Gateway Gazette

Beef, Sheep and Deer.

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Spring has sprung and the grass is finally growing. Increasing global meat demand has come as very welcome news after a long winter and slow spring! While meat processors and exporters are still facing some challenges, recent trade deals and global demand for red meat protein has driven prices up to some record highs and created some exciting opportunities overseas. This is a nail biting time for our venison producers, hopefully there will be an upswing following some strong marketing campaigns from our meat processors and as restaurant trade picks up again.

Welcome team Rachel! We welcome Raechel Parker back to Gateway after a few months exploring New Zealand and working with the sheep and beef farmers of the Maniototo, and welcome Rachel McLeod – our new graduate vet who recently joined us from Glasgow. We also welcome Charles who's just joined our team after vetting for a couple of years in the rolling hills of Ireland.

Cervidae Oral

Raechel Parker BVSc

The wait is over – the first licensed deer drench is finally on the shelf!

After years of research and development the finished product is very sound from a pharmacological perspective. It contains the same active ingredients as the triple 'home-mix' combination of Oxfen C, Oxfen C Plus and Cydectin, but in one convenient oral drench of 1ml/10kg. It's best feature has to be its 28d withhold - juggling the impractical 91d withhold with sending weaners is a thing of the past! Please get in touch with the clinic for further information.

Is your sheep drench working?

Nina Jaine BVSc

There is a nation-wide increase in drench resistance in sheep in NZ, with some farms having to drastically change their farming practices due to drenches not being effective. This is especially a problem for trading properties, but we're also running into issues on breeding and finishing farms.

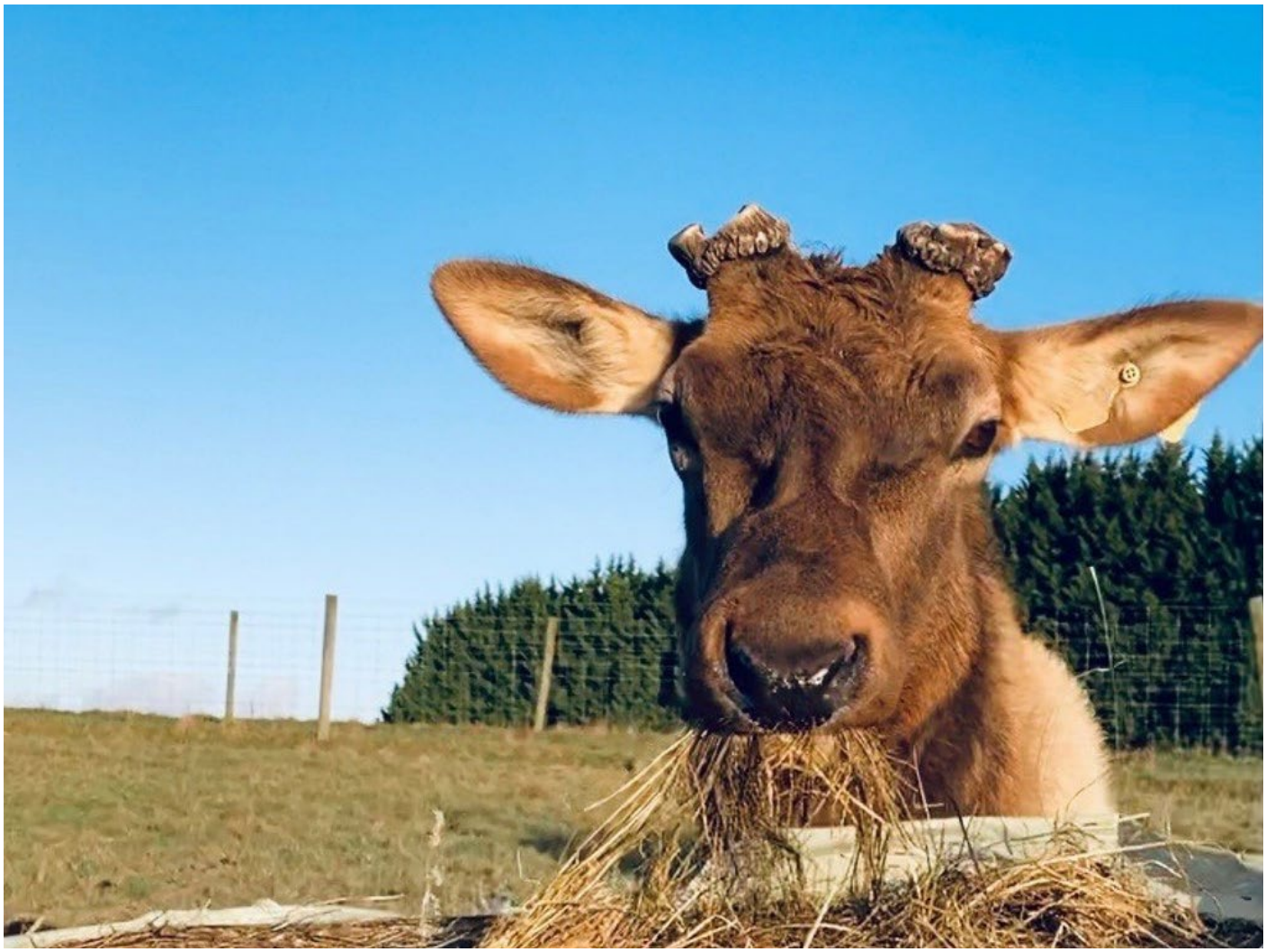
A Faecal Egg Count Reduction Test is a valuable tool for farmers to see what their resistance status is on farm. This process tests different drench families - individually and in combination. We then get feedback on the percentage of worms getting killed by each drench – so that we can make educated decisions around which drench to use going forwards.

