

DIGEST

SOUTH ISLAND
WINTER 2017



Looking ahead with
confidence

P2

Prepare for the wet –
hidden deficiencies

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Rearing to go

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LOOKING AHEAD WITH CONFIDENCE

Peak milk levels may seem a distant thought, but the basis for success in this area must be laid well in advance. Preparing the dry cows' diet and keeping them in good condition through early lactation will produce results when it counts.

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STACEY VAN DEN BEUKEN

SealesWinslow is a recognised leader in the production of high-performance compound feeds and feed additives. A fully owned subsidiary of Ballance, SealesWinslow has manufacturing sites located in Morrinsville, Ashburton and Whanganui, and supplies custom-blended pelletised feed to farmers throughout New Zealand. It also provides calf feed, mineralised molasses blocks, feed supplements and additives.

When milking is off the schedule (or reduced to a smaller winter-milking herd) it's time to enjoy some well-earned late starts. It's also the perfect time to prepare for the coming season. As you'll know, getting the herd off to a good start in the last three weeks prior to calving can make a tremendous difference to production and health.

Feed to meet changing needs

To start with, through the early transition phase, the springer cow has increasing energy demands as foetal calf growth accelerates, yet a reduced rumen capacity and less appetite as the calf takes up more room. "To combat these physical constraints and reduce weight loss in the lead-up to calving she needs high-quality, energy-dense feed with elevated mineral levels. It supports her body's effort in growing the calf, preparing for milk production and the lactation demands ahead," advises Paul Sharp, SealesWinslow Science Extension Officer.

Given the cow's insufficient capacity to meet these increasing energy requirements, she is forced to mobilise energy from her body's stored fat reserves, resulting in a negative energy balance and condition loss if not managed carefully. Therefore the number one priority is meeting her nutritional needs. This helps minimise body condition score losses and supports her through a time of extreme metabolic stress.

Important elements

Making the right minerals available is the best line of defence against infections as it boosts the immune system and helps avoid or minimise metabolic disorders. “Grass staggers and milk fever around calving are the most obvious signs of dietary flaws in the transitioning process,” Paul notes. “These metabolic issues typically retreat when mineral deficiencies are addressed.” An early start with supplemental magnesium before calving (and with the addition of calcium thereafter) is certainly indispensable. However, further problems may require more in-depth analysis.

Early lactation is key

It all comes together in the days and first weeks after calving: that’s when you can substantially enhance (or undermine) all the work that has gone into preparing the herd. Remember that the dietary requirements during early lactation well exceed the cow’s ability to consume pasture and supplements. As a result, the right nutritional support is extremely important.

“Feeding to minimise weight loss is imperative,” says Paul, “because it has a bearing on peak milk levels and will impact her ability to cycle and get back into calf.”

The answer lies in the quantity as well as the quality of feed required to drive early milk production. Keep in mind that early production sets the level for the whole season’s production! In fact, every extra litre represents a potential 200 additional litres during the season.

A feed strategy with a focus on energy density and optimal balance of nutrients will pay dividends in terms of early production levels and reduced animal health issues. Just remember to calculate feed quantity accurately. To maximise the herd’s potential, work towards a daily feed intake of 4% of liveweight by peak lactation. However, take losses and wastage into account, as this is a ‘down the throat’ target.

It’s the perfect time to contact your friendly SealesWinslow representative and discuss options for lifting your season’s production. It might be a most profitable conversation!

	Typical spring pasture composition	Ideal dairy cow diet requirements – early lactation
Crude protein content	25-30%	18-20%
Soluble sugars and starch	5-15%	35%
Acid detergent fibre (ADF)	18-22%	16% min
Neutral detergent fibre (NDF)	25-40%	25% min
Phosphorous	0.3-0.5%	0.4% min
Calcium	0.4-0.7%	0.6% min
Magnesium	0.15-0.18%	0.22% min
Sodium	0.1-0.2%	0.2%



PREPARE FOR THE WET – HIDDEN DEFICIENCIES

When paddocks are sodden and moisture levels go off the chart, even with the best feed budgets animals are likely to be exposed to mineral deficiencies. Those who exercise a little foresight can reduce animal health issues down the line.

