

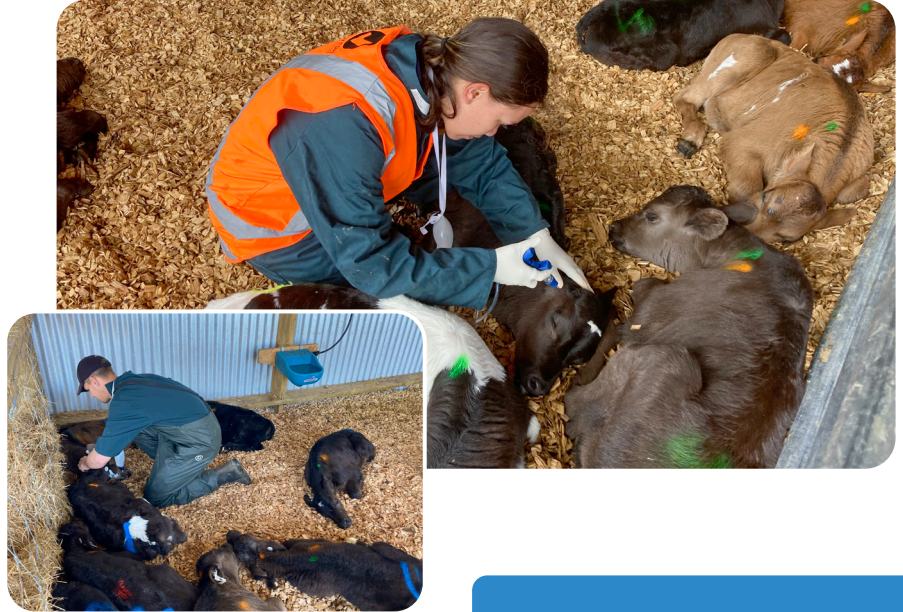
Greymouth Gossip



We have had a bit of a difficult time over the last few weeks, with a lot of quite severe sickness going through the clinic. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused you and your businesses, but we are pleased to report that the worst seems to be behind us and, hopefully, we will all be healthy for the rest of the season!

Disbudding is starting and the tech team is out in force, with Molly taking the lead. Meanwhile, our newest vet Marvin is enjoying the start of spring over here in New Zealand and is already leading the way in our in-house calving cup competition!

After a couple of years of having issues with her wrist, Marjan has now had surgery and will hopefully be back on-farm as soon as she is back to 100%.



Maria has got her lambing kit ready for the lambing season, which is in full swing, and now has Nadine on-board (as the proud owner of two of Maria's sheep and boasting a lambing percentage of 250%)!



Getting repro ready

By Laurence Cohen

As calves hit the ground, we're starting to think forward to another important part of the cycle – mating.

It may seem quite a way off, but time very quickly disappears and it is important to ensure cows have enough time for their uteruses to prepare for another successful conception. This means shrinking from something that can hold up to 100L (about the volume of a mini fridge) to something about the size of a cucumber!

The uterus must clean itself of all material (calf and membranes) and resolve any post-natal infections (metritis or endometritis). All this has to be done in a matter of weeks.

The ovaries must also start developing dominant follicles in their follicular waves. Often, the first ovulation after birth is silent, with subsequent ones being detectable, usually from 40 days of the cow calving.

Checklist



COWS

- Magnesium supplementation
- Take pre-treatment milk samples from mastitis cases
- Metrichick cows, ideally in batches
- Check Cu and Se pre-mating
- BCS herd
- Mating tail paint
- Record heats
- BVD vaccination for naive herds
- Identify and treat any non-cycling cows

NEW CALVES

- Maintain hygiene in pens
- Ensure fresh water and meal are available
- Disbudding from 2 weeks of age
- Covexin 10in1 vaccination
- Early identification of sick calves

YEARLINGS

- Vaccinate for BVD
- Check Cu and Se pre-mating
- Check weight! Should be >60% of adult weight at mating
- Drench

BULLS

- How many bulls do you need? Do you have reserves organised?
- BVD testing and vaccination (vet certificates available for loan bulls)
- Check for lameness

Pre-mating prep

We can help cows by making sure:

- Their bodies are fully stocked with the essential trace elements.
- Any uterine infections are identified and treated early – we recommend metrichecking 10 days-4 weeks post-calving and treating/metricleaning any that need it.
- Their Body Condition Score (BCS) is at the right level pre-mating – aim for 4.5 BCS. If cows are losing weight/ on a negative energy plane, their bodies will go into self-preservation mode and reproduction (ovulation and conception) will be affected. Meanwhile, overly conditioned animals are not always on a rising energy plane, which could be a reason for the lacklustre in-calf rates we saw in R2s last year.

