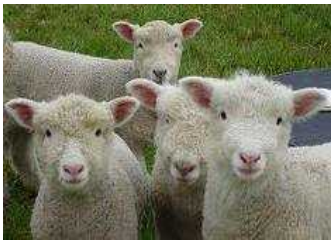
LEVIN & HOROWHENUA VETS ...your animal health professionals



Animal WOFs Newsletter – Nov/Dec 2011 –

Welcome to another *Animal WOFs for Lifestyle Blocks* newsletter.

Each issue we are covering important animal health issues relevant for that time of year. Please feel free to give us feedback or ideas for the next issue, with any topics you would like to see covered.

In this issue:

Animal Health Diary – things to watch out for at this time of year

Bloat in cattle – a deadly disease

Flystrike – attack of the Blowfly maggots...

Pig restraint – ideas on easier pig handling for vaccination, drenching etc

Animal Health Diary Nov/Dec

Six tips for early summer animal husbandry

1. Start monitoring your animals and weather conditions for occurrence of **Flystrike**. See our feature article for more information on recognising and treating flystrike.

2. Start thinking about **Facial Eczema** and zinc treatments as the risk period is almost upon us again. Consider the use of intraruminal zinc boluses, fungicide sprays and zinc in the troughs or feeds to prevent the painful effects of spore damage to the liver and skin. We will start emailing and faxing out spore counts once they start rising towards December and January.

3. Unvaccinated young stock are at risk of developing deadly diseases like **pulpy kidney** and **tetanus** in lambs and goat kids, and **black leg** in calves. If you haven't vaccinated your young stock yet, it is time to do so.

4. Weaner animals, especially lambs and calves, will need to be wormed regularly for their first 4-6 months on pasture. Monitor for scouring, weight loss and Faecal Egg counts. We have already seen a few cases of **Barber's Pole** infection, so preventative measures need to be taken.

5. The risk period for **bloat** and **nitrate poisoning** has started. Both are potentially deadly problems that can affect cattle. See our feature article for more information.

6. Although Facial Eczema season has not yet started, we can see animals with acute photosensitisation, or “sunburn”, at this time of year too. This condition is called **Spring eczema** and can be caused by previous liver damage from Facial Eczema, certain weeds like St John's Wort or Storksbill or, especially in calves, from a pasture mycotoxin or simply by overeating of fresh green pasture.
   Clinical signs include sudden onset of reddening of skin, in particular white parts of the body and the udder, pain, shade seeking and kicking at affected parts of the body. Later on the skin may blister and peel off, and secondary infections can develop. Treatment is similar as for Facial Eczema and as the condition is very painful, veterinary advice should be sought.

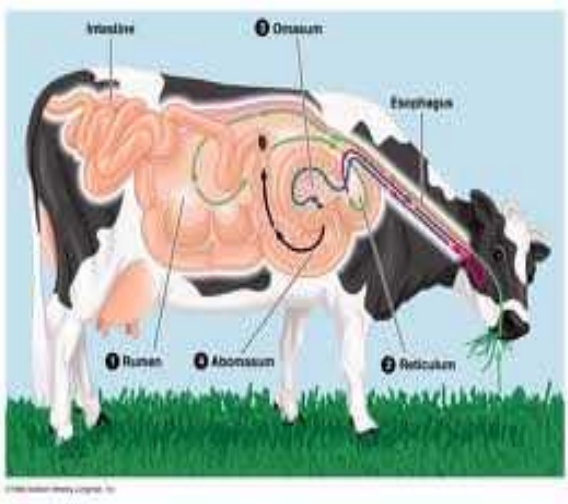
For questions, querries or concerns on the above mentioned spring husbandry facts, please call us at the clinic on 368 2891 or contact animalwof@lhvc.co.nz for non urgent enquiries.

Bloat in cattle – a deadly disease

Bloat is a common cause of sudden death in cattle in New Zealand.
There are two types of bloat, primary bloat (also called “pasture bloat” or “frothy bloat”), and secondary bloat (also called “gas bloat”).
In this article I want to discuss in detail the causes, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of primary, or frothy bloat.
Just as a quick note: Secondary bloat is most commonly caused by an obstruction blocking the oesophagus, like a potato, piece of carrot, pumpkin or similar vegetables or fruits, which prevent affected animals from belching out the gas in the rumen, leading to gas building up and causing the animal to bloat. The treatment of this involves removal of the foreign body and decompression of the rumen. As the oesophagus is a delicate and soft structure, any stomach tubing should be carried out by a vet or under veterinary supervision.

