

As I sit here and write this many of you are out there busy making silage, some of you on second cuts, some on first. Some good stuff should be made this year. Whilst on the subject of silage I make this plea ever year, and probably will continue to do so until I stop going to the knacker yard to open up cows with wires around the heart..... **Old knackered tyres on silage clamps routinely kill cows.** Even cows



with magnets in their reticulum won't always be protected. There are plenty of other options for weighing down silage sheets from rolls of astro

turf or rubber to gravel bags or similar.

In other news We've seen the first couple of cases of photosensitisation this year. Typically these are animals that have eaten plants that contain toxic photoactive substances. These then make the white areas of skin more prone to becoming sunburn. One of the most common culprits is hemlock which is in flower now and is seen typically around ditches and damp hedgerows. There are other that can cause it but hemlock I would say is by far the most common plant we see round here. Lastly, one of our clients was airlifted off the farm after an accident this month. We are pleased to hear he is doing OK all things considered. I have been guilty of cutting the odd corner in order to speed up a job and events like these remind me how dangerous farms can be so I for one will be taking a bit more care in the future. Stay safe.

Ben

NEW DATES for the Grassland meeting (Sarah)

We are delighted to announce that we have managed to reschedule our **'Grasslands Meeting' for the Friday 30th June 2017** with Charlie Morgan, an Independent grassland consultant. The idea behind setting this up came from our sheep clients originally, when we were consulting with them about how we can help meet their needs better. It is clear that optimising your grazing on mainly grass based systems is vital for making a farming enterprise as economic as possible. Both sessions we have planned will cover aspects from soil, sward measuring and composition to how we can make the most of our grassland. Charlie worked for The Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) for 22 years where he helped develop new grass varieties and grazing methods to benefit UK agriculture. He spent ten years as lead officer for sheep, beef and environmental management systems at the IBERS Grassland Development Centre. He is an author on over 60 scientific publications and regularly reported in National press and in 2014 he was awarded Associate member of Royal Agricultural Societies (ARAgS) for his distinguished service for Grassland & Technology Exchange. We are very lucky to have secured a day with someone as knowledgeable and experienced as Charlie. The day will consist of two sessions:

MORNING - 10am – 12pm at Cocking Hill Farm, Midhurst by kind permission of Andy Hodgkins. This is for our SHEEP clients ONLY and will consist of a farm walk and talk with Charlie, Maarten and myself.

AFTERNOON - 2-4pm at Farthings Farm, Midhurst by kind permission of the Renwick family. This is for our BEEF and HEIFER REARING clients and will consist of a short presentation and then farm walk.

Both will be practical, on farm walkabout discussions. Please wear suitable clothing and footwear that can be properly disinfected. Please give the office a call or email to confirm you attendance, and to **WHICH** session. **We will be asking for £5 per farm for attendance** – this is in no way going to cover the cost of the day BUT is aimed at trying to ensure those that say they will attend meeting to actually turn up the day. We run these meetings for **YOU!** Therefore we rely on you making the most of them. This will be added to your monthly invoice. Directions to the farms will be provided when you book.

Health planning (Maarten)

As most animals are turned out and harvest is still a few weeks away we would like to use this quieter time to review your health plan. This should avoid the panicky phone calls, for a vet's signature before **tomorrow's** farm assurance inspection. The whole idea for farm assurance requiring a veterinary signature is not for the bit of ink but that the farmer engages with his/her vet in the interest of animal health and welfare. This should result that the consumer can be confident that farm assured beef/lamb originates from farms with a certain standard of animal health and welfare. The time after calving/lambing is a good opportunity to take stock. Has every cow been turned out with a calf at foot. What is the difference between scanning percentage and the number of lambs turned out? Please get in touch with us to arrange your annual health plan review. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons is very clear about the rules of certification so we cannot declare and sign that we have discussed and reviewed the health plan if in actual fact we haven't.

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Artificial insemination sheaths (Claire)

On a course recently I learned of these new Alpha sheaths for AI. These sheaths are different from conventional sheaths as they have a domed head design and a flexible shaft that facilitates optimum navigation and placement in the female reproductive tract, and minimises trauma. They also have dual-lateral side delivery ports for semen expulsion into the body of the uterus rather than up one or other horn. They also have a better straw fit to reduce semen backflow. These claims are backed up with data of improved conception rates.



First instalment of Farming outside the UK! (Amy Avery)

So, it seems even on the other side of the globe I can't escape the Livestock Partnership as Claire managed to successfully collar me for a newsletter article! Currently most farmers here are getting stuck into dry off and as vets we are out every day teat sealing hundreds of heifers. This is a management tool that has completely taken off in the last 6 years or so following some research by Parker et al in 2007 showing the benefits. The dairy recession doesn't seem to have slowed the numbers by much either.

On that note things are starting to look up now a little with payout's rising, with the forecast at around \$6.45/kgMS for 2017 as opposed to the 2016 payout of \$4.30/kgMS (In English this was roughly 20p/l depending on milk solid % and exchange rate), and a general feeling of optimism amongst farmers. There are now 6.5 million dairy cows in NZ and dairy products are the country's largest commodity export worth \$11.3 billion over the last year. The government is hoping to double primary sector exports by 2025. Thankfully for the rest of the dairy world NZ cannot hope to double cow numbers to achieve this but they will be looking into how they can improve the value of their product and one huge area they are looking at here is the impact of dairying on the environment. This is getting more and more press coverage and there is a huge amount of research going into this area over here.

Not so good has been the weather this year, it has been a poor year for pasture feeding with wet conditions impacting on both production and reproduction. This terminated with a very wet April which resulted in many people drying off a good number of cows a month earlier than they would have liked due to lameness, poor pasture and reduced energy intakes. Most cows go onto fodder beet once they are dry which is break fed to the cows, it will be interesting to see the effect this has on cow condition by calving, as this is very high in sugar and starch. This method of feeding again is again a fairly recent kiwi innovation and even in the couple of years I have been away far more people seem to be using it, sometimes to supplement lactating cows and young stock as well.

I hope you are all well and are beginning to get some good spring weather. We are pretty settled in Geraldine now and enjoying life in the Southern hemisphere. I must confess though I can't resist downloading the Archers omnibus on a weekly basis, so haven't quite let go of UK life yet!

Best wishes to all, Amy

Boney changes in the feet of lame cows (Megan)

I recently attended a course where we dissected the feet of some cull cows with lesions. The boney changes which occur following a lameness event are significant and were commonly seen on cows that had sole ulcers. (See picture below). The pedal bone which is the bone that sits within the claw is where the changes seem to most often occur. Sharp points grow on the bone and protrude down towards the floor. Furthermore, new tissue grows inwards towards the foot putting further pressure on the sole ulcer site. Once a cow has had a lameness event she is much more likely to go lame again and this must be in part due to the physical changes which occur to the structure of the foot.

Mobility scores are the best way to reduce lameness prevalence on farm if they are done regularly by the same person and lame cows are treated promptly. Of the animals identified as 'would benefit from treatment'- these cows need to be foot checked +/- trimmed within 24hours by a competent trimmer. Delaying treatment leads to much lower cure rates. It is best to trim cows BEFORE they go lame.



Recent work suggests that the statutory trimming of cow's feet to 75mm when measured from the coronary band to the toe leaves many cows with too shorter toe length and thin soles. A length of 90mm measured from the coronary band to the toe is more appropriate.

