gateway vets

Gateway Gazette

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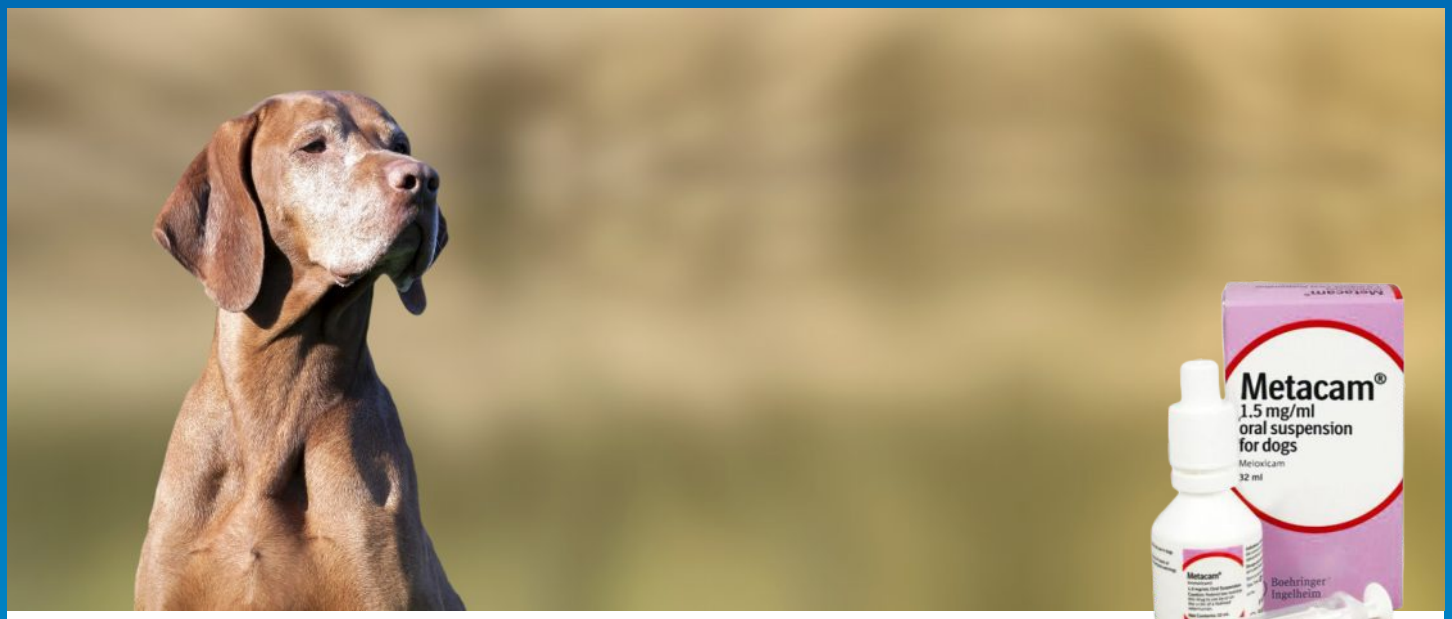
Roll On Spring

So far so good! Mother Nature has given us a traditional Canterbury winter with frosts and plenty of sunshine. Animal health is good, crops are feeding well and product prices are encouraging overall. Obviously the big grey cloud hovering over all of this is *Mycoplasma bovis*. While acknowledging this disease incursion is a significant challenge to our agricultural sector we are determined to meet this threat. To date we have conducted Biosecurity consultations with many of our clients to review every aspect of their business. This has been a very successful process and it is our opinion that every business which is involved in the dairy, dairy support or beef industries should have a written Biosecurity Action Plan to confront this disease.

At Gateway Vets we are stable despite all the turmoil in the industry. Most of you will know Shantelle McLeod who returns from maternity leave to assist us through the spring. We also have Michelle Ingham covering for Lynette while she is overseas. Otherwise it's business as usual for Gateway.

