment in next season's production and the flow-on effects will be felt for seasons to come. It is very hard to make up lost ground of things slip in one season.

Cost cutting on Animal health expenditure should be carefully assessed. It is more cost effective across the season to be pro-active rather than reactive.

Source: Neil MacPherson NZVA Dairy Cattle Vets Resource manager