



# Farm Newsletter

Veterinary Associates Hastings Limited

814 Francis Hicks Avenue - PO Box 2511 - Hastings

Spring 2009

## Silage Abortion in Stock

The feeding of spoiled baleage or silage to pregnant stock can be risky and it is not uncommon to see problems. Listeria and fungal overgrowth can cause abortion outbreaks and occasionally can be associated with deaths.

Usually there is mould present on the feed, but if you are suspicious of spoilt feed, testing can ascertain the pH and will indicate if there has been adequate fermentation. High pH feed is associated with listeria.

Listeria infection leads to depression, circling and abortions eventually recumbency and death. Some animals will survive if given antibiotics early in the course of the disease.

If there is any doubt over the quality of the feed don't feed to pregnant animals, get a sample tested first to give some indication of how potentially dangerous it maybe. It can also be suitable for feeding to dry stock.



## BVD Vaccination Reminder

Bovine viral diarrhoea affects a large percentage of NZ herds causing reproductive losses, ill-thrift and deaths in young stock. Vaccination is recommended prior to mating with a sensitizer and booster four weeks later. Herds on an annual program will be due for the booster 3-4 weeks prior to mating. Any queries regarding BVD and vaccination costs and benefits can be discussed at the clinic.

## - BLOAT - Rumensin Capsules

The spring conditions this year are likely to cause an increased risk of bloat, due to rapid growth of clover.

"Rumensin" capsules are controlled release capsules for beef and dairy cattle over 200kg live weight, giving 100 days release of Rumensin for bloat prevention plus increased feed efficiency and/or weight gain in beef cattle.

## Brassica Crop Feeding

Feeding of brassicas to stock can be associated with some problems. These can be avoided with management, especially over the critical transition period in the first few weeks.

**Nitrate** poisoning can be avoided by first checking the nitrate levels especially following rapid growth. Introducing stock slowly by feeding for a few hours a day initially for the first week or alternatively providing a runoff with old pasture to act as a "gut filler" prior to introducing.

**Polioencephalomalacia** or vitamin B1 deficiency is caused by a rapid change in the diet. Feeding another form of fibre or providing roughage will slow the rapid uptake of the highly soluble sugars.

**Red water** caused by toxic sulphur compounds, and **photo sensitivities** causing signs similar to facial eczema are uncommonly seen, but can be avoided by grazing management.

**Trace element deficiencies** is usually only seen with long term grazing i.e. 3 months, so supplementation should be considered in these situations, particularly selenium, copper and iodine.

**Blood poisoning** diseases are also a risk factor in the wetter months.

**Carbohydrate indigestion** can be caused if stock gorge on feed in the first few days while not being used to the high level of soluble carbohydrate.



## Working Dog Forum

The latest NZVA Sheep and Beef Conference in May dedicated a day to working dog health, presenting information from recent research and national survey results. Sharon and myself attended this useful and interesting day.

### FARMER SURVEY

A farmer survey into disease and injury of working dogs identified the main problems as BEHAVIOURAL ones such as not casting left or right consistently, fighting or mauling stock, excessive grumpiness or timidity. Problems with feet, legs, joints and skin were a feature. Joint problems were common among older dogs.



### VETERINARY VISIT SURVEY

A nationwide survey of veterinary practices of health events affecting working dogs reported TRAUMA as the largest category of presenting complaints, accounting for 38% of visits recorded. Injuries included dog bites, stock and automotive injuries, and being 'caught up in the fence'. Interestingly Heading dogs were more prone to multiple ligament injuries and hock injuries which are often some of the most expensive and difficult to treat, where cruciate (knee ligament) injuries were evenly spread over Heading and Huntaway dogs.

### GASTRIC DILATION VOLVULUS - or GDV

Gastric dilation and twisting is a serious life threatening condition that affects large breed, deep chested dogs such as Huntaways. Dogs fed large, single meals a day are at risk of developing GDV. Initial signs may include restlessness, salivation, unproductive vomiting and abdominal distension. These are surgical cases and up to 30% are likely to die. Outcome is improved for those cases seen within 5 hours of onset of clinical signs, so it is important to know what to look out for. Risk of this disease is minimized by:

- not feeding overly large meals
- avoiding stress, eating too fast during feeding
- not using an elevated feed bowl
- not breeding dogs with a first-degree relative with a history of GDV
- seek veterinary care if any signs of bloat occur
- preventative surgery for high-risk dogs

### WORKING DOG NUTRITION

The ideal working dog diet contains > 25% protein, high fat (30-40%) and carbohydrates (<15-16%). Many cereal based diets are low in protein and fat and contain

too much carbohydrate. These don't provide much endurance for dogs in hard work and muscle fatigue results in more bone, ligament and soft tissue injuries. Home kill alone is deficient in mineral/vitamin content and we still see working dogs with variable nervous signs resulting from Vitamin B1 deficiency on meat only diets. A good balance is provided by an equal mix of home kill and premium quality commercial diet such as Eukanuba which has a protein level of 30%.

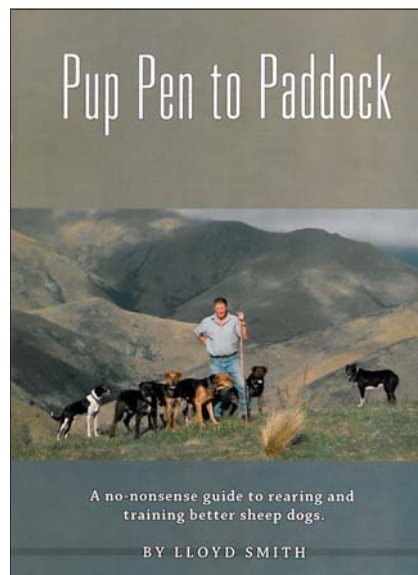
Costs for feeding of Eukanuba as a sole diet range from \$2-2.50/day, depending on work load for a Huntaway and from \$1.35-1.60/day for a Heading dog. If a diet combination is used these costs are reduced and are a good investment in the health and fitness of a vital farm resource. Who else would work willingly for those hours, that much pay, take that much heat, run that many miles, over hills and without complaining?

### ABAMECTIN TOXICITY

There is potential risk to working dogs of toxicity from exposure to the macrocyclic lactone (ML) family of drenches. There are no toxicity warnings for dogs on the labels of these products. Affected dogs may salivate, have dilated pupils, appear blind, have tremors, unstable gait, depression or coma. Ingestion is the main route of toxicity. Things to consider:

- avoid using old abamectin drench containers for water containers
- prevent dogs licking pour-on guns
- prevent dogs eating carcasses where pour-on has recently been applied
- avoid giving dogs 'a squirt' if they 'are looking a bit wormy'!

*Linda*



Buy a bag of  
**Eukanuba**  
Premium Large  
Breed 20kg  
and receive a  
copy of "Pup Pen  
to Paddock, by  
Lloyd Smith  
**FREE !**

One booklet per farm  
While stocks last