



All ready for mating?

It is time to start thinking about Salmonella in sheep

Bopriva: taking the hassle out of bull beef farming

The ol' wind down

Induction reminder

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Preventative vaccination in the sheep industry: An early outstanding winner - so why we do we feel bad about jabbing sheep?

This article is mainly directed at our sheep farmers - but to illustrate my points I am going to borrow a huge success story from our Vetlife dairy clients. So everyone please read on!

The discontent we all feel about the number of needles that we inflict on our breeding sheep is starting to be supported positively. The simple truth is that the New Zealand sheep industry has been ahead of its time, and the other sectors are catching up!

Let me digress for a few sentences and talk about lactating dairy cows.

Over the last 10 years Vetlife has seen a massive fall off in antibiotic use for treating clinical mastitis. One leading antibiotic product of choice for treating mastitis that was a firm favourite for the last 15 years is now prescribed at only a fraction of the original volume.

Sure some other more modern products have eroded some of that volume but to offset that the number of dairy cows has probably quadrupled for us since then.

Sure we have had milking seasons that have been good, but we have had bad challenging years over that period as well for dairy cows.

A number of very important and positive things have happened.

- On farm:
 - › Farm management and staff are very astute at mastitis management.
 - › Many incurable cows have been culled.

However, Vetlife is also immensely proud of some of the things that we have been up to:

- Delivering meaningful advice.
- Using a fantastic dry off antibiotic instead of using the same volumes of an inferior antibiotic product.
- Using a non-antibiotic teat sealant in heifers before calving.

All of these preventative strategies have resulted in:

1. A big drop in somatic cell count and clinical mastitis.
2. Healthier cows, less milk wasted in treatment discard, better welfare.
3. Far less antibiotics used in rear guard action over a year.

On our study tour last year to look into dairy farming systems in North America, we noticed

the very, very significant use of vaccines in their milking cows, and a corresponding lack of use of antibiotics because the disease was in check - hey presto = the New Zealand sheep industry!

Newsbreak - Vetlife, along with three other veterinary business partners, has acquired the New Zealand vaccine rights for a particular bacteria that causes mastitis. This internationally recognised vaccine product will require development within our New Zealand system so we are careful to say that our recommendations are yet to be made but what an ambition to have - another management vaccine to prevent mastitis disease.

So at last, my point:

The mastitis success story described above serves to illustrate how valuable disease prevention is and how far an industry will go with multiple steps to achieve this. Imagine mastitis prevention being as simple as a single vaccine doing the job!

So sheep farmers, do not feel bad about the number of vaccine needles that you give your sheep, imagine the impossible rear guard action and the mess of treating sheep during disease outbreaks.

The reality is that our New Zealand sheep industry has simply led the charge with excellent vaccines - we have been 15 years ahead and our other farmed species are set to catch up!

A wee bit of a sting in the tail with this article - I leave you with one reminder - do not ignore Salmonella, control it via vaccination, either for the gut form or the abortion form.

Salmonella has not disappeared, it is simply resting for a while until as usual the climatic conditions conspire against us and we have another outbreak. See the excellent article in this edition for more details.

Anyway on a positive note, as I write this article the rain has fallen 10-25 mm depending on parts of the practice, setting the start for a great autumn.

Happy farming - be confident on the disease management front, it is a complex business but it is well worth it.

Regards Adrian Campbell



Practice Principal
Adrian Campbell (Vet)



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All ready for mating?

- Rams are palpated.
- Teaser rams vasectomised.
- Lambs weaned.
- Toxovax and Campyvac done.

But what about the body condition of your ewes?

Ewes are the key to any profitable sheep and beef farm. They produce lambs on the ground and the milk to get lambs up to weaning weights (both of which are vital performance indicators of farm productivity), but after weaning time they are forgotten about. Often ewes are kept in large mobs, used to clean up rough feed, held tight when feed levels are low, and no extra feed is provided for lighter body condition animals. They are then expected to go to the ram, scan 150 - 180%+, and produce big lambs the following season as well.

Flushing lighter ewes pre-tup will increase ovulation rate but it requires a lot of good feed - will you have enough and what about the rest of the pregnancy?

You should aim for ewes with the body condition score of three (BCS 3). They will:

- Start cycling earlier - condensed lambing period.
- Have higher ovulation and conception rates - more lambs.
- Give birth to heavier lambs - higher survival rates.

- Produce more milk - heavier lambs at weaning.