Primary/frothy/pasture bloat:

Normal digestion of feed in the cow's stomach:



The feed swallowed proceeds through the oesophagus into the first stomach, also called rumen, of a cow. With the help of large amounts of saliva, certain bacteria and other bugs, the fibre and sugars in the diet get broken down into smaller particles that can be absorbed by the cow. During this process, gas is produced, which is removed from the stomach by eructation (the fancy word for belching or burping).

Causes:

Frothy bloat is caused by the excessive production of rumen gases and entrapment of these in a stable foam, which prevent normal belching and thus lead to a buildup of large amounts of gas in the rumen.
The production of foam is associated with pastures high in soluble protein, sugars and water and low in fibre, like lush rapidly growing clover and lucerne pastures. The high water content causes a reduction in saliva excretion predisposing to bloat, while the more rapid digestion of clover pastures, as compared to normal ryegrass pastures, leads to a faster build up of rumen gases that become trapped in the foam.
Animals can start bloating within one hour of grazing dangerous pastures and often several animals can be affected.

Clinical signs and diagnosis:

As the gas and foam build up in the rumen, you will notice the left side of the animal's abdomen get progressively bigger and bulgy. The animal becomes progressively more uncomfortable and may show signs of pain like bellowing, getting up and down frequently and kicking at its abdomen.
As bloat progresses rapidly, we often don't see animals in this early stage.

In advanced cases cattle will be lying down, first on their chest then on the side, mouth-breathing from severe respiratory distress, salivating increasingly, and have their tongue sticking out.

They may bring up some rumen contents and defaecate. If relief is not provided at this stage, animals will die quickly of asphyxiation or heart failure.

Diagnosis is on the basis of history of access to bloat-causing pastures and clinical signs. A post mortem examination by a vet can help to determine if bloat was the cause of death.

Treatment:

This varies depending on severity of bloat.

If animals are still standing and mild-moderately bloated, consider giving a dose of bloat oil by mouth, alternatively 100mls of vegetable oil can be given.

Ensure that the cow is swallowing properly and don't drench cows too fast as inhaling of bloat oils can cause pneumonia.

Remove the herd from high risk pastures and feed hay or silage.

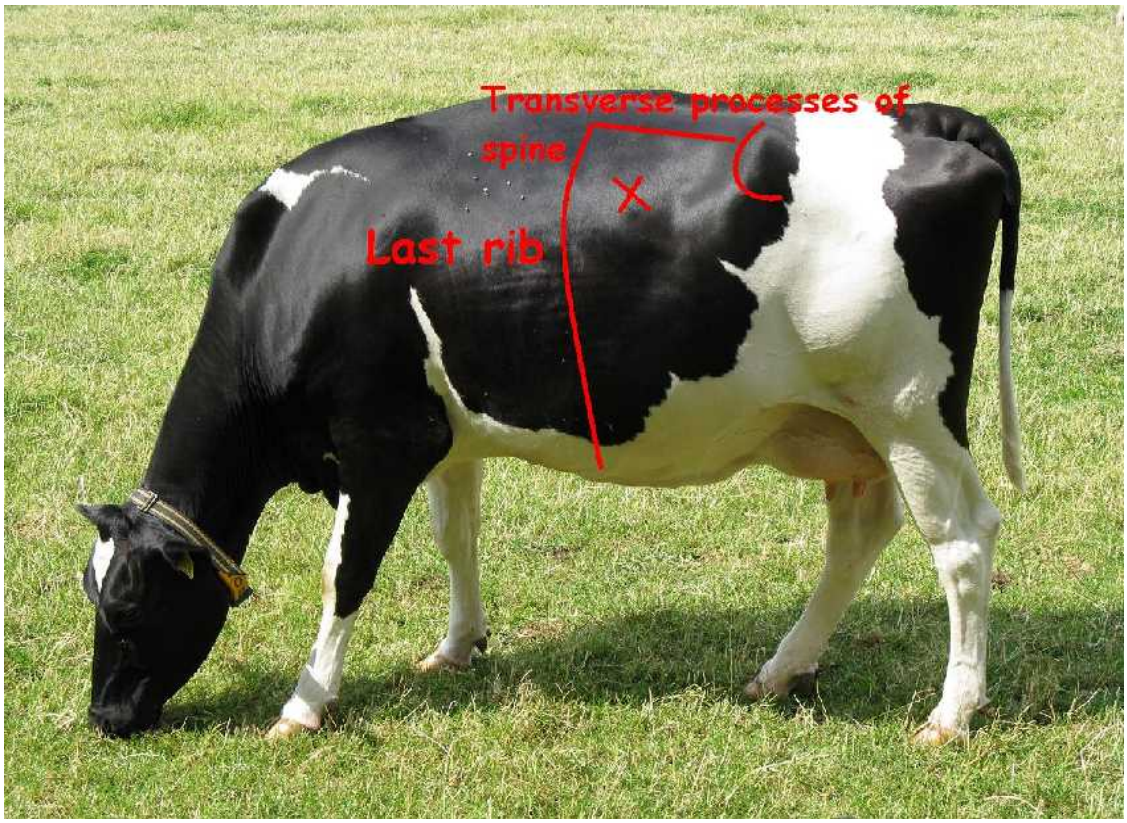
=> Note these cows grazing on high risk pasture rich in clovers.

