

CVC CLINIC NEWS

In true SW Vic fashion, winter has arrived with a dramatic change in weather— we hope you are managing to stay moderately warm and dry! This edition will focus on repro management in dairy herds including synchrony programs and non-cylers. Prior to breeding, it is also good to know the BVDV status of your herd - this edition will explain the available options to test for BVDV and what to do if your herd does test positive for this virus. We would also like to welcome Vet Nurse Nikita to the CVC team— be sure to say hello when you see her!

We are available 24-hours for emergencies on 5593 1077. Follow the prompts to speak to the veterinarian on call.

BOVINE VIRAL DIARRHOEA VIRUS (PESTIVIRUS/BVDV)

BVDV or “Pestivirus” is widespread throughout Australian beef and dairy herds. Although it’s name implies a disease of the gastrointestinal tract, the condition more commonly has significant effects on reproduction and immunity in unexposed herds. Cattle that have never been exposed to the virus are considered “naïve”. Some animals may develop fever or diarrhoea after infection although these symptoms are usually mild. Once infected, cattle will develop antibodies to the virus in their immune system which helps prevent further infection. The most significant consequences of BVDV infection are suppression of the immune system and decreased reproductive performance. Whilst the impact in adult cattle is often minimal, **calves with naturally lower immunity and exposure to a high load of pathogens often develop more severe signs of common diseases.** BVDV is spread through contact with a wide variety of bodily fluids including respiratory secretion, uterine secretions, urine, milk, semen and faeces. If cows become infected during key reproductive periods, there can be very serious consequences. Infection during pregnancy can result in significant foetal abnormalities depending on the timing of infection during a cow’s gestation.

Infection at the time of joining can result in reduced conception rates and increased early embryonic deaths

Infection of a cow between 40– 120 days gestation results in production of “persistently infected animals” or “PI’s”. PI animals are the main source of infection in most herds.

Infection during day 100-140 of pregnancy can result in calf birth defects. Infected calves may be aborted, stillborn or born alive with defects such as blindness, fixed joints and tremors.

DIAGNOSING BVDV:

Bulk milk testing – this is performed on a milk sample from the vat to assess for presence of antibodies. This is a good first line test to assess if you have BVDV on your farm.

Antibody testing through blood sample - this assesses individual cattle for antibodies to determine if they have previously been exposed to the virus.

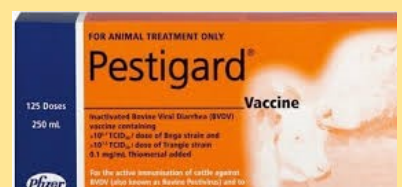
Antigen testing – ear notch or hair sample from cattle suspected to be PI as they will not be able to mount an immune response and therefore will be antibody negative. If we suspect your herd might have been affected by BVDV but individual cattle are testing negative, we can perform antigen testing to confirm if they are true negatives or if they are in fact PI calves.

SO YOU HAVE BVDV, WHAT NOW?

There is no specific treatment for BVDV and most infected cattle recover without intervention, however it is clearly best to prevent infection in your herd to minimize reproductive losses. Management approaches need to be tailored to your individual farming situation.

Sometimes a course of two Pestigard vaccines four to six weeks apart can be given to naïve cattle to reduce impacts of infection. Annual boosters are required to maintain adequate immunity.

If you are interested in determining your herd’s BVDV status and / or implementing a vaccination program, please do not hesitate to call—we would love to help and have a chat.



NON-CYCLING COWS/ COWS WITH NON-VISIBLE OESTRUS

With the joining period fast approaching, now is the time to start preparing your cows so they are in peak condition for breeding. This includes preventing and identifying any non-cycling cows.

WHAT IS A NON-CYCLING COW?



Generally, the uterus of a cow recovers and returns to normal cyclic activity within 30-50 days post calving. Often their first heat may be 'silent' and therefore no behavioural signs of oestrus are observed, however, all subsequent oestrus periods should be detectable. Any cow that has not shown signs of oestrus prior to breeding can be considered a 'non-cycling cow,' or a cow with a 'non-visible' oestrus.

There can be many factors that contribute to cow fertility but the predominant manageable factor is body condition score.

BODY CONDITION

Body condition plays a big role in the fertility of your cattle. At the start of joining, cows should have a body condition score of 4 or 5/9. Light cows and excessively fat cows that have lost condition prior to joining have the lowest fertility scores. Body condition should be monitored throughout lactation with attention to cows putting on condition in late lactation if required. Weight loss should be kept to a minimum during the dry period and early lactation (prior to joining).

Any disease or condition which affects a cow's ability to eat or decreases her appetite can alter body condition and can result in cows with 'non-visible oestrus'. These diseases can include lameness, metritis /endometritis, metabolic diseases and gastrointestinal illnesses such as acidosis, displaced abomasum and diarrhoea.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE COWS IN NON-VISIBLE OESTRUS

If you suspect you may have cows in 'non-visible oestrus' there are many things we can do to help bring them back into oestrus ready for breeding. With seasonal calving, it is important that these cows are detected **prior** to the intended joining period to avoid creating prolonged calving periods next calving season.

Specific oestrus synchronisation programs can be implemented to induce cyclicity in 'non-cycling cows'. These programs require timed administration of specific drugs to mimic the natural cyclic process.

PREVENTION OF NON-CYCLING COWS IN YOUR HERD

Our vets can perform pre-breeding checks on individual cows or your entire herd to ensure any reproductive issues are detected prior to joining. Additionally, they can assist you with body condition scoring your cattle, reducing lameness and treating disease to help prevent the occurrence of 'non-visible oestrus' cows in your herd.

If you suspect you may have non-cycling cows in your herd or would like to have a chat with one of our vets to implement strategies to prevent their occurrence, please don't hesitate to contact the clinic on 5593 1077.