All of the above equals more and heavier lambs at weaning.

Feed is often tight during summer and autumn. There are lots of mouths to feed - finishing lambs, lactating beef cows, growing calves, replacement hoggets and flock ewes - grass needs to be used efficiently!

A ewe requires 2% of her body weight to meet maintenance feed requirements; therefore a 70 kg ewe needs 1.4 kgDM/day. A ewe with a BCS of 3 or greater can be fed maintenance levels while maintaining pasture quality and cleaning up rougher feed while ewes with BCS less than 3 can be priority fed - it is much easier to put on weight prior to mating than from scanning onwards. The feed consumed by a flock of ewes split on BCS will often be the same amount as a mob with varying BCS individuals as it allows efficient feeding of those animals that require extra feed instead of making fat ewes even fatter.

Do you draft your ewes by eye and take out the skinny ones?

If ewes are more than six weeks off the shears, drafting light ewes by eye is very inaccurate and will only pick up the extreme tail-end animals. Body condition scoring is faster than weighing

animals individually and can easily be done at mousing/uddering, vaccination, drenching or as ewes are scanned. Body condition scoring is not affected by body size, fleece weight, gut fill or pregnancy.

Lighter ewes should be body conditioned scored and drafted off at weaning and scanning. Beef + Lamb NZ surveys show that high performing farms earn \$185/ha more than an average farm and commonly these farms continually monitor the lighter animals in their flocks, body condition scoring them and priority feeding lower conditioned stock.

Campylobacter vaccine can increase profit by **\$4.54** per ewe mated but increasing average ewe BCS from 2.0 to 3.0 lifts gross margin by **\$13.00** per ewe mated! (Beef + Lamb Ewe BCS Handbook).

It is not too late to get in now and BCS your ewes, or contact your local Vetlife vet. We are always happy to discuss how to get the best productivity out of your ewes or come out and teach you how to body condition score.

Amy Watts
Vetlife Alexandra



It is time to start thinking about Salmonella in sheep

Salmonella bacteria cause two disease syndromes in sheep – enteric, or gut disease and abortions. These two syndromes are distinct from each other in that they occur at different times of the year, and are usually caused by different types of Salmonella.

Enteric disease occurs sporadically, primarily in adult ewes between December and June, following periods of stress. The Salmonellae responsible are usually *Salmonella hindmarsh*, *S. typhimurium* and *S. bovis-morbificans*.

In 1996, *Salmonella Brandenburg* was isolated from aborted and dying ewes in Mid-Canterbury, and since then it has spread into Canterbury, Otago and Southland. Disease occurs in late pregnancy, with affected ewes dull, fevered and aborting putrid late term lambs that have been dead at least one day. Around half these ewes will develop a severe uterine infection and possibly diarrhoea.

Without treatment, 30 to 50% of aborting ewes die. Some ewes, however, will have only a short term dullness, with lambs born dead or small and weak. On average, 3 to 4% of a flock will abort over a period of around 30 days, although abortion rates as high as 15% have been recorded. In 2010-2011, confirmed cases of *S. Brandenburg* abortion were as common as those caused by either *Toxoplasma* or *Campylobacter*.

S. Brandenburg abortions can affect all ages of ewe, with the majority occurring in multiple bearing ewes. Two-tooths introduced into a breeding flock are also at higher risk. Outbreaks are sudden and severe, and losses can be very high, typically peaking around two weeks after the first abortion. Infection occurs by direct contact with aborted fetuses or placentae, or from ingestion of contaminated feed. Hence, farms with higher stocking densities that use intensive grazing systems are at higher risk of disease.

S. Brandenburg can survive in the environment for several months, and sheep that have been infected and recover can carry the bacteria in their gut for up to six months. These “carriers” are an important source of infection, particularly if introduced into a naive flock. Spread can also occur via scavenging birds (particularly black backed gulls), as well as people, vehicles and equipment that come into contact with the bacteria.

Prevention and control of *S. Brandenburg* abortion involves an integrated approach.