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The wet winter months can be challenging enough as it is, as you try to ration limited pasture, crops and pasture supplies. It therefore makes sense to try to minimise problems that are very easy to fix – like trace element deficiencies. Regardless of whether your operation is dairy or beef, these mighty minerals are key players that will boost productivity and promote fertility.

“A deficiency of key trace elements such as copper, cobalt and selenium can take months to manifest in the animal,” cautions Paul Sharp, SealesWinslow Science Extension Officer. “That’s because those minerals are stored in the body during times of dietary sufficiency and are mobilised when intakes are low, until reserves are depleted.”

How much is available through forage varies significantly depending on soil type and the pasture, forage or crops being fed. One common issue is soils high in molybdenum (along with sulphur and zinc) reducing copper absorption, making it unavailable from the diet. To further complicate matters, there are also seasonal variations in trace element availability; these can produce a double whammy for minerals that may already be below optimal levels in pasture such as copper, cobalt and selenium.

“Copper availability is particularly compromised during the winter months,” says Paul. Wet soils are easily pugged, and pugging is one of the culprits for depleting animal trace element levels. It’s due to ‘dirt in the diet’, which also happens with winter grazing of crops. The problem lies in high iron levels in the soil, which severely interfere with copper absorption, making it unavailable from the diet.

It’s easy to see why this is important when you consider the metabolic reach of the trace elements and their respective deficiency symptoms. “Copper, cobalt and selenium deficiencies are typical during winter due to dietary depletion. They present during spring as increased retained membranes at calving, low conception rates, poor growth rates and potentially even bone fractures in calves,” explains Paul.

Luckily, mineral supplementation couldn’t be easier! With SealesWinslow’s mineral molasses blocks, pellets or water treatment products, you can kiss mineral deficiencies goodbye.



REARING TO GO

Rearing calves for beef can be a fickle business. What differentiates successful operators is the effort they spend on planning and ensuring quality – from sourcing their animals to their choice of feed. And therein lies the best advice.

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As in many specialist farming disciplines, the success factors for calf rearing are varied. What they all share is an overriding commitment to quality and a skilled approach.

It starts with the sourcing and selecting of calves, ideally from as few sources as possible and with adequate background information. Buying ex-farm and knowing the animals' history reduces risks of disease and illness because you can check the farm's practices and colostrum programme. And let's face it, there's a world of difference between healthy calves that received high-quality colostrum within the first 12 hours plus adequate quantities thereafter, and those that miss out.

"Aim for good-quality calves that weigh at least 40 kg, as they will lead to better reared stock," suggests Nutrition and Quality Manager, Wendy Morgan. "And be aware of calves that aren't alert or show signs of illness. Even if they're a bargain or free, those animals will ultimately cost you."

The next critical step is minimising the stress of transportation and resulting growth checks. Calves penned for transport should have space to lie down in a draught-free area. If at all possible, feed them electrolytes on arrival, as this helps to lessen the impact of travel stress.

With feed being the dominant cost item, it can be tempting to make a selection on price alone. However, the results may be disappointing. In the case of milk powder, check the rates required (125 g vs 150 g to make up 1 litre) when comparing prices. Also, make sure it's not rejected or downgraded baby milk powder; calf milk replacers (CMR) are designed for calves and will optimise growth, as well as being formulated with the vitamin and mineral requirements to meet the needs of a calf.

The type of protein plays a big role as well. "It's important to note that any vegetable proteins contained in CMR, must in fact be processed vegetable proteins," says Wendy. "Adding soya bean

meal to CMR makes it poorly digestible. It should be listed on the ingredients in the form of hydrolysed vegetable protein or soya protein concentrate."

The last critical decision rests with the choice of calf meal. As is generally the case, you get what you pay for. Quality meal will arrive smelling fresh and will be palatable to calves. This ultimately means that calves take to it quickly, the rewards being an easy transition from milk with minimal growth checks.

On the topic of growth: quality meal will do a great job of promoting good growth rates. That said, it's vital to weigh calves regularly as weight deviations often give you an early indication of any issues, which means you can intervene in a timely manner. The reward: healthy calves that reach their targets and a healthy bottom line.



TEAM SNAP-SHOT: STACEY VAN DEN BEUKEN

SealesWinslow's Technical Sales Representative in Canterbury and North Otago, Stacey van den Beuken, has an unshakeable belief in customer service and goes the extra mile to make sure 'her' farmers are well-informed.