Going Grey



Old age is not a disease

As your dog ages their metabolic rate slows, there is a decrease in immunity and a general decrease in organ function. We often see a loss in muscle mass, skin and coat quality as well. Old age itself is not a disease and we can help improve the quality of life for older dogs.

Osteoarthritis

One of the main diseases we do see in our older animals, especially older working dogs is osteoarthritis. You may see lameness and thickened joints but it can be more subtle; stiffness in the morning, often "warming up" over the day, difficulty sitting, stiff after exercise, reluctance to jump into the truck and spending more time sleeping and less time moving. Often signs worsen over winter. They may also lick at a painful joint, yelp when it is touched or just generally be a bit more grumpy!

Management of osteoarthritis focuses on a combination of weight control, low impact and consistent exercise, padded bedding, special joint diets, medication to decrease pain and inflammation and nutraceuticals (Catrophen, green lipped mussel, omega 3 fatty oils etc) to support the joint and joint fluid health.

Osteoarthritis is a progressive disease and will get worse over time. However, there are many options of medications for multi-modal pain relief to help prolong working life and maintain quality of life.

When it's not just "old age"

Some diseases of older dogs can look a bit like old age, especially hormonal diseases like Cushings and hypothyroidism. Both of these diseases have subtle signs and can make dogs eat more, drink more, gain weight and affect the skin and coat. Other diseases, like cancer, liver or heart disease, are also more common in older patients. It is a good idea to have older dogs checked out regularly, just in case.

What you can do

- Maintain a healthy body condition
- High quality, high protein food, but may not need as much as a young dog
- Provide comfortable bedding, warm and draught free environment
- Non-slip surfaces (add mats or rugs)
- Regular light controlled exercise, ideally walking on a lead, or swimming
- Continued enrichment such as switching to visual/tactile commands instead of whistles especially if hearing loss is an issue

Carla Fletcher

Get your Beet back

Most farmers these days know about transitioning cows onto Fodder Beet. It is all about allowing the rumen microbes time to adapt to the new diet, and to avoid the devastating consequences of rumen acidosis. A slow and steady, incremental increase up to the set portion of the diet over 3 weeks or so would be fairly standard practice.

Sometimes overlooked, is the importance of the transition of cows back onto pasture, which leads on to the transition into milk. Rumen microbes need time (about 3 weeks) to adjust to this change in diet. While the threat of acidosis is less, the rumen still needs to be in optimum health to support the cow at this physically demanding time. Without a gradual adjustment off beet onto grass there will be a lag period where the rumen is unable to adequately function. The diet must also provide key nutrients to avoid common metabolic disorders at calving. Well transitioned herds have a lower incidence of milk fever, retained foetal membranes, lameness, metritis and mastitis.

By now a transition plan should be in place. There should be an incremental reduction in the portion of beet and an increasing allocation of grass silage/baleage and, where possible, pasture. When the cows come back to the dairy farm the silage or baleage is continued as pasture becomes the predominant part of the diet. Regardless of whether you adopt the Dairy NZ approach of energy restriction, or the school of thought which favours feeding generously in the lead up to calving, the rumen needs to be adequately transitioned to digest and utilise grass.

Lowering the dietary cation-anion difference (DCAD) to reduce metabolic disease post-calving is a well-established strategy employed during the transition to milking. Analysing the diet and reducing the DCAD makes the conditions in the blood more favourable for the mobilisation of calcium and phosphorous to meet the increasingly high demand in early lactation. We work closely with Agvance to analyse farm specific diets and tailor pre-mixes to provide key nutrients and aid this transition into lactation.

In summary, transitioning onto grass is vitally important and requires careful planning and management, as much as (or arguably more so than) transitioning onto Fodder Beet does. The flow on effect on cow health and milk production is significant.

Thurza Dickson

Disbudding Calves

Spring is nearly upon us, and it is time to consider our new season's calves.

As many of you would have heard, there is new legislation coming into effect next season regarding calf disbudding. From next season onwards, local anaesthetic will be mandatory, under an amendment to the Animal Welfare Act.