- Vaccination provides increased but not complete protection. Even if given appropriately, in the face of a heavy challenge, abortions and ewe deaths may still occur. Salvexin B (MSD Animal Health) vaccine can be used to prevent both abortion and enteric disease, but the ideal timing of vaccination differs for the two syndromes. In unvaccinated animals, a sensitiser dose is followed by a booster dose 4 to 8 weeks later, with an annual booster given in subsequent years. The timing of the booster dose is important - it should be given 2 to 3 weeks before the anticipated risk period. So for protection against abortions, this means giving the booster in early pregnancy. For ease of management this often means the sensitiser is given at ram introduction and the booster at ram removal, or at ram removal and then at pregnancy scanning.
- It is also important to reduce the predisposing factors for salmonellosis.
 - › Mob stocking and strip grazing increase the risk of disease and spread. If these practices cannot be avoided, in an outbreak it is critical to spread ewes out and reduce the stocking density to reduce the number of ewes affected.
 - › Minimise pre lamb yarding and general stress where possible.
 - › Avoid purchasing stock from known *S. Brandenburg* affected properties, because these animals may be carriers.
 - › Minimise environmental contamination by practising good hygiene, disposing of aborted material quickly and quarantining affected ewes.
 - › Visit non-affected mobs before affected mobs.
 - › Control scavenging birds.

An injection of a long-acting tetracycline antibiotic early in the course of disease usually prevents ewe death, but it will not prevent abortion.

It is important to note that *S. Brandenburg* can cause enteritis in humans, so be careful when handling aborted material and ensure you practice good hygiene.

For more advice on the prevention and management of abortions in your ewes, please talk to your local Vetlife vet.

Georgina Mc Kerchar
Vetlife Fairlie



Bopriva: taking the hassle out of bull beef farming

The latest report from Beef + Lamb NZ chairman Mike Peterson suggests that beef prices are likely to be buoyant in the foreseeable future. This is being driven by a number of factors including the rebuilding of the US beef herd following a number of years of liquidation resulting in increased stock retention. This reduction in stock available for slaughter is strengthening the US domestic beef price and is likely to also reduce beef availability in other export markets where we compete with the US as suppliers. All in all this is expected to increase New Zealand farm gate prices for beef.

Although bull beef is recognised as having natural growth rate advantages over alternative beef classes, raising bulls for the beef market has traditionally required significant investment in infrastructure and/or an acceptance of some losses due to injury and death. Bopriva is a product that was brought to the market around three years ago specifically to reduce these problems. Bopriva is a vaccine that induces the animal's immune system to generate antibodies against its own GnRF (Gonadotrophin Releasing Factor). In doing so the animal's immune system essentially shuts down the production of testosterone. This is not a growth promotant, nor hormone or genetic modification but simply some clever trickery of the immune system to reduce the activity of certain hormones that the animal is producing.

Reduced testosterone reduces the tendency for bulls to fight allowing them to be stocked in higher numbers at higher rates and minimises the tendency to destroy gates, fences and each other. Two injections of the vaccine are required for the effect to develop. The duration of the effect can be regulated through careful timing of the interval between the vaccinations and can be varied from twelve to sixteen weeks. By selecting an appropriate time for onset of effect and correctly timing the duration of effect the bulls can be programmed to exhibit "agreeabull" (the manufacturer came up with that one) behaviour throughout winter then flush up with testosterone to maximise lean muscle mass growth rates in spring as feed availability increases. Research shows that if timed well Bopriva-treated bulls will achieve normal bull growth rates under these conditions.



At present there is no official research on the effects of Bopriva on fertility and so the manufacturer's advice is not to use Bopriva-treated animals for mating at any time. Last spring I was involved with the testing of some previously Bopriva-treated bulls and although there was a high rate of exclusion due to poor semen quality we did find some bulls that appeared to be producing good quality semen. Scanning of heifers over which these bulls were used appears to confirm that they were in fact fertile. This was however a small scale experiment and, as noted above, there did

appear to be a higher than normal rate of infertility. So, for now, any decision to use bulls previously treated with Bopriva for service should be discussed with your Vetlife vet with the understanding that it is an off-label practice with no guarantees of outcome.

If you are interested in using Bopriva in your farming situation contact your local Vetlife clinic to discuss its application on your farm.

Duncan Crosbie
Vetlife Temuka



The ol' wind down

The last few weeks have had me reaching for my jersey when I get up in the mornings and I have also noticed I cannot make it to the truck in my socks any longer because of the heavy dewfall. Woe is me I know, but it is a timely reminder that as the days get shorter and the risks of frosts start to creep up, we are certainly on to the slowdown of the season. As each day goes by, our minds should start casting ahead towards August 2014 and getting the cows in a state of preparation so they reach calving at a body condition score (BCS) of 5.