If mildly bloated cows are not responding to the treatment with bloat oil within an hour or get progressively worse, please call us to examine the animal and determine if it is indeed bloat.

Severely bloated animals are often lying down and gasping, this is the last stage before death so an emergency “rumenotomy” must be performed immediately.
Ideally you should **call the vet asap** for this, however if the cow is lying on it's side gasping, there may not be much time and you may need to relieve the rumen pressure yourself.

This is also called “bloat stabbing” and involves stabbing a sharp guarded knife into the rumen and making an incision through which the foam and froth can escape, relieving the pressure on internal organs and allowing the animal to breathe easier.

It is important that you stab the animal on the LEFT-HAND-SIDE, as the rumen is located in the left side of the abdomen. The landmarks for the bloat stab are one handwidth down from the transverse processses of the spine and one handwidth behind the last rib. In a badly bloated cow these can be hard to find and if you have any concerns, please call a vet immediately!



Aim the knife towards the cow's opposite elbow and once you have stabbed the cow, leave the knive in place and twist it sideways to allow air to escape. (At this point, speaking from personal experience, it is a good idea to step sideways out of the firing line as the smell and stains of rumen contents and foam can take a long time to get off you and your clothes...).

If the hole is not large enough for foam to come out, cut downwards and make a larger incision.

Once the foam has been released the cow should be breathing easier and eventually be able to get up on her feet again.

Bloat stab wounds are always contaminated and “stabbed” cows should be treated with antibiotics.

To avoid peritonitis (infection in the abdominal cavity), holes larger than 2 centimetres (or 1 inch) need veterinary attention to debride, clean and suture the wound. It is mainly the hole in the rumen that causes peritonitis as a large hole may not heal and will continue to leak rumen fluids into the abdomen, so even if the skin wound will heal well, please call us to assess the wound and treat as needed.
Cows with larger wounds that have been properly cleaned and closed often recover better than cows with small wounds that are left to heal by themselves.

Prevention:

As with any disease, prevention is better than cure.

There are 4 different strategies available to help prevent bloat. None of them is 100% effective but together they do reduce the likelihood of bloat occuring.

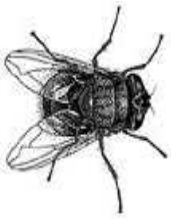
1. Offer decent amounts of **fibre** in the diet and avoid feeding solely lush spring grass.
   => add hay, baleage or straw to the diet
   => move animals to a new paddock before grass is grazed down too far

2. **Avoid** putting **hungry cows** onto high-risk pastures
   => avoid high-risk paddocks first thing in the morning when cows are hungry
   => feed hungry cows straw, baleage or hay first then release them onto the pasture

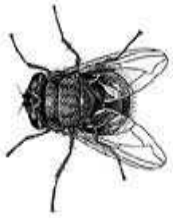
3. Use **rumen modifiers** like “Rumensin”
   => available in liquid, powder and capsule forms for individual drenching, feeding on supplements or giving a bolus that lasts 100 days into the rumen respectively.
   => Rumensin changes the rumen bugs to decrease the number of gas-producing bugs and increase the number of energy-increasing bugs thus reducing the amount of foam produced

4. Use **bloat detergents** like “Bloatenz”
   => act by breaking down the stable foam in the rumen
   => can be added to drinking water or individually drenched (check dose rates as they may vary depending on the level of bloat risk).

