



### CVC CLINIC NEWS

Welcome to the April edition of the Dairy Newsletter. We are well and truly into Autumn now with the colder weather starting to set in. Our vets are seeing a range of illnesses associated with calving including many cows with endometritis. Therefore this issue will delve into uterine infections in cattle and the importance of heard health visits. It will also touch on disbudding and silirum vaccinations as well as umbilical abscesses in calves. Our vets have also seen a few down cows lately and would like to stress the importance of calling us quickly as the longer they are down, the less likely they will be to respond to treatment.

1 Leura Street, Camperdown

Ph: (03) 5593 1077

Hours: 8am-5:30pm (Mon-Fri)

9am-12pm (Sat)

We are available

24 hours for emergencies on 5593 1077.

Follow the prompts to speak to the veterinarian on call.

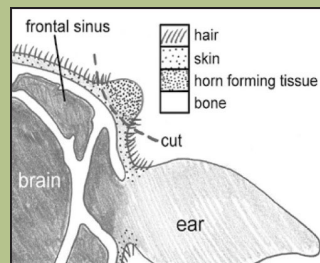
### Disbudding

Disbudding is the process of removing horns from calves when they are only small little buds. This process stops them developing into horns which can damage the carcass of paddock mates or injure handlers.

Disbudding is best performed when the calf is between two and six weeks old. At this age, the horn bud is able to be felt easily through the skin but has not yet attached to the skull making it the ideal time to be removed. At this age calves are also old enough and robust enough to handle sedation with minimal set back.

Disbudding is performed under sedation with local nerve blocks of the horn buds allowing a pain free procedure. A gas iron is then used to remove the bud. The calves receive a long acting pain relief/anti-inflammatory injection that lasts for 3 days and topical antibiotic/antiseptic spray on the bud wounds. We can also remove extra teats and assess for umbilical abscesses or hernias.

Only healthy calves should be disbudded as they can handle the sedation. Calves should have food and milk withheld for at least 6 hours prior to disbudding to prevent aspiration under sedation.



### Silirum Vaccination

Silirum is the registered vaccination for control of Bovine Johne's Disease (BJD). A single dose of the vaccination from 3 weeks of age can provide life long cover. We recommend vaccinating all replacement heifers with Silirum on any property where BJD is a problem. Silirum works by decreasing the amount of bacteria shed in faeces, reducing transmission and therefore the number of cases within a herd.

CVC recommends vaccinating with Silirum at the time of disbudding. Self-injection with Silirum can have severe health consequences and therefore it is safest to be administered by a veterinarian. By administering at time of disbudding, risk of self injection can be minimized as calves are sedated and easier to handle.

All Silirum vaccinated animals must have an NLIS tag and be identified with a specific ear notch at the time of vaccination.

If you would like to discuss Silirum vaccination of BJD in your herd, don't hesitate to contact the clinic for a chat with one of our vets.



### Umbilical Abscesses

Umbilical or naval abscesses are caused by bacteria entering the umbilical cord shortly after birth. This can be through faecal or dirt contamination or via other calves suckling the navel. Common signs include painful swelling at the umbilicus, fever, decreased appetite, lethargy.

Generally these calves require antibiotic and anti-inflammatory treatment. In severe cases surgical intervention may be required to drain and remove infected tissue.

Prevention is always better than a cure! Umbilical infections can be prevented by ensuring calving pads are not overly contaminated with faeces or mud (not always easy in SW VIC!), keeping bedding in calf rearing sheds clean, spraying umbilicus with disinfectant spray shortly after birth, regular monitoring, removing calves which suckle the navel of other calves.

Umbilical abscesses can often be confused with umbilical hernias. Hernias occur when there is a hole in the abdominal wall which allows abdominal fat or organs to slip through. These often require surgical repair and can be life threatening. If you are concerned or unable to tell the difference, contact our vets for assistance.

## DAIRY HERD HEALTH VISITS

We are currently seeing many cases of metritis and endometritis which not only result in sick cows but also can delay cows getting back in calf.

Dairy herd health visits are really important to ensure cows are ready to be re-joined after calving in the following joining period. Reproductive management is the cornerstone of dairy production and early planning for “at risk cows” is essential for ensuring your herd achieves the best results come preg testing time.

It is normal for cows to have vaginal discharge for up to 12 days post calving - this is part of the normal process as the uterus recovers from pregnancy. Vaginal discharge that is malodorous or persists longer than 14 days after calving is considered abnormal and may suggest the cow has endometritis or metritis. Both of which can significantly affect the cows ability to get back into calf.

**Metritis** is an infection of the deep muscle layers of the uterus and generally results in a clinically sick cow. Illness can range from mild to life threatening and most commonly occurs shortly after calving.

**Endometritis** is an infection of the inner layers of the uterus and is most commonly what we consider a ‘dirty cow’. Affected cows generally have minimal signs of clinical illness. The main clinical sign is the presence of purulent material (pus) in the vagina. Endometritis is a common cause of poor reproductive performance in dairy cows. The major risk factors for developing endometritis include:

- Dystocia (difficult calving)
- Premature calving (including abortion and induction as well as twin calving)
- Retained fetal membranes (RFMs)
- Inadequate transition period nutrition including metabolic conditions such as hypocalcemia (milk fever), hypomagnesia (grass tetany), ketosis and fatty liver syndrome.

It is recommended to get your cows checked well before the start of joining to ensure cows are cycling and there is time to treat affected cattle prior to joining. We offer herd health visits to all dairy clients which include metrichecking, rectal palpation of reproductive organs in any abnormal cases and treatment of endometritis or metritis.



## WHAT IS METRICHECKING?

“**Metrichecking**” is a procedure in which a Metricheck® device is inserted into the cows vagina to sample any discharge sitting near the cervix or cranial vagina. The identification of pus in this discharge is highly indicative of endometritis. Therefore metrichecking can be used to identify cows which require treatment prior to joining.

Metrichecking can be performed on the whole herd post-calving or for high risk cows only. Metrichecking is a quick procedure that causes minimal discomfort and can be performed at milking on most dairies.



## WHAT IS METRICURE?

Cows can be treated for endometritis with an intrauterine antibiotic called “**Metricure**”. The antibiotic is placed directly into the uterus using a catheter (like semen during artificial insemination). Treatment of infected cows can improve 6 week in calf rates by up to 15%. Cows with mild cases of endometritis may self cure, therefore we recommend waiting until 3-4 weeks after a cow has calved before getting her checked and treated.

Metricure has a 0 day milk withhold and therefore treatment with Metricure will not impact on milking.

**If you would like to book a herd health visit for your cows, please give us a call on 5593 1077 to organise!**



## DOWN COWS

‘Down cows’ are any cows which are unable to stand and they are medical emergencies. Cows can be ‘down’ for many reasons including but not limited to; metabolic disease such as hypocalcaemia (milk fever), hypomagnesaemia and ketosis, musculoskeletal disease such as nerve paralysis, fractures and dislocated hips or systemic illness including mastitis, metritis, pneumonia and other infections.

The longer a cow is down, the more likely it is that it will stay down. Cows are obviously heavy animals and when down for extended periods of time they can put unwanted pressure on nerves causing secondary nerve damage which may complicate recovery. If you have a down cow the best thing to do is to call a vet immediately. They will be able to help you assess the cause of illness and establish a prognosis in the cow to help guide treatment.