

FEBRUARY 2012

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## TIMING

BY FANNY LEDUC

A parish priest, Father O'Brien, was being honored at a dinner on the 25th anniversary of his arrival in that parish.

A leading local politician, who was a member of the congregation, was chosen to make the presentation and give a little speech at the dinner, but he was delayed in traffic.

(Now, lateness is usually not a good thing, especially for the people waiting. And it could have pretty negative consequences, as you will see below. Sometimes, it's all about timing: some things just have to happen at the right time. For example, take lepto vaccinations. Since the lepto bug survives well in cool, wet conditions, stock should be vaccinated and boosted before May.)

Sooo.....Father O'Brien decides to say his own few words while they await the politician's arrival.....

"You will understand," he said, "the seal of the confessional, can never be broken. What is confessed in there to me, is never repeated on the outside. However, I got my first impressions of this parish from the first confession I ever heard here.

(As for us at the vets, we cannot disclose our clients' private information to others.)

Realize, please, that I can only hint vaguely about this, but when I came here 25 years ago, I thought I had been assigned to a terrible place.

The very first chap who entered my confessional told me how he had stolen a television set and, when stopped by the police, had almost murdered the officer. Further, he told me he had embezzled money from his place of business and had an affair with his boss's wife. I was appalled. But as the days went on I knew that my people at this congregation were not all like that, and I had, indeed come to, a fine parish full of understanding and loving people."

(In this practice, in spite of the lepto forms being sent out and dozens of phone calls made to assist our clients in planning their lepto vaccinations, every year there are a number of people who fail to have them done on time. This includes calves getting their booster too late, or herds being dried off and dispersed at graziers before the leptos were done. If your stock got lepto, you could get it too. And it doesn't just happen to others: we have diagnosed lepto in unvaccinated stock before. Last November, 9 cases of human lepto were reported in NZ, 5 of which were farmers)

Just as the priest finished his talk, the politician arrived, apologized for his tardiness and then started in on his speech.

"I want to thank you all for letting me say a few words this evening in honor of Father O'Brien. 25 Years is a long time. In fact, when he arrived here, I had the honor of being the first confession he heard at this congregation."

Now that is bad timing.

(How about your lepto? Good or bad timing this year? Please return our forms and our phone calls! Thanks!)

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### FACIAL ECZEMA UPDATE

BY PAULA GOLD

The spore counts are being kept down by unseasonably cool grass temperatures. In general a delayed rise in spore counts is likely to mean a less severe FE season. It is important to remain vigilant. Keep a close watch on our weekly spore counts. Ensure that preventative measures are taken with young stock, as even moderate spore counts will effect their growth.

Please head to our website for the latest spore counts [www.vetplus.co.nz](http://www.vetplus.co.nz)



## MASTITIS—WHAT SHOULD WE BE AIMING FOR BY GREG NICKS

Recently I attended a mastitis course to become a Fonterra accredited mastitis vet where many aspects of mastitis control were covered. This was an intense 3 day course where we had a farmer under the microscope who was acting as a guinea pig for us to investigate. I am not sure if we crossed the line from being clinically helpful to putting him through the wringer as he had 12 vets looking through his records, going through his shed with a fine tooth comb and generally interrogating him about his mastitis!

However one area covered was what industry Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for levels of mastitis should be. I thought it would be relevant to define them in this article. Why do we have KPIs? Firstly they are a standard way of analyzing/presenting data, secondly they provide guidance as to what is achievable, providing a benchmark for any improvement and lastly they are a basis for cost/benefit analysis. So what are they? Most of these KPIs are suggested figures based on what the top 25% of farmers are currently achieving.

The basic KPIs:

1. Bulk milk Somatic Cell Counts

The arithmetic mean for the season should be less than 150,000 cells/ml. The number of consignments with a bulk tank cell count greater than 400,000 cells/ml should be less than 0.

2. Case rate of clinical mastitis

Target<10%. This is the percentage of cows with a clinical case of mastitis over a 12 month period.

3. Subclinical mastitis.

The proportion of cows >150,000 at any herd test, the target is 15-30%. Post calving and end of lactation this figure may be toward the upper end of the range given, and toward the lower end of the range for heifers rather than cows.

More advanced options

4. Culls/deaths due to mastitis.

Aim for less than 2%.

5. Subclinical mastitis: Incidence rate of new intramammary infections (IMI) per 100 cows per month.

Target; Heifers<5%, Cows <8%. This is calculated from your herd test data. If a cow moves from under 150,000 cells/ml to over 150,000 cells/ml from one test to the next then it is assumed to have become “infected” and therefore a new IMI ( threshold for heifers is 120,000). We can calculate this by exporting your herd test data into a spreadsheet or soon this will be worked out for you as a new feature on MINDA on the web. From a mastitis point of view the individual herd test data gives good information of how many cows are infected, and how quickly it is spreading through the herd.

Cost calculators.