For any questions or advice, please don't hesitate to contact us at Levin and Horowhenua Vets.



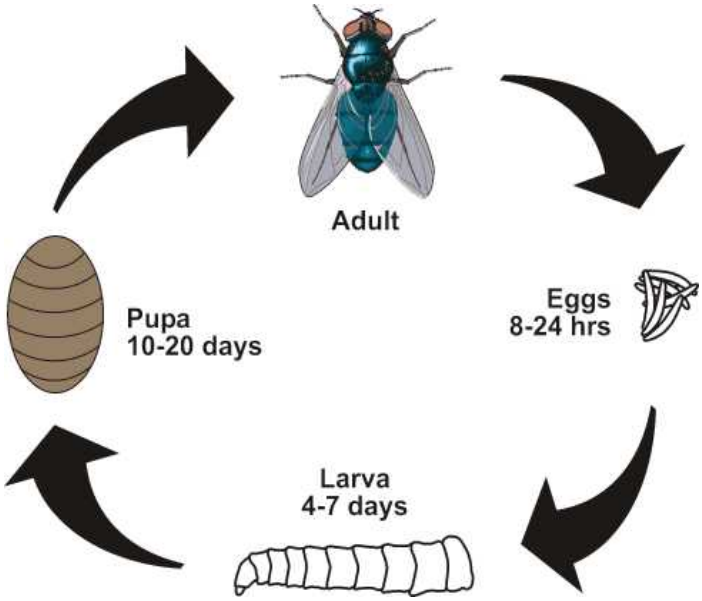
Flystrike
- Attack of the Blowfly maggots...



Flystrike is a serious condition that can affect all species of animals ranging from sheep, alpacas and goats to pet rabbits.

Cause:

It is very common during the warm months of November through to March and is caused by the three species of Blowfly called *Lucilia sericata*, *Lucilia cuprina* and *Calliphora stygia*.



These blowflies overwinter as adults or pupae and as temperatures rise in springtime, the flies become active and start laying their eggs on animals bodies where there is warmth, moisture and a food supply.

← *Blowfly eggs in a wound*

Within 12 hours the eggs hatch and maggots start feeding on the surface of the hosts skin by scraping it with their hook-like mouthparts and secreting enzymes to dissolve the skin.
During feeding the maggots cause extensive damage to the animal and the skin wounds attract even more flies.

Once blowfly maggots have eaten enough, they drop onto the pasture and burrow into the soil, where they pupate for 1-2 weeks after which they emerge as adult flies.

Clinical signs:

These are obvious irritation, seen as stamping, tail twitching, rubbing and biting at the affected area. After a few days affected animals stop eating, seek shade and appear depressed.

On closer examination you may notice wounds in the skin, often hidden underneath the wool or fur, that are quite raw and often ooze a lot of fluid. Around the edges, once the wool is parted, a large number of maggots will be found, that will start wriggling away from the light when disturbed.

Occasionally sheep or goats with footrot can get flystruck in between their toes so check their feet daily and remove any maggots as needed.

As the wound enlarges fluid is lost through the wound surface and animals can become very dehydrated. Untreated animals invariably die due to the loss of fluid, protein and electrolytes from the wounds as well as the toxaemia following tissue damage.

Treated sheep may take up to 6 weeks to recover lost weight, with up to 8 months for the fleece to recover fully.

Predisposing factors:

- moist and warm areas on the body, like:
  => faecal and urine staining around the crutch, often associated with high worm burdens
  => fleece rot and skin infections
  => footrot
  => wounds from shearing or other injuries
  => wrinkled areas of skin, especially in some Merino breeds of sheep
- sometimes animals can be struck on other parts of the body for no apparent reason

Treatment:

As soon as a flystruck area is identified on an animal, the maggots need to be removed and destroyed. Soaking the clippings in methylated spirits will kill the maggots. Avoid putting meths straight onto the wound and animal though as it will sting a lot.

