



### CVC Clinic News

Welcome to the November issue of the Dairy Newsletter. Our vets have been out and about seeing lots of cases of woody tongue and photosensitisation so this issue aims to provide information on these diseases to help you to detect cases early and seek appropriate medical assistance.

By now you may have seen our new vet Caitlin on farm or in the clinic. She is settling in well and loving this warmer Camperdown weather.

We are seeing a lot of snake bites this season already so be mindful of your pets and working dogs on the farm. If you suspect a snake bite please contact the clinic as an emergency.

### Camperdown Veterinary Centre

1 Leura Street , Camperdown

Ph: (03) 5593 1077

#### Trading Hours

8:00am – 7:30pm (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday)

8:00am—5:30pm (Wednesday, Friday)

9:00am – 12:00pm (Saturday)

**We are available for emergencies 24/7**

**Joke of the Month**  
Why did the cow win an award?

### Woody Tongue

Woody tongue is a disease caused by the bacteria *Actinobacillus lignieresil* which leads to abscesses in the soft tissue of the mouth. This bacteria is found world wide and we see many cases occur in and around Camperdown. *Actinobacillus* is a commensal bacteria of the upper respiratory and gastrointestinal tract in cattle, which means it is naturally found in many cattle. Disease occurs when there is damage to the soft tissue in the mouth, generally in the form of abrasions from rough feed, allowing bacterial entry.

Infection commonly occurs in the tongue, making it swollen, painful and inflexible but it can also occur in the lymph nodes, lips and mouth cavity. Since cows use their tongue to pick up feed, woody tongue can stop the cow from being able to eat normally so you may notice weight loss or ill-thrift in affected cattle. Other clinical signs include increased salivation, inappetence, swelling below the jaw, increased bellowing or agitation and sometimes infected cattle will make chewing motions as if they have something stuck in their mouth.

#### Treatment

If caught early enough, woody tongue can be treated and generally has a good prognosis. Veterinarians will treat with antibiotics and iodides via intravenous injection as well as anti-inflammatories to help bring down swelling and provide pain relief. Resolution of the disease can take a couple of weeks but cattle are usually back eating again within 48 hours.

#### Prevention

It is very difficult to prevent woody tongue in your cattle as the bacteria is naturally found in their mouths. Therefore, early detection is key to improving prognosis.



## SWAMP FEVER/ PHOTOSENSITISATION

Photosensitisation is a disease process where the photodynamic agents (agents which react to light) from plants cause non-pigmented or hairless skin to become more susceptible to sunlight and ultraviolet rays. This results in severe inflammation in affected skin and the development of burn like wounds.

There are two main causes of photosensitisation, primary and secondary.

The most common form of photosensitisation seen in livestock is secondary occurring due to liver damage. Generally, the photodynamic agents from plants are excreted from the blood by the liver after being broken down by microbes in the rumen. However, when the liver has been damaged, it loses the ability to filter the photodynamic agents from blood resulting in a build up in the skin where it can react to light causing photosensitisation.

Cattle can also develop primary photosensitivity by eating plants that directly contain photo-toxins. These plants include brassica crops and weeds such as St Johns Wort. It is also important to note that some plants such as parsnips are able to cause blisters and photosensitivity by contacting the skin.

### CLINICAL SIGNS

- Irritation
- Kicking at cups during milking
- Seeking shade (photophobia)
- Shaking head or ears
- Peeling or swelling of skin in affected areas
- Lameness if skin around hooves has been affected
- Often affected animals will seek relief by standing in water, hence where this condition gets its name, swamp fever
- In severe cases where teats are damaged, some cows may develop mastitis.
- Some cows may also be found recumbent with a fever

### TREATMENT

Affected animals should be placed in a paddock or area with limited exposure to sunlight until the acute clinical signs decrease. Anti-inflammatories and anti-histamines can also help to reduce the severity in the acute phase of the condition, therefore if you suspect your cattle have been affected contact a vet immediately. The application of emollient zinc sunblock (such as Filtabac) can be applied to affected teats to protect the cow from long term damage. Occasionally if damage to skin is severe, excessive antibiotics may also be required.

If photosensitivity is occurring secondary to severe liver damage the animal may not recover, however it is important to note that degree of skin damage generally does not correlate with survivability.

