

Dairy Newsletter

September 2022



CVC CLINIC NEWS

Welcome to the September issue of the CVC dairy newsletter. The last few months have been challenging for many with relentless rain and the threat of foot and mouth on our doorstep but we are hoping that spring not only brings some warmer weather but also a reprieve from the chaos and challenges our industry has faced this year. This issue will focus on preventing pink eye in your cattle, heifer management and lameness in your dairy girls.

Camperdown Veterinary Centre

1 Leura Street , Camperdown

Ph: (03) 5593 1077

Hours:

- 8:00am – 5:30pm (Monday – Friday)
- 8:30am – 12:00pm (Saturday)

PINK EYE IS COMING AND PREVENTION IS KEY!

Pinkeye, also known as bovine infectious keratoconjunctivitis, is a highly contagious ocular infection of cattle most commonly caused by the bacterium *Moraxella bovis*. The bacterium produces a toxin that causes aggressive inflammation of the eye, often resulting in short term or permanent blindness in cattle. The bacteria *Moraxella bovoculi* has also been implicated as the causative agent on some farms in Australia.

Pinkeye can affect up to 80% of a mob and usually young cattle are most susceptible. Pink eye occurs most commonly in Summer and Autumn in Victoria.

Pink eye generally requires initial trauma to the cornea for the bacteria to colonize. Often feeding hay or grazing crops can scratch the surface of the eye making it susceptible to bacterial infection. Other **predisposing factors** include;

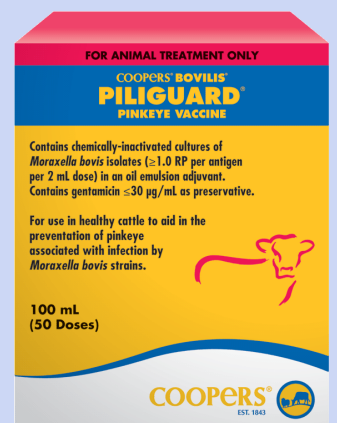
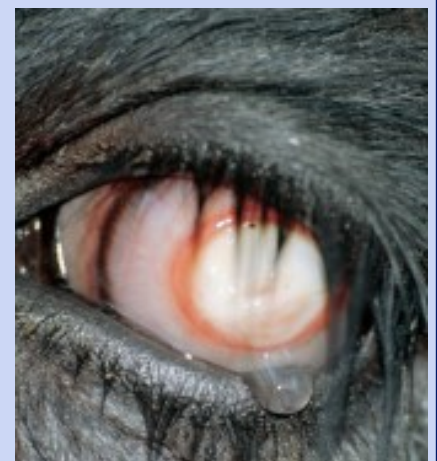
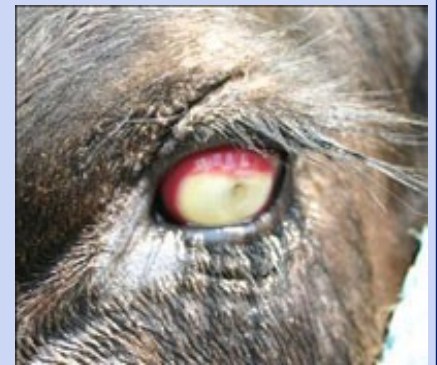
- Flies as they spread bacteria between cattle
- Dust as it irritates eyes, increases tear production and assists the spread
- Non-pigmented eyes as they are more sensitive to ultraviolet irritation
- Overcrowding as it proliferates spread of bacteria
- Immunity status of cattle– cattle with decreased immunity due to poor body condition or comorbidities are more susceptible to infection. Naive animals (those that have never been infected or vaccinated) are most susceptible to pinkeye infection.

Clinical Signs Include:

- increased lacrimation (increased tear production)
- Cloudy cornea or white spot formation
- Corneal ulceration
- Eye can change from white to pink to yellow colour

Prevention is key! COOPERS Piliguard® is a vaccination registered for aid in the prevention of pink eye associated with infection by *Moraxella bovis* strains. The vaccine must be given 3-6 weeks prior to the start of the pink eye season (generally given in October). Annual re-vaccination is recommended to maintain protection. If you would like to discuss pinkeye prevention in your herd or order your Piliguard vaccine please do not hesitate to contact the clinic, so we can help you be prepared to beat the flies this season!