Some people who grow up on dairy farms naturally gravitate back to this environment. This was the case for Stacey, who found her niche at SealesWinslow after a foray into primary industry training.

"I absolutely love the diversity that comes with this role," she explains. What she finds truly rewarding is finding solutions to problems, and educating farmers about technical issues while adding value to their business. She says her work is greatly enhanced by the back-up she gets from excellent in-house nutritionists.

She has a natural inclination to pursue optimum outcomes for her customers and finds that they appreciate her genuine, straight-shooting approach. Whether she's helping address mineral deficiencies or advising farmers how to ensure their chosen feed delivers optimal nutritional value, her advice delivers the business results her customers are after.

Give Stacey a challenge, and she'll work towards it with huge drive and energy "Seeing the results of your work is the biggest satisfaction," she says. She has a great deal of enthusiasm for improvements in production and animal health and particularly likes challenges where analysis, education and technical information are pivotal; when all elements come together and customers understand why proposed changes are needed and what they'll deliver for the animals and the business. "They're my favourites," she laughs.

Her farming network respects her capability to help with decisions that make business sense. She says it's ultimately about building relationships and being part of the community (she is a Dairy Women's Network co-convenor for Lincoln and volunteers with the local fire brigade). A long-term horizon, she says, is the only viable approach.



REGIONAL WEATHER OUTLOOK

The tropical Pacific overall remained in an ENSO (El Niño – Southern Oscillation) neutral state (neither El Niño nor La Niña) during April 2017. The strong 'coastal El Niño' which developed along the coast of South America (southern Ecuador and northern Peru) during February and March has now weakened. International guidance indicates that a transition towards El Niño conditions over the next three-month period (May – July 2017) is more likely than not, with 56% chance, versus 44% chance for persistence of the current ENSO-neutral state. The models indicate increasing chance for El Niño becoming established later during the winter, with nearly 70% chance for the August to October period. Note however that ENSO forecasts made just before

the start of the winter season have lower accuracy than at other times of the year, and the current spread between the models' forecasts is significant.

For May – July 2017 as a whole, the atmospheric circulation around New Zealand is forecast to favour slightly more south-westerly flows than normal, but variable circulation regimes are to be expected over the course of the season.



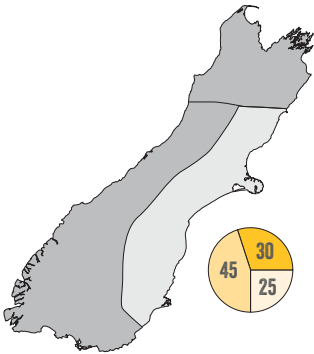
Regional Weather Outlook Continued

May – July 2017 temperatures are equally likely to be above average (40% chance) or near average (40% chance) for the north of the South Island and most likely to be near average (45% chance) for the remaining regions of New Zealand. As we transition towards winter, frosts and cold snaps will occur from time to time in cooler locations, even in regions where elevated chance for higher than normal seasonal temperatures is forecast. In fact, the first half of May is expected to experience cold outbreaks, with below or well below normal temperatures for the time of year – this will be in stark contrast to what was observed during April.

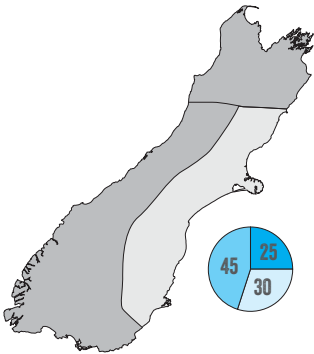
May – July 2017 rainfall totals are most likely to be near normal (40-45% chance) in the east of the South Island. Seasonal rainfall totals are about equally likely to be below normal (35-40% chance) or near normal (40% chance) for the north and west of the South Island.

May – July 2017 soil moisture levels and river flows are about equally likely to be near normal (35-40% chance) or above normal (35-40% chance) in the east of the South Island. Soil moisture levels and river flows are about equally likely to be near normal (40% chance) or below normal (35% chance) in the north of the South Island. In the west of the South Island, soil moisture levels are about equally likely to be below normal (45% chance) or near normal (40% chance) and river flows most likely to be in the below normal range (45% chance).

Air Temperature



Rainfall



Soil Moisture