As is widely known, silage reserves on many farms are towards the lower end of adequacy and I have not noticed as many trucks carting feed around the place over the last few weeks compared to historical seasons. Also as is to be anticipated, many farmers are talking of hanging onto their empty cows for as long as they can, given the current milk price. Remember though, as the going is good at the moment, it is essential that these cows do not leave the tank empty towards the beginning of calving. Also, make sure you book space on the chain for your culls well in advance as I am sure it will be standing room only 10 days either side of June 1st. Ideally, the empty cows which are going on the truck should only be kept whilst there is feed available for them. It will be mighty tempting to offer them silage from the pit in order to keep their production up, milk flowing and the bank balance in good order. Resist this temptation!

With the pitter-patter of a few inches of rain through most parts of Canterbury and Otago over the last few weeks, many dryland winter feed crops have had a timely rainfall and are sure to grow significantly through March and hopefully make up for lost time through February. Ensure that you take the time to see how big the silage stack is and the volume of hay/straw available for cows over the winter. Ensure that you account for autumn feed requirements, with the very dry conditions with our northern colleagues, the price of PKE has jumped up considerably and is unlikely to come down a lot this season. Across the board, irrigated crops are looking to be in great heart and those folk looking to begin to transition the herd whilst milking onto fodder beet in mid-April will need to be careful to ensure they have accurate dry matter yields to calculate requirements and areas to be offered through the transition period. Ensure the herd goes onto the crop all at the same time to reduce individual cows eating too much beet and tipping over with acidosis issues. If you do run into problems, typically, one of the first things seen is a few cows off their feed and moving slowly. They will be dehydrated and have diarrhoea. Chances are these cows have encountered a good bout of acidosis and feed restrictions will need to be imposed on the herd. Do not cut it right out but hold at a lower quantity offered for a couple of days with the balance made up from forage such as silage or grass and begin transition again onto the crop.

Taking the time to transition the herd slowly onto fodder beet is critical, take the time to ensure silage and supplement reserves are in good order for the autumn, winter and spring and get in early if you think feed supplies might be running short.

Sooner rather than later those heavy dews will be ice crystals, with reduced growth rates; good quality supplement and fodder beet is an ideal combination to continue milking and reduce pressure on the platform. Feel free to give the Centre for Dairy Excellence a ring to discuss your run down to dry off, transition programme and herd preparation for the winter feeding regime.

Craig Trotter
Centre for Dairy Excellence, Geraldine

Stop press

Induction reminder:

Please remember that the current induction code requires a list of cows eligible for induction to be agreed upon between farmer and vet no less than 60 days prior to the intended date of induction. This means you need to have had a discussion with your Vetlife vet around inductions by about mid to late May. This year you will need to provide your NAIT (the database will not allow us to register you without it). Most of the familiar rules from the previous few years will continue: No more than 4% of the herd (rounded to the nearest whole cow only), 3-8 years old, 4.5-6.5 BCS, 8-12 weeks prior to natural calving date. If you have any questions please contact your Vetlife vet.



Theileria: what does it mean for Canterbury and Otago?

Theileria is a disease of cattle spread by ticks, sometimes causing severe anaemia in cattle when they are bitten by a tick infected with the Theileria parasite: *Theileria orientalis - ikeda*. This new strain of Theileria was first reported in Australia in 2006 and then in New Zealand in 2012. Initially cases were confined to Northland but since then the disease has spread into most of the upper North Island. There has been one confirmed clinical case in Rangiora, Canterbury. Spread occurs when an infected cow is bitten by a tick and then the tick, after moulting, feeds on an uninfected cow. It is believed that for the disease to survive within a cattle population a viable tick population in close and frequent proximity to the cows must also be present.

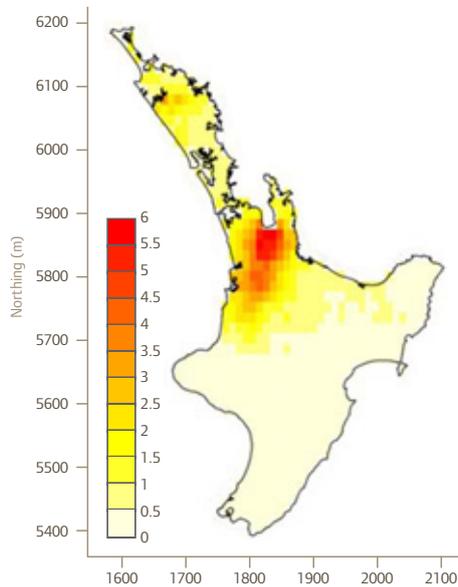
The map shows the relative risk of Theileria in the upper North Island with the red representing the highest level of danger.