This data can be collated into a cost calculator to work out the return in closing the gap. There are some very good ones on the dairy NZ website that give a very good best guess as to how you are going.

The economic benefit is achieved through closing the ‘gap’ between your herd’s actual, and target performance, through:

- Increased milk sales, as cows with lower SCC produce more milk;
- Lower costs & losses due to less clinical mastitis;
- Less culling and deaths related to mastitis.

For example, take a 300 cow herd producing 100,000 kg milk solids with an clinical case rate of 60 cases/season and an average bulk tank somatic cell count of 300,000 cells/ml, with 15 culls due to mastitis. If you plug these figures into the gap calculator we can see that closing the gap could yield the following gross figure;

KPI	Current	Target	Cost
Case rate	60 cases/annum	30 cases /annum	\$3600
Bulk tank milk	300,000 cells/ml	150,000 cells/ml	\$13,600
Culls due to mastitis	15 cows/year	5 cows/year	\$10,000
		Total cost from Gap	\$27,200 ( %6.50 pay-out)

Note how the biggest cost is from lost production due to high bulk tank cell count. There are various levels of gap calculator on the website including basic, intermediate and advanced according to amount of data that you can you can put in. I hope you enjoyed the numbers, if you want to know more then please us a shout.



*Save \$27,000!*

*See the example  
in the article.*

## 12 MONTHS ON BY DAVID O'BRIEN

With the onset of February comes the sudden realization that an entire year has passed me by. I have completed my first year working with the VETPlus team. And what an interesting year it has been.

I joined their team at the start of February last year and, although they were busy, my duties were light; consisting of leptovaccinations, the odd sick cow, manual pregnancy testing and a day or two in the small animal clinic.

Over the next few months I concentrated on developing my skills further. Armed with a checklist and guidance from the senior vets and support staff I clocked up the hours examining, injecting, cutting and curing. During this time I managed to extend my vet training through becoming a qualified deer TB tester. This involved more book learning, which I had vowed to never do again following university, but by fitting a few hours in between clients and calls I found it much less of a drag, and before I knew it I was ready to complete the practical assessment. Once accredited by the Animal Health Board, I was injecting, reading and blood sampling hundreds of deer necks in no time.

The calving season was my first big challenge. The first few call outs I relied on brute strength and university training to get the stuck little fella free. But I soon realised that refining my technique could save valuable time and energy, which could then be used on the next calf to pull. All in all I found the experience challenging but hugely rewarding, and even though it was disappointing in cases when the calf was pulled out dead, it was satisfying to know that the cow had been saved.

Following closely behind the calving season was metrichecking/metricuring of dirty cow's. With the benefits of this procedure now well understood, VETPlus saw a huge amount of client interest which, in turn, led to many mornings inspecting cows. Although repetitive, the time spent metricuring was not only of benefit to our clients cows, but also to myself, as my hand-to-brain neural connections were sharpened prior to my week long AI training course. Fortunately no book work was involved in this qualification, just good old hands on learning, or, put more correctly, hands in learning!

Once most of the calves were on the ground, calf disbudding kicked into gear. I always found it amusing to note the contrast of before and after. Hundreds of vocal calves, voicing their detest at having not been fed that morning, contrasted by complete silence for an hour or two later, calves all sleeping soundly following a painless flick of the wrist with a hot iron. Once the last calves began to stir, recovering well from the anaesthesia, we'd all scarper before the mooing for food became too intense once again.

Herd health tests, treating non cycling cows and an increase in horse calls filled out the remaining months that lead into Christmas and, following much anticipated time off at New Years, we circled back into the pregnancy testing once again. This time round the procedure was much more efficient. Now that manual testing of cows was second nature I was into using the ultrasound. Another skill to hone the practical side of, but as a large animal vet, I enjoy the challenge.

First year down with VETPlus, and I've really enjoyed it. Bring on year two!



## FAWN WEANING BY ANDEW SCURR

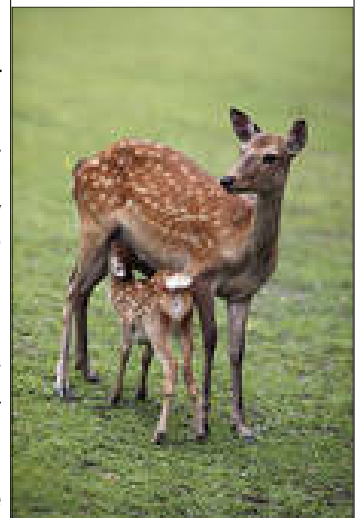
With velvetting and re-growth finished the next operation on the horizon for most deer farms is weaning.

The reproductive advantages of pre rut weaning are well recognised with earlier conception and lower empty rates in the hinds.

Good rain in early summer has seen some great grass growth and led to some very well grown yearlings and well conditioned hinds. The challenge now is to have the quality there for the fawns at weaning.