How does it work?

- Draft out 100-120 lambs at weaning, leave these lambs undrenched
- Drop 10 faecal samples into the clinic to check that worm numbers are high enough to start the test (we need a good base level of worms)
- We come out for two farm visits – the first to dose lambs with the different drench families, the second visit (10days later) to take faecal samples for testing.
- Results will show us the resistance profile of each drench
- This will allow changes to be made, where needed, to your farm drenching program – boosting production and allowing for sustainable drench use in the future.

Veltrak update

Nina Jaine BVSc



The new electronic system for tracing deer velvet is up and running - Veltrak. This will allow NZ velvet to be traced right from the farm gate through to our international buyers, allowing us to continue selling velvet at a premium. The VelTrak tags are black (the old blue ones are no longer valid), and contain a chip and number which is recorded on the VelTrak website.

A few key things with Veltrak

- Farmers must register online with Veltrak and assign a vet clinic to their farm
- Tags can be picked up from the clinic, these have been allocated to your farm and recorded on the VelTrak website
- After velvetting, the tags will be scanned on pickup by the velvet buyer
- When the velvet buyer or receiver scans your velvet, they will generate a draft electronic Velvet Status Declaration (eVSD) for you to sign, instead of the paper book that you used to fill out.
- Have fun and give us a call if you have any queries

VelTrak

Coglavax – a vaccine sweet spot

Nina Jaine BVSc

Coglavax is a combined 8-in-1 clostridial vaccine. The benefit when compared to a 5-in-1 vaccine is that it provides added protection against different clostridial diseases (8 diseases vs 5.)

Two shots, 4-6 weeks apart, are required for good levels of protection, which last for one year. If an annual booster is given to ewes 2-4weeks prior to lambing, then passive immunity is passed onto the lamb through colostrum. This will cover lambs for 3-4months (from the time of injection.)

Clostridial deaths are commonly related to a sudden change in diet during feed transition. There is also increasing incidence as we use higher power feeds and crops, with deaths often affecting your best animals.

Common situations that can lead to enterotoxaemia:

- Anytime off feed that will cause animals to empty out and become hungry
  - Mustering and time into yards for drenching, dipping, vaccination
  - Time in woolshed for dagging, crutching, shearing
  - Stock transport, especially after sales or longer distance
- Break feeding - creates a situation of rapid change from low to high feed availability
- Any sudden high food availability on an empty stomach or low feed
- Stock movement from low level or poor quality to high power feed or lush pasture

If you are seeing deaths associated with any of the above situations, and despite using a 5-in-1, then upgrading to an 8in1 vaccine could deliver more profit to your farm. Feel free to ring the clinic and discuss options at any stage.

Clostridial protection for New Zealand

Disease	Present in NZ	5in1 protection	Coglavax8 protection
Clostridium tetani	✓	✓	✓
Clostridium chauvoei	✓	✓	✓
Clostridium septicum	✓	✓	✓
Clostridium novyi Type B	✓	✓	✓
Clostridium perfringens Type A	✓		✓
Clostridium perfringens Type B[3]	✓		✓
Clostridium perfringens Type C[4]	✓*		✓
Clostridium perfringens Type D	✓	✓	✓

*C.perfringens Type C is present in NZ, it is yet to be confirmed as the cause of death, as has been confirmed overseas.

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Feed them well, Breed them well

Raechel Parker BVSc

So the debate continues; should I mate my yearling beef heifers? While there's no 'one size fits all answer', there's potential to improve your profitability by up to 15%, so it's well worth considering. Currently 30 – 80% of yearling heifers are put to the bull in New Zealand, depending on the region.

What is the critical mating weight – CMW?

CMW is the **minimum** weight at which heifers can be mated successfully, not to be confused with average weight. We're aiming for **65%** of mature body weight or **>300kg** at body condition score (BCS) **6-7 at 15 months of age.**

97% of heifers will be cycling once they hit 65% of their mature body weight, but they need to be well grown, not just fat! Hence the importance of looking at their weight in conjunction with their BCS. If they've reached CMW then an 86% preg rate should be achievable in a 6w mating period.