Previously legislation has only made local anaesthesia compulsory for cattle over 9 months of age. Pain is experienced by younger calves, therefore Gateway Vets have been using local anaesthetic as a standard pain relief for disbudding and dehorning all ages of livestock.

Our calf disbudding service involves sedation, a local anaesthetic nerve block, disbudding, recommended anti-inflammatories, navel checks and cutting off excess teats at a set price per calf. Calves are best done between 2 and 6 weeks of age, and usually in groups of 20 – 60. Calves need to be fasted for the sedation. Generally the morning feed is skipped, they are disbudded and then fed in the early-mid-afternoon when fully recovered. With sedation the calves lie down and snooze for about an hour. This is an excellent opportunity for farmers to ear tag or DNA test calves. A longer acting pain relief, Meloxicam, is recommended as the local anaesthetic wears off after 2-4hours. It has been shown that calves given Ketoprofen (Ketomax) or Meloxicam (Metacam, Meloxivet) at disbudding had significantly increased growth rates when compared to those that received no analgesia (Bates 2016).

Contact the team at Gateway Vets Ltd for any questions about the process or for general calf health advice.

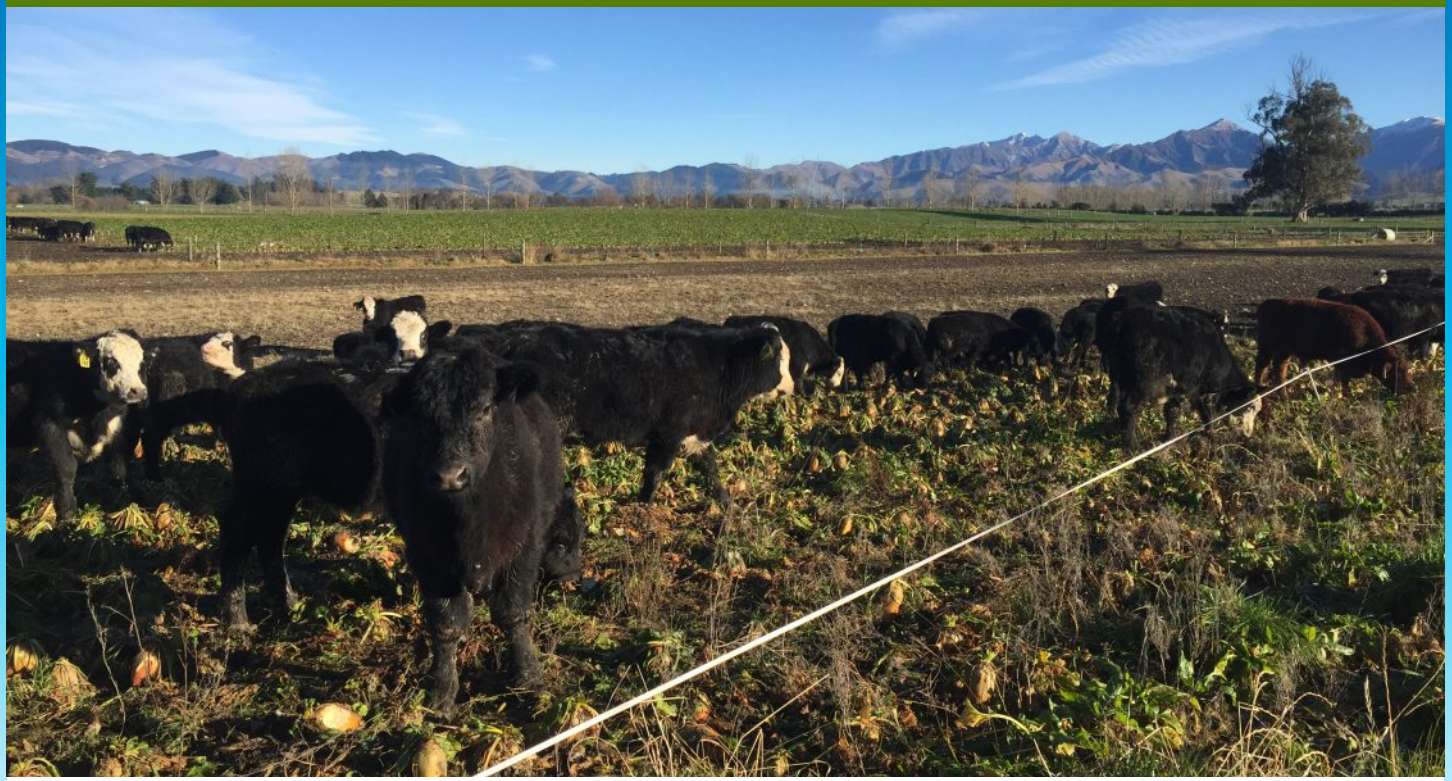
Thurza Dickson

References

Bates AJ, Laven RA, Chapple F, Weeks D, Eder P. Should calves get analgesic when they get disbudded? Proceedings of the Society of Dairy Cattle Veterinarians of the NZVA Annual Conference 193-199, 2016

Bickner L, Laven R. The headache of disbudding. Proceedings of the Large Animal Veterinary Technicians Group of the NZVA Annual Conference 2017

Could Covexin 10 save lives on your farm?



Clostridial bacteria cause a number of diseases in cattle and sheep, often with fatal consequences. Clostridia are commonly found in soil and the intestinal tract of animals. Animals ingest clostridial spores when grazing, particularly on crops like fodder beet where soil intake is high. Once ingested spores can lay dormant in the body until triggered by a stressful event such as a diet change, primary disease process or injury causing muscle damage. Injuries can be accidental or associated with management procedures such as tailing, castration or dehorning. These events create the anaerobic environment clostridia need to thrive. As they multiply it is the lethal toxins the Clostridia produce which do the most harm, with clinical signs quickly progressing to death.

