

## NAVAN VETERINARY SERVICES MAY 2014 NEWSLETTER

### AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

Vaccines are arguably the cornerstone of preventative medicine. The benefits of a well vaccinated dairy herd are lengthy and difficult to deny. Anybody that has had to endure a major pneumonia outbreak will attest to the high cost of disease, both in terms of treatment costs and lost milk. Vaccines are available for many other common cow illnesses including environmental mastitis and calf scours. The concept of disease prevention goes well beyond the use of vaccines, however.

Many dairy management protocols are intentionally or unintentionally aimed at preventing disease. Giving Vitamin E/Selenium to newborn calves will help prevent white muscle disease in our part of the country where soils are often low in Selenium. Something as common and simple as dipping calf navels with iodine for the first few days of life helps reduce the chance of joint infections and septicemia.

We see preventative practices in use every day on our dairies. Dry cow mastitis treatments aimed at preventing fresh cow mastitis, foot baths prevent and control lameness from infectious causes. For a few years now there has been a movement to focus more attention on preventing diseases that in that part of a cow's life where they are susceptible to so many problems – the transition period. Diseases like milk fever, fatty liver and displaced abomasum are some of the issues fresh cows deal with.

The transition period is roughly the few weeks prior to and several weeks post calving. Fresh Cow Protocols is the commonly used term for these programs. We have seen several herds adopt fresh cow protocols with very positive results. Other herds had started and then drifted away. The intention of this newsletter is to try to illustrate the benefits of these programs and get some dairies to initiate or restart the program.

We all know that if we can get cows through this transition period without any major health issues, the rest of the lactation is fairly low risk.

The cornerstone of most Fresh Cow Protocols are:

- 1) Taking daily temperatures of fresh cows beginning at day 2 post calving.
- 2) Testing ketone levels of fresh cows at approx. days 4 and 10 post calving – Ketones can be tested using either milk or urine.
- 3) Using California Mastitis Test to check milk quality on all fresh cows when the milk is ready to go into the bulk tank.

The values obtained from these 3 tests need to be recorded so that trends can be seen and treatment decisions adopted to changing clinical signs. It is important that someone on the farm be responsible for entering this information on a standardized form (which can be obtained from your vet).

Detecting and treating cows that are mildly ketotic could easily prevent long term problems associated with severe ketosis such as excess weight loss and displaced abomasum.

Identifying feverish cows early in a disease process and treating promptly will surely increase the likelihood of a positive outcome.

Right around calving time, a cow immune system is severely taxed. Ketones found normally in the blood and milk, are a result of inefficient fat metabolism, and has an effect of suppressing a cow's immune system. The more severe the ketosis, the more likelihood the cow will fall to other infections such as mastitis and fresh cow pneumonias.

In this new era of CQM and obligatory record keeping, of all cow treatments, here is one proactive record keeping that if done consistently and accurately will save a dairy unnecessary costs.

Fresh cow protocols are a great idea unless you are willing to pay for a pound of cure!