Mating your heifers is worth considering if:

- **Heifers have reached CMW by 15 months of age**
- **You have the capacity to put plenty of feed into them immediately after calving to keep them in good nick for the second mating**
- **Your mixed aged cows are performing well with at least 90% in-calf rate**

There are several factors to consider when getting heifers up to CMW at 15m: **genetics, cow health, nutritional management, parasite control, trace element levels and infectious disease control** eg BVD.

Weigh a sample of heifers every 6w to see how they're tracking, allowing you to intervene before it's too late. Remember to weigh your mature cows too from time to time to give you a baseline.

WEIGHT IN KG				
Mature Cow	**Mating - 15 Months**	**0 – 3 Months of Pregnant**	**4 – 6 Months Pregnant**	**Calving - 24 Months**
500	315	360	390	409
600	365	419	454	487

The pros and cons to mating yearling heifers

There are several advantages: better **culling power**, opportunity for faster **genetic progression**, higher lifetime **productivity** and **fertility** performance and higher **economic return** on feed consumed if managed correctly; based on a 20% replacement rate there should be **16-18%** more calves after allowing for calf survival rates etc.

The big risks are that heifers **aren't up to weight** in time, experience **calving issues** or fall behind after calving – **failing to conceive** at the **second mating**. This is all about nutritional management, and the suitability of your system to meet these nutritional demands. On average heifers take 20d longer than cows to hit their first cycle after calving (70d for heifers, 50d for cows) so getting your heifers in calf to the first cycle is hugely beneficial in lining them up for a successful second mating. If you're tight on space and feed you may also need to reduce mixed-age cow numbers to optimize the nutrition of first calvers.

Please do not consider mating heifers if they've not reached their CMW. While some heifers can get in calf as young as 5 months of age, we all know it doesn't usually end well.

What the science says

Dairy based studies have looked at common factors between high and low fertility cows and they've shown that high fertility cows consistently have one thing in common; they hit puberty and got in calf earlier as heifers. Whether this is chicken or egg it shows an **earlier calf correlates with higher lifetime reproductive performance overall**.

Massey university funded some studies looking at birthweights. They showed that variation in heifer live weight gain during the first trimester of pregnancy does not affect calf birthweight or reproductive performance at second mating. Predictably they also found that assisted calves were consistently heavier than non-assisted calves, took longer to stand and suck but once up and going there was no difference in milk intake

or subsequent growth rates. They also demonstrated that prompt calving assistance does not have a negative impact on calf performance in the rearing period.

A word on EBVs

With **calf birthweight as the primary cause of calving trouble** in two yr old heifers, the most reliable solution is selection of appropriate bulls with **low birthweight EBVs** and **positive direct calving ease EBVs**.

Be wary of **rib fat** EBVs; while they can be helpful just remember they are a **carcass value not a cow fertility value**. **Days to calving** (DTC) EBVs are much more reliable and already have rib fat factored in, just remember the more **negative the value the better** when it comes to DTC. It's a lowly heritable trait, so takes a while to advance genetically, but is still important to make sure you're heading in the right direction, albeit slowly!

DTC cannot be measured in artificially inseminated heifers due to the synchrony effect, therefore the industry is trialing other ways to gauge when heifers hit puberty; these include regular **ovary ultrasound scanning** and the use of **pedometers** which show increased activity when heifers are cycling. This has led to some interesting discoveries, one being that many heifers are not even cycling when they first meet the bull and yet somehow get in calf early in the joining period – more work needs doing to solve this mystery, but it does make you wonder whether teaser bulls may have a larger role in the future.

FEED THEM WELL - NUTRITIONAL TARGETS

- ✓ Weaning to mid-winter: **DLWG target 0.5kg/hd/d; 2.5-3% of heifer's BW of pasture**
- ✓ Pre-calving: **BCS 5-6 with heifer gaining less than 0.5 kg/d in last 6w pregnancy** (calf growing, heifer maintaining weight)
- ✓ Calving: Calved heifers onto **2500 kg DM/ha (about 10-12cm) of quality pasture**
- ✓ Lactation: **10kg DM/d from calving; need access to high quality pasture (2500 kg DM/ha or 10-12cm, with pasture covers not falling below 1500 kgDM or 5-6cm).** Can be tricky if calving doesn't coincide with spring growth! Just remember underfeeding in this period results in the greatest breeding failures at second mating
- ✓ BCS 7 at second mating

BREED THEM WELL - MATING TARGETS

- ✓ **65% mature body weight at 15 months of age**
- ✓ **BCS 6-7 at mating** (Scale 1-10)
- ✓ **42 day mating period** (2 cycles). Consider mating 10-15% more heifers than required to give you scope for tight mating period.
- ✓ **70% heifers in calf to first cycle**
- ✓ **Bull: heifer ratio of 1:40**
- ✓ Maximise number of heifers reaching CMW 2-3 cycles before mating