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NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

Welcome to November, only 50 something sleeps to go...

The season continues to improve with lots of silage being made and cow condition improving. We haven't seen a pregnancy toxæmia case now for weeks. Our area, despite a hard winter, is very lucky.

Last night after a difficult day I rang an old friend, John Oldfield, up north of Bourke who has 170,000 acres on two properties, which normally run around 1 sheep per 10 acres. He was typically positive and says this drought, although bad, is nothing that hasn't been seen before. The Darling and the Warrego have been dry before and will be again. His main problem among many is that they're down to just 4,000 sheep. When it rains it will be a long time before sheep will be affordable, particularly for that western division country, to restock. So their recovery will take years.

Yes, this is another drought story that is not as relevant to us as grain at \$400 / tonne is, it's just another perspective. Similar to someone milking 200 but can only just feed 50.

What is relevant at the moment is high SCCs and what to do about them. This decision is important because of the money involved in milk quality payments, factory policy and, of course, cow health. Not to mention cow numbers...

High SCCs depend on the source of the infection. It is no use culling these cows if the source of the infection hasn't been identified. Take environmental mastitis for example. If the yard and laneways are cesspools and cows keep getting infected you'll end up culling the whole herd. Not all bacteria spread from cow to cow like *Strep agalactiae* for example. So the best way to get an idea of the source is milk cultures of these high SCC cows. Herd recording will also give some clues. Again by example, staphs will have chronic high SCCs of 500-800,000, not 2 or 3 million. Yet staphs are one of the most difficult bugs to cure and infected cows often require culling.

Dry cow treatment is also important, especially so if the SCC is high. Again, depending on the bug, some cows will be difficult to cure of infection, such as staph cows, but others

easy.

If your bulk SCC is high check it against your plate count. If the plate count is low it means you have subclinical mastitis, machine problems or 3 Day for example. If the plate count is high it probably means you have clinical cow(s) going into the vat, or subclinical mastitis and vat hygiene/refrigeration problems.

The point is that culling high SCC cows can be very costly without identifying and fixing the cause of the problem first. Also SCCs must be interpreted carefully with all the available information.

Several months ago when rye grass was difficult to get and expensive two of our farmers planted feed barley and wheat. I was very impressed by this lateral thinking and the minimal inputs that were required. The barley was a bit sparse and was fed off. The wheat was great and made into silage. No yield figures were done but both farmers think under the circumstances it was worthwhile and something to keep in mind next year.

Horse topics—this is the busiest time of the year for our horse work. This month we've had two very difficult foalings both with their front legs back. One foal of the two survived only to have very bad flexor deformities of its front legs.

Two sets of twins have been picked up at 17 day scans. One set are too close together to destroy one, and in the other mare one has been popped.

This can be done preimplantation (about day 21) usually without affecting the other foetus. Other options are to leave them and hope one resorbs; abort and start again; or, especially in big mares, letting them go. Mares usually abort twins from late pregnancy or have them prematurely.

DISEASES OF THE MONTH

Mid lactation milk fever

Vaginal prolapses

Uterine prolapse

Cellulitis

Calvings

Eye cancers and freezing eyeball tumours

RUN DATES FOR NOVEMBER

Lansdowne.....Thurs 2nd

Oxley/Mitchell's Is.....Tues 7th

Hannam Vale.....Thurs 9th

Dyer's Crossing.....Tues 14th

Wingham.....Thurs 16th

Lorne/Comboyne.....Tues 21st

Coomba and the deep south..Thurs 23rd