As they are often hiding in the wool and fur around the wounded area, this will need to be clipped or shaved off gently. Avoid cutting the wool right down to the skin though as this can presdispose the skin for sunburn.

Initially only a few maggots may be visible, but once you start clipping the surrounding area, many more maggots will usually start crawling away from the light and noise.

Once all the maggots have been removed, bathe the affected area with salty water then apply flystrike treatments like Maggo, Flystrike powder or Flystrike dressing, that are available at Levin and Horowhenua Vets. (Some products may have milk and meat withholding times so check these with a vet before using such products on when relevant.)

Check the wound daily to avoid reinfection and check other animals in the mob for flystrike too and apply flyspray on the surrounding wool, not the wound itself, to keep blowflies away.

Very deep or large wounds may be difficult to treat, please contact your vet if you are unsure what to do. These can be very painful for the animal and may require pain relief and antibiotics. In severe cases euthanasia may need to be considered.

Prevention:

These are mainly for sheep but may be applicable for other animals too:

1. Crutch and dag sheeps' bottoms to remove soiled wool
2. Ensure worm control, especially for young stock, is up and running to reduce diarrhoea
3. Tail dock lambs to the appropriate length, check with your vet if you are unsure
4. Treat wounds, cuts and footrot quickly so flies don't get a chance to lay their eggs.
5. Keep animals out of deep moist gullies, bush margins and shelter belts during peak flystrike season as these have a particularly high fly challenge. Windy exposed paddocks are less favourable to flies.
6. Dispose of dead animals and animal materials like placentas quickly to reduce sites where flies multiply.
7. Consider the use of fly traps if your area has high fly burdens.
8. There are long acting pour on or spray on products available to prevent flystrike, like *Zenith*, that are available at LHVC.
9. Check animals regularly for development of flystrike, this goes for pet rabbits in outdoor hutches too.

Pig restraint – a great idea for easier pig handling for vaccination, drenching etc

These photos are from Mel and Terry of Waikanae, who have a few sows and a lovely friendly boar.

After a few exhausting efforts to get these lively pigs vaccinated Terry built a narrow race inside his cattle race in his yards.
It is one pig-width so that they can't can't attempt to turn around. It has solid sides and two guillotine style gates to separate the race into two parts so you can get two in at once.

Pigs will move up races so long as they can't see though them but will try to push out the tiniest light gap. Terry sometimes puts posts over the top to stop them jumping out.

This race has reduced the time to do vaccinations by about 75 percent and is much less stress on the pigs.

Great work Terry!

Animal WOFs Ipod competition:

For the last few months we've had a competition running and all farm visits from July to October have gone into a draw for this 8GB Ipod Touch.

On November 1st we randomly selected a WOF client from the pool of farm visits, so I would like to announce the winner.

Congratulations to:

Robert and Leanne Ward
of Waipuna Grove
just south of Levin

At this point I would also like to thank you all for being such loyal and wonderful clients and supporting our Animal WOFs programme as it's first year of existence draws to an end.

We have some exciting new ideas for the coming year that I would like to introduce now.

- Starting on January 1st 2012 we would like to offer to you an actual **official WOF membership with a 5% discount** for all services and products that we offer at LHVC. This includes large and small animal farm visits and consults, surgeries and medication and will automatically be applied to your account, provided that your account is paid in full by the 20th of the month following. The WOF membership will cost $60 per year, including GST.
- Please print, fill out and return the attached membership form to get signed up for your 5% discount.

- For clients in the Otaki area and south, please note we are only charging mileage from our clinic in Otaki, Otaki Animal Health, rather than from Levin. Supplies and deliveries can also be sent to Otaki Animal Health, at 33 Dunstan Street, for your convenience.

- **Free email newsletters** will continue with more exciting topics for the upcoming year and if you have any topics you would like to see discussed, please don't hesitate to email me with suggestions.

- Also, we would love to see contributions from our WOF clients, so please do write to us if you have a good animal story, a great new set of yards or anything else you would like to share with the other WOFers.

- We would also like to offer **printed and posted newsletters** for lifestylers without computers, these will cost $15 per year because we have printing and postage costs with these.

- If you would like to receive printed newsletters instead of emailed ones, please contact Stef at Levin and Horowhenua Vets.

"This model is hard to get parts for."

Looking forward to see you at the clinic or at your place,

Stef & the team @ LHVC.

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