If you have had trouble in the past with the pink eye vaccine not working, you may have a strain that is not covered by the vaccine. CVC can assist with laboratory development of a farm specific vaccine by swabbing and culturing samples from affected eyes.



DAIRY HEIFER MANAGEMENT

As we approach the end of calving for most producers, many will be looking at weaning this year's heifers. While many will be glad to clear out the sheds for a few months, the growth and health of your future milkers should remain of primary importance!

Regular weighing and examinations of your heifers can help ensure they meet their target weights and remain as healthy as possible. Young heifers are extremely prone to the effects of parasites so herds should have regular faecal egg counts (FEC) performed to determine the need to drench. FEC instructions are available from the clinic to collect faecal samples from your herd. We run these tests in house and have results within 24 hours to allow you to make quick drenching decisions. As discussed in a previous newsletter, FECs are not always reliable when diagnosis ostertagia infections in your herds. Results always need to be interpreted in correlation with how your heifers are looking and performing.

Critical mating weights are one of the key drivers of heifer fertility. Weight has an extremely large influence on the age at which heifers go through puberty and begin to cycle. Larger heifers have higher milk production, greater longevity and better fertility in the long term. Critical mating weight is the weight at which 85% or more of heifers joined will fall pregnant in 6 weeks, and is the minimum weight a heifer should be at the start of mating. The actual weight varies between breeds, and is based on the mature weight of the herd. Heifers usually begin cycling around 55% of their mature body weight, and are sexually mature at 65%. Once they have reached sexual maturity, the chance of each heifer becoming pregnant during joining is maximized. This means that for a **500 kg mature-weight cow, heifers need to be a minimum of 320 kg at joining.**

One of the most crucial determinants of heifers reaching critical mating weight is ensuring they are a good weight at weaning. Dairy Australia has some excellent resources on target weights for heifers.

The recommended weight at weaning is:

- **100-110 kg for a Holstein– Friesian**
- **90-100 kg for Jerseys.**

At CVC, we have a set of digital scales available for use throughout the year. Additionally we can assist you with weighing and assessing heifers suitability for joining. If you have poor fertility in your heifers, or if your first calving heifers can be a problem to get back in calf, speak to us about heifer management for better reproductive success.



NOT ALL LAME COWS NEED ANTIBIOTICS!

Here at the CVC, we have been very busy recently seeing lots of lame cows. Lameness is one of the dairy industry's biggest health concerns following infertility and mastitis. Not only does lameness impact a cow's welfare, it will also cause a drop in milk production, loss of body condition and poor reproductive performance. It is estimated that a single case of lameness costs a producer on average \$220 once veterinary care, drugs and milk withholding is considered. There are a large number of factors that play into the development of lameness in the modern dairy cow including:

- Track and paddock conditions, cow flow along tracks
- Time spent standing on concrete
- Cow behavior and herd hierarchy
- Genetics/ hoof conformation

Early treatment of lameness is crucial to reducing the impact on a cow's production. Lame cows should be removed from the herd for examination and kept close to the dairy after treatment for close monitoring. Walking should be minimized to reduce wear on the lame foot.

For cows that need veterinary attention, our vets will lift and examine the affected claw for any lesions causing discomfort. A block may be applied to the opposite claw to reduce weight put on affected claw while it heals. Some cows may just need a hoof trim while others will require extensive paring to allow drainage depending on the cause of lameness.

Antibiotics are generally only indicated in cases where infection is present, such as footrot or deep seated hoof abscesses. A short course of Depocillin is usually adequate to manage footrot as the organism is very sensitive to penicillin, provided any stones have been removed from the interdigital space. While Accent is a common choice for treating footrot in cattle, it contains a critically important antibiotic to human and animal health and should only be reserved for special cases or high producing cows where it is not economical to remove them from the vat due to milk withhold periods.