Generally, tick populations are NOT maintained in Canterbury and Otago and while there are ticks present in deer we believe there is insufficient contact between these farmed species and cattle for the ticks to cause a problem in the cattle sector in these regions.

The disease has had a dramatic impact in Northland and, although the mortality rate in infected herds is only around 1%, up to a third of cows may develop severe anaemia on infected farms. Some farms may be more severely affected with up to 5% of cows dying. The main losses are likely to come from the dramatic fall in production and the ill thrift from the anaemia caused by the parasite. All ages and classes of cattle can be infected.

The risk of infection in our region will primarily be from the movement of infected cattle or the accidental import of ticks from the infected regions in the North Island. It is UNLIKELY that infection will spread much/at all in the mid and lower South Island as there is not a sufficiently well-established tick population in close proximity to cattle to allow the disease to persist. Of course, the effect of climate change if it leads to warmer winters may change this as might the discovery that other insects such as biting flies or lice can spread the disease. This would open a whole can of worms allowing the disease to spread very easily under South Island conditions. Within an infected farm the repeated use of the same needles when injecting cattle can potentially spread the disease as the needle effectively replaces the tick. However, on uninfected farms this common management practice represents no extra level of risk than normal.

Affected cattle develop a profound anaemia: they are weak, off their milk, often off their feed and can be very, very pale. The udder, vulva and the membranes around the eyes and in the



mouth will be noticeably pale or white. Cattle with anaemia will pant if made to move quickly, stagger and stumble.

Treatment can be very effective if the cases are caught early. Mildly affected animals (still pink!) may just require monitoring and moving to a smaller more cruisy group. Animals that are

paler than this (tending to a pale yellow/white) may need treatment with the special anti-parasite product Buparvaquone. Animals that are really pale (white as a sheet) will benefit from a blood transfusion from a healthy donor. Although this may sound a tricky procedure we are very lucky with our bovine patients and both donor and recipient tolerate a simple field transfusion very well and it is straight forward to do.

If you have imported any cattle from the North Island bear this condition in mind. Look out for the signs above and call your Vetlife vet if you have any concerns. Severely affected animals are easy to spot but less severely affected cows can require a veterinary examination plus or minus blood tests to confirm the case. Tick treatment of cattle before they arrive on your farm is another option to consider, so please do not hesitate to contact your Vetlife clinic for further advice in this area. Prompt intervention is vital to prevent this disease from spreading within your farm (shared needles) or between farms (if we are unlucky, with ticks biting flies or lice).

Andrew Bates
Vetlife Temuka

Thanks to Kevin Lawrence of Massey University Veterinary School for information used in the preparation of this article.



Beef calves

Autumn is weaner-calf fair time and if you have invested good money buying calves then you want to ensure that their performance is not impaired by parasites and sub-optimal trace element levels. This applies to all young growing cattle including retained heifer replacement calves.

Recommended practice is a quarantine parasite treatment of bought-in calves upon arrival on farm. This treatment should be a Levamisole-containing combination product to ensure that any endectocide-resistant *Cooperia* worms are eliminated. This approach is also recommended for treating any retained calves on beef breeding properties.

Ideally, treatment options would range from triple-action oral drenches such as Matrix C to the double combination pour-on Eclipse or the injection Eclipse E. The treatment product, type of stock on your farm and associated grazing regime will influence the frequency of ongoing parasite treatments. Talk to your Vetlife vet for advice on parasite control programmes.

Copper and selenium are two important trace elements that can be production-limiting in cattle. We know from liver and blood testing of beef cows from inland hill-country farms that copper and selenium levels will be low to marginal where no supplementation has been carried out. This will be reflected in the copper and selenium status of calves from these farms.

If calves are wintered on brassica crops such as kale their copper and selenium levels will become further depleted even if they are adequate to start with.

Copper can be supplemented with injections or longer-acting copper oxide needles (bullets). Selenium can be supplemented with injections including a highly effective long-acting injectable form.

As for parasite control programmes, every farm is different so seeking advice from your Vetlife vet about the various trace element supplementation options would be time well spent.