Vaccination of the fawns against yersinia and leptospirosis and a drench at weaning is common practice on a lot of farms. The 'best' drench for deer, as I have mentioned before, is still a hot topic and consideration needs to be given to the worms we are trying to treat, with lung worm still a big player but the ostertagia type gut worms are a major concern with well documented resistance to moxydectin in some areas.

An animal health plan can tailor a vaccination and drenching strategy as well as all other aspects of your deer herds annual animal health. If you would like any assistance with reassessing or starting an annual health plan or any other herd health questions give one of our deer vets a call at the clinic and we can help set that up for you.



VETPlus Taupo 07 378 7690  
Nukuhau Street Taupo

VETPlus Reporoa 07 333 8707  
605 Settlers Road Reporoa

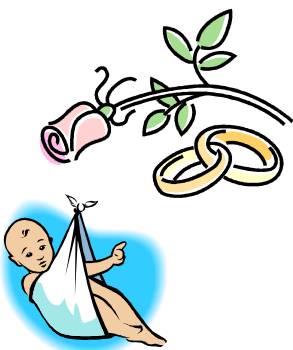
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return to get your preferred  
dates and ensure what you  
need done is booked. All  
forms returned by  
March 15 go into the  
draw to win \$100 dinner  
voucher.



## OUT AND ABOUT IN REPOROA

BY MEGAN PARKER

Kathy Bouma and Malcolm Cane moved to Reporoa in 1967 and 1970 respectively.

They were at Reporoa College together, and in Malcolm's words he "finally won Kath over, half way through the 6<sup>th</sup> form". Even then Malcolm was a forward thinker, reasoning that if he picked up hay in the summer he got paid 3c per bale, and if he owned the trucks he got paid 35c per bale, so at the tender age of 16 he leased 3 hay trucks from Merv Gibbons, employed his mates, and at the end of the year purchased the trucks and continued to operate a hay contracting business in Reporoa for the



next 10 years. In the off seasons he spent time in Auckland as a builder's labourer, worked for John Hathaway milking cows, worked for Ian Bell fencing his Allen Road farm and eventually became a self employed fencing contractor.

Kathy went off to Taumaranui to train as a nurse, returning home every fortnight to see Malcolm. She finished her training, and then nursed in Rotorua and they married in 1985 spending 9 months overseas in 1986. On their return the opportunity came up to buy 200 acres from Owen Evans on Plateau Road, and after being refused by 2 banks they finally managed to secure a mortgage and began the task of converting a sheep farm into a deer farm. They had a hard time making ends meet and both worked off the farm full time in order to earn the money to fence it for deer, which Malcolm did after hours and at weekends.

Deer farming is without question Malcolm's passion, but it is not an easy industry and they faced many set backs along the way. Never daunted they stayed positive, and in between nursing, fencing, and hay they reared large numbers of calves for many years, took on dairy grazers, exported live deer to Slovakia, invested in a forestry block with 2 partners and then took on the huge task of converting part of it back into farmland. Oh and raised a family!

Six years ago they purchased a further 500 acres and converted it to a deer farm, borrowing further to stock it with deer, but unfortunately their farm was particularly hard hit in the 2008 drought. At times 40 mls of rain would fall within 500m of them but none on their farm. They faced big feed bills and then ended up having to sell off most of the new stock. They rate 2008 and the 3 dry years that followed their most challenging ever.

In 2011 they made the decision to lease out part of the farm for dairying, as the regular monthly check was more appealing than the much more irregular income of deer farming.

Now they have the best of both worlds, with a more manageable workload and can concentrate their efforts on their deer. They produce venison and velvet, including their own Canes Deer Velvet capsules launched 12 years ago, and now sold online to many corners of the world (see [www.canesdeervelet.com](http://www.canesdeervelet.com)). However the main emphasis has been on making genetic improvements towards producing deer with massive antlers suitable for the trophy hunting market, and they are now the proud owners of some of the world's top deer. For the last 2 years they have held an annual stud sale and have built a good reputation in the industry. Kathy continues to run the deer velvet business, helps on the farm with velvetting and in the deer shed, and does much of the office work and marketing. In her spare time she still maintains a keen interest in health and the community.

Their set up is a credit to them. It is obvious that they both enjoy what they do and thrive on the challenges they face in such a volatile market. No day is ever the same, they are very much a team, and the hurdles they have overcome just seem to have strengthened them. If success is measured by resolve and enthusiasm they have already achieved it.

## WHO, WHAT, WHERE?

We (temporarily) farewell Clare who is leaving this month on maternity leave and wish her well.

Congratulations to James and Abigail Wotherspoon who got married in romantic Fiji.

Welcome back to Fanny, who has survived her first few PD jobs

Congratulations to Paul and Keren Leslie on the safe arrival of baby Ruby.

Good luck to all the children starting their first year of primary school or college. Yes that bit is just for you Emily Braithwaite! MJP