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JULY NEWSLETTER

It's ryegrass time and, as usual here's a run down on rye, and why it's so good and bad.

The good points are its high protein and energy. Protein drives palatability, so they eat more because it's tasty. Cows that eat more will milk more. Cows can eat up to 5% of their weight in dry matter per day. Energy is necessary for life of course, and it increases milk protein.

The problem is that the protein is in excess of requirements and the excess must be metabolised and excreted, which in itself costs energy. This is where the strong ammonia smell in their urine comes from. High blood urea concentrations are also not good for embryos. Also ryegrass can be low in dry matter and fibre, so they have to eat an awful lot of it.

How can we help digestion ?

Silage or hay will increase the dietary fibre, which will improve digestion of the rye, and lift milk fat. Also check the concentrate ration's protein level. Cows require 17% and they could be getting 30% from the rye, so high protein in the grain/pellets is not necessary.

Another thing we see at this time of year is grass tetany (low magnesium) when on short, lush feed, especially if coupled with bad weather. Cows go down and are stiff legged with rapid loud heart rates, or the herd may be just agitated. Treat them with 4 in 1 calcium bags if mildly affected, and if severe will need magnesate injections. To avoid this have magnesium oxide in the feed as a buffer, or include older grass, silage or hay in the diet. It's only the short stuff that's a problem.

We had a case of woody tongue the other day. This bacteria is more common in low, wet areas, which includes lots of our district at the moment. If cows eat abrasive feed the bacteria enter the tongue, infect it and give it a tough, woody feel. The cows then can't eat food properly. The first symptom is dribbling and weight loss. It can be treated with antibiotics and sodium iodide injections, the latter of which can cause abortion. It's easy to treat but can be difficult to cure completely as it often returns.

We've had more cases of liver fluke, presumably related to the wet conditions. Possible more of the water

snails that are the intermediate host of the parasite are present. Weight loss and intermittent diarrhoea are the usual signs. We can test faeces from suspected cows for the eggs. Maybe liver fluke is more common than we think.

We blood tested 10/10 heifers/cows on one local farm for pestivirus in a study to determine prevalence state wide. It has always been assumed that it's common on the coast and therefore the cows have some natural immunity. The disease can cause abortion, reproductive problems and animal losses. If there is immunity it's probably not worth vaccinating. The herd we tested is a closed herd i.e. they don't buy in stock, and as it's spread by faeces they shouldn't have any pestivirus. Only one heifer and one cow had detectable antibody levels. This is impossible to interpret yet but when we get more results we'll let you know.

HORSE TOPICS—another case of Big Head on setaria based pasture. Horses must have calcium supplementation if on setaria. 100 g of dolomite per day for adult horses is enough.

C u s h i n g s D i s e a s e (hyperadrenocorticism) is another disease that we have a couple of horses with in the practice. Typically it's in older mares, and they drink a lot, get sore feet more often and can founder, and they have very woolly coats, which is hard to assess in winter! It is treatable but mostly not done as it's not life threatening and can be, to a degree, managed. Diagnosis is usually by

appearance and history, and sometimes helped by blood samples.

This month has seen more than its fair share of hoof abscesses due to the wet weather.

The Mandarin Open has just started with a few choice entries. A bag of citrus fertiliser to the winner. Will it be the inbreds, or cross breds from Bunyah, or the pure breds from Moorland, or a rank outsider with a tree that only produces in wet weather ?

RUN DATES FOR JULY

Lansdowne.....Thurs 5th

Oxley/Mitchell's Is.....Tues 10th

Hannam Vale.....Thurs 12th

Dyer's Crossing.....Tues 17th

Wingham.....Thurs 19th

Lorne/Comboyne.....Tues 24th

Coomba and the deep south..Thurs 26th