Young, rapidly growing cattle on high quality feed are susceptible to dying suddenly due to clostridial disease (e.g. pulpy kidney, blood poisoning, sudden death syndrome). The prevention of one of these deaths with vaccination is cheap insurance. The vaccines Covexin 10 and Ultravac SD 6n1 provide premium protection over and above the conventional 5n1 vaccines.

All winter feed crops and autumn-sown grasses should be tested for nitrate levels before they are grazed by cattle to prevent a potentially spectacular and expensive outbreak of nitrate poisoning.

Hayden Barker
Vetlife Pleasant Point



Maurie Niles: Vetlife farewells a colleague of many years

After 10 years as a sales representative with Vetlife, Maurie Niles retired in February. Maurie came to work for Vetlife from a background in agricultural merchandising and sales. His vast experience and local knowledge was a valuable asset to the Pleasant Point clinic where he became an integral part of the team and a major contributor to the expansion of the Pleasant Point clinic over the last decade.

Maurie's personable approach meant that he was popular with staff and clients alike. Being a qualified mechanic, his practical abilities are second to none and he is able to do more with one good hand than most can do with two. Servicing drench guns was his specialty and

morning tea times at the clinic are now a meagre affair without Maurie's (and Pam's) regular contribution.

Maurie is a keen golfer and was a stalwart of the annual Mt. Nessing Vetlife Client Golf Tournament. An eager participant both on and off the course Maurie was to the Mt. Nessing golf day what the late Des Bowman was to the popular Moeraki fishing trips.

Hayden Barker will be attempting to fill Maurie's very big shoes out of the Pleasant

Point clinic. He will be stepping back from the hands-on vet role to providing animal health and product advice.

All the Vetlife staff would like to wish Maurie and Pam all the best with Maurie's retirement and reducing his handicap!

Vetlife Pleasant Point on behalf of all Vetlife colleagues.



Combination dry cow and teatseal: a farmer's story

For Vetlife Ashburton client Steve Hay, the only downside of well-fed, well-wintered Friesians had been the likelihood of mastitis come spring time, and the headaches of having to deal with it at the busiest time of year.

“Given how well they are fed over winter, they would come back pumped up to start milking, and inevitably after leaking in the springer mob, we would have mastitis.”

The problem, as in many Canterbury herds, was only worsened by not being able to check the cows for mastitis over winter, while grazing off farm often in wet, muddy conditions.

While he had been using Cepravin as a quality long-term dry cow treatment, Steve decided to opt for a combination therapy, administering Teatseal after the Cepravin at drying off, for

extra protection through the dry period and reduction in any early spring mastitis.

For him it was a return to a practice he had done some years before when in the Waikato and now data backs up the effectiveness of the treatment. He has also elected to treat the heifers with Teatseal pre-calving, with major reductions in spring mastitis through blocking the teat canal before infection can establish.

Steve reports excellent results from both treatments, almost zero heifer mastitis at calving after rates as high as 25%, and mixed age cow mastitis reduced to only one or two cases after rates over 10%.

The benefits of dealing with the problem through combination therapy have also extended well into the season.

Steve has won the Vetlife Award for the past two years for having the best average somatic cell count, typically around 50,000-60,000 through the season.

He attributes part of the combination success to the efficient and hygienic job the Vetlife team do when they arrive to administer the Teatseal after him and his staff have administered the Cepravin.

“It's money we are spending earlier for prevention to avoid having the stress and expense of cure later in the season, and very worth it.”

Vetlife Ashburton with thanks to Steve Hay.



Vetlife BVD Roadshow

Thanks to Dr Stuart Bruere from the Wairarapa, an inaugural member of the BVD Steering Committee, Linda Homer of MSD and all the Vetlife veterinarians and staff who made these seminars happen.

Stuart is a great communicator and those who attended left with a great understanding of the difference between a temporarily infected (TI) animal and a persistently infected (PI) animal, and how those infections affect a farmer's bottom line.

The results of a local survey of beef properties carried out by Vetlife staff created a lot of interest with 86% of local farms returning an SP ratio greater than .75 indicating recent or ongoing exposure to the BVD virus. Any farmers who missed the Roadshow are welcome to contact their local Vetlife veterinarian for more information.

Beatrix Loomes
Vetlife Twizel





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Vetlife Ltd - a locally owned and owner operated business.
Vetlife Ltd is locally owned by veterinary shareholders who live in Canterbury and Otago.

Those shareholders personally manage Vetlife and work as veterinarians.

All business proceeds are invested back into the business locally and we provide careers and employment for 165+ local people and families.



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