Identifying non-cyclers

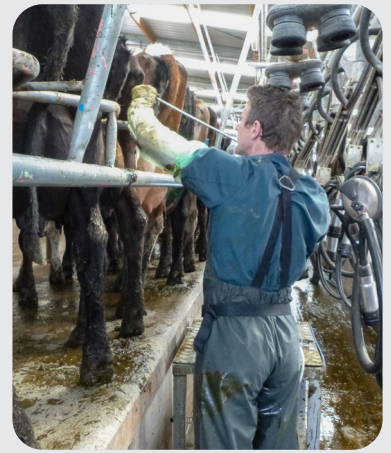
Using either pre-mating tail paint or wearable collars will enable you to identify non-cycling animals prior to mating. These cows can then be

brought on with a CIDR programme and give a first service conception rate of 50-55%. Often, the non-seen cyclers outperform the herd average (as shown in graph 1 below from one of our farms in 2023).

Consolidating mating allows you to have more days in milk and, while it makes for a busier first few weeks at calving, most of the herd will be in by then. There are options for consolidating mating for those animals that you have already seen cycling. The 'Why Wait' programme involves two PG injections that enable you to submit most of your herd in the first 10 days.

Heifers can also be consolidated with two PG shots, 10 days apart, with the second shot being one day before the planned start of mating (PSM).

If you are keen to discuss the repro performance of your herd further, or to hear more about the variety of choices available to you, please give your large animal vet a ring – we will happily explore the options that would work best for you and your system.



Managing 'dirty' cows

By Molly Kells

'Dirty' cows are problematic but, come with a quick and easy fix. To check for evidence of infection or slowed healing after calving, we can metricheck your girls 10 days-4 weeks post-calving.

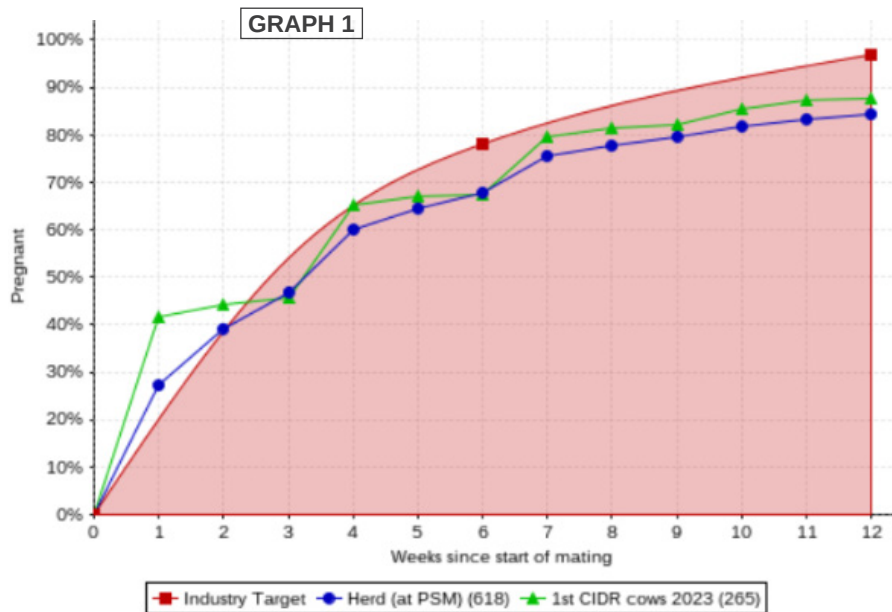
This is a quick and simple procedure, where a checker is inserted into the cow's vagina to scrape out any discharge, which is then examined and scored as either clear or purulent. It is a quick and fast test that can be done at milking time and we can simultaneously draft and treat any positives with the intrauterine nil-milk withholding antibiotic, Metriclean.

Cows in your herd who are most likely to be affected by infections such as metritis may have:

- ✓ A complicated calving history (assisted/difficult calvings)
- ✓ Stillborn calves
- ✓ Retained membranes
- ✓ Ketosis
- ✓ A lower BCS.

Having an infection of the uterus can have major effects on a cow's performance throughout the year – potentially causing reduced milk production and conception rates.

Book in your metrichecking with us today!



WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER?

METRI-CHECKING

10-14

days after calving

BCS

4.5

BCS average

PRE-MATE HEAT DETECT

4-5

weeks before mating

CYCLING PRE-MATING

75%

by 10 days prior PSM

Are your bulls up to the job?

By Marvin Wiens



In the lead up to repro season, it is vital to remember the other key players in your mating success: bulls.

Bull condition should be on target (aim for **BCS 6-7**) and they should not be suffering from any disease or illness. In addition, all bulls should **meet minimum scrotal circumference** targets for their age and breed prior to mating.

Other key points to remember about bulls prior to mating:

1. Ensure **high sperm quality**:
 - Have they got adequate magnesium, copper, selenium and zinc levels?
 - Do they have well developed and sound sexual organs? Bulls over 3 years can suffer with issues such as low libido, locomotion challenges, penile or testicular problems.
2. Check they have **sound eyes**.
3. Ensure they are **physically able to breed** (don't have any injuries, ailments or deviations in posture, which can affect biomechanics).
4. Give all bulls a **BVD booster** vaccine at least 4 weeks before mating starts. Virgin bulls should be blood tested for BVD virus as well as vaccinated.
5. Make sure they have had their **annual lepto vaccine**.
6. **Treat injured bulls** as promptly as possible. Allow them plenty of time to rest and recover.
7. Have some **spare bulls** on-farm to swap out if one becomes lame or injured.