The timing of routine management practices and periods of rapid growth rate help explain why clostridial disease is often associated with younger stock but it's worth being aware that these bacteria can affect animals of any age. Injuries caused by bulls fighting, trauma during calving or transitioning onto fodder beet are all possible triggers in older animals.

Treatment is usually pretty unsuccessful. The toxins can kill within 24 hours so the window of time to spot early signs, administer treatment and for it to reach effective levels is just too short in most cases. The best way to combat these diseases is prevention using vaccination.

Covexin 10 is a really robust product offering protection from toxins produced by the 10 most relevant Clostridia affecting New Zealand dairy, beef and sheep farming systems. Whole herd annual Covexin 10 vaccination is becoming increasingly popular as fodder beet feeding becomes commonplace. Whilst Ultravac 5 and Ultravac 7 offer protection from 5 clostridial toxins, Covexin 10 doubles this coverage. Covexin 10 offers unique protection against *Clostridium sordellii* which causes death by peritonitis, *Clostridium haemolyticum* which targets damaged liver cells and *Clostridium perfringens* types A, B and C.

Covexin 10 boosters can be given 2 to 6 weeks pre-calving or lambing, with good colostrum intake, this ensures protection of offspring for the first 12 weeks of life. From 8 to 12 weeks of age lambs and calves will require their primary course of two shots 4 to 6 weeks apart and then an annual booster. Alternatively calves or lambs born to unvaccinated mothers can start their primary course from two weeks of age. Annual boosters are required to maintain lifelong protection following the primary course in all classes of stock.

The question we have for you is, how many of the sudden deaths in older animals, particularly those on fodder beet, may have been caused by Clostridia? We know of confirmed cases in heifers on beet and of anecdotal cases where vaccination with Covexin 10 has stopped adult cow losses on crop during the dry period. As the number of deaths due to acidosis fall, as everyone's knowledge and experience transitioning onto fodder beet grows, are the odd incidental losses actually due to clostridial disease? How many deaths could be easily prevented with Covexin 10? We would certainly encourage you to get in touch if you have sudden deaths occurring in any class of stock so we can discuss whether further investigation or vaccination might be worthwhile.

Amy Edwards

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