Dairy cows: the farm's Olympic athletes

By Marjan Sprock

By the time you read this, the Olympics and Paralympics will be over. All those top athletes had to be at peak performance at the right time to be able to get to the event and be medal contenders! This was only possible with lots of training, excellent nutrition and coaching.

Our dairy cows are comparable with Olympic athletes. Cows are expected to produce plenty of milk, while not losing too much body condition, and to get pregnant every 365 days. All of this has to happen on a diet consisting of mainly pasture!

To enable your cows to reach their full genetic potential and be able to produce lots of milk, while getting in-calf on time, the details and balance of their nutrition are very important.

Most cows receive enough feed, containing enough energy, protein, fibre and starch, for basic milk production. However, if you want more milk per cow AND expect them to conceive in the first round of AI (instead of the last week with the bull), giving them a boost with minerals and vitamins is important.

Before mating starts, we advise you test a representative group of your 'Olympic athletes' (young and old) with some liver and blood testing. If you don't test, you don't know where your cows are!

The main trace element levels that we test for are:

- ✓ **Copper**
- ✓ **Selenium**
- ✓ **Magnesium**
- ✓ **Calcium**
- ✓ **Phosphorus**
- ✓ **Vitamin B12 (sometimes recommended)**
- ✓ **Iodine.**

Let's give all your cows a chance to do well this season! Give us a call to book in some liver and blood testing for your 'on-farm athletes'!





Protecting your herd from BVD

By Nadine Savage

Bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) is a challenging and costly viral disease, affecting both dairy and beef herds in NZ. Cattle of all ages are at-risk, including the fetus of pregnant cows.

Types of BVD

There are two types of BVD transmission:

Transient infection (TI)

This is when an animal of any age comes into contact with the disease and mounts an immune response. The infection lasts about 2-3 weeks, during which time the animal is shedding the disease, before clearing the infection.

If a bull gets a transient infection, it will affect his sperm quality for around 3 weeks and he will infect every cow he comes into contact with while infected.

Persistent infection (PI)

A persistent infection is formed when the fetus of a TI cow gets infected between 40-120 days of gestation. This calf will be a carrier of BVD for life and will shed high quantities of the disease during its lifetime. PI animals can sometimes be easy to pick, as they will often be smaller and sickly, however, some grow as normal and enter the herd.

The infection can result in different things, depending on the stage of gestation:

- Early pregnancy (days 0-40) – early embryonic deaths.

- Mid pregnancy (days 40-120) – mummification, abortions, PI animals.
- Late pregnancy (days 120-280) – stillbirths, weak or stunted calves, birth defects.

How does BVD get onto your farm?

There are a few ways BVD can be transferred to your farm, including buying infected stock, such as bulls or pregnant cows (trojan cows are those carrying a PI calf); heifers grazing off-farm; contact over the fence with neighbouring stock; and contaminated equipment/clothing.

What can you do about it?

To help manage BVD on your farm, it is important to have a monitoring programme, which may include:

- Bulk milk testing - if you aren't signed up for this, contact the clinic to do so.
- Testing replacement calves.
- Ensuring bulls have tested negative for BVD virus and have been vaccinated before arriving on-farm.
- Vaccinating at-risk stock, especially heifers going away to grazing.
- Checking boundary fences and minimising over the fence contact with neighbouring stock.

Testing options

There are different options available for testing your stock for BVD, including:

Screening tests: Bulk milk testing

We do two tests via bulk milk:

1. Antibody testing – this is looking for herd 'exposure' to the disease. If this is high, it can give an indication there is a PI.
2. Antigen testing – this is looking for the 'virus' itself. Positive antigen means there is a PI in the herd, and we need to go on a PI hunt.

Screening tests: Blood sampling

We take blood samples from 10-15 animals in the mob to get an idea of exposure. Animals should be older than 10 months, and unvaccinated. If exposure is high, we would need to move to individual animal testing and do a PI hunt.

Individual testing: Ear notching

A similar process to taking a DNA sample, we take an ear notch at any age (can be done at the same time as disbudding) to test for antigen (PI animal).

Individual testing: Blood sampling

Again, this can be done at any age to check if an animal is a PI. The blood is pooled to make sampling more cost effective. If an animal has an individual blood test and is found to be negative for antigen (so is NOT a PI animal), this means they will never become a PI and these animals do not need to be tested again in their lifetime.

Vaccination

Vaccination is aimed at protecting the pregnant cow and her fetus from getting infected.

If your animals have not been vaccinated before, they will need two doses, 3-4 weeks apart. The first injection should be given about 8 weeks before the start of mating, with the second needed at least 4 weeks prior to the start of mating.

For animals that have previously been vaccinated, they will need an annual booster, to be given at least 4 weeks prior to the planned start of mating.

Our clinic

