



updates from the field

News

CVH teaching roles

All the CVH team play a role in working with university veterinary students and love the privilege of hosting students in our practice. During the past year, 13 university students have spent 45 weeks at CVH, with still more students booked to the end of 2016.

Principal vet Rob Churchill has also been involved in a more formal teaching capacity with the University of Sydney Faculty of Veterinary Science for over 13 years. Rob spends several days every few months with Year 4 vet students at Arthursleigh, the University's 8,000 hectare property near Marulan. His responsibilities now include the Faculty's new DVM students (from the end of 2018, graduate vets will have the degree Doctor of Veterinary Medicine). Rob's role has involved teaching cattle pregnancy diagnosis and sheep diseases, practical sheep management and handling skills. Discussion of sheep parasites – a major focus of CVH work and one of Rob's veterinary passions – is an important part of his role.

Rob says he loves interacting with students in such an intensive teaching environment, and values too the informal and wide-ranging chats with students over lunch when they ask lots of questions about life as a country vet. Dr Edwina Leslie, our current final year student, says, 'It's great having a teacher with so many years experience! Rob knows all the theory in great depth and is quick to share helpful tips when it comes to practical work'.

Bulls – are they up to the task?

CVH vets have been busy testing bulls since late winter as producers increasingly recognise the importance of undertaking bull examination in the lead up to the joining season. It's often difficult to identify infertile or lower fertility bulls and early testing allows time to replace a bull if required.

Bulls can show apparently normal mating behaviour with fertility problems not recognised until pregnancy diagnosis or calving reveal lower than expected percentages. The Australian Association of Cattle Veterinarians' benchmark is the ability of a bull to achieve, by natural service with 50 normally cycling females, 60% pregnancy within 3 weeks and 90% within 9 weeks of mating.

What are the most common causes of reduced fertility?

- Diseases and injury of the genitalia – infections of the testicles or prepuce (injury, foreign bodies), or contact injuries from bull fights.
- Congenital conditions of the genitalia – corkscrew penis, retained testicles, persistent frenulum (downward curving penis).
- Mobility – any injury to the limbs, pelvis or spine, foot infections or arthritis can significantly impede a bull's capacity to serve.
- Poor libido – this can be hereditary, dominance of other bulls (join bulls of similar weights and ages, bulls need to spend their time serving, not fighting), and pain from arthritis or other conditions affecting mobility.
- Abnormalities of sperm cells from genetics, environmental impacts such as high temperatures (recovery from heat or a fever can take eight weeks, the length of the sperm production cycle), and poor or inappropriate nutrition (under and overfeeding impact sperm quality).
- Campylobacter (vibriosis), trichomoniasis and papilloma virus (warts).

What does bull examination entail?

- We gather information before the on-farm clinical examination – general health, vaccination status, previous performance history of each bull.
- Clinical examination starts with observation of the bull(s) in the yard for lameness or other poor mobility, obvious abnormalities of the genitalia and the animal's general condition.
- In the crush, genitalia are palpated and checked for injury or disease, the limbs and feet given a closer examination, teeth examined for wear and loss, and eyes checked for any conditions causing poor sight.
- **Testing is two-pronged:**
 - semen is collected via manual manipulation or, if required, electro-ejaculation. The fresh semen is immediately examined in the field under the microscope for density and motility of sperm cells. Samples may be sent for further laboratory examination – for example, to investigate suspected abnormalities in the morphology (shape and structure) of the sperm cells.
 - testing of each bull's serving ability. This is best done by observing a bull's performance with in-season females.

Pre-joining examination of bulls goes a long way to preventing income loss from poor conception rates. Talk to us about how we can help ensure your herd has the best opportunity of delivering satisfactory calving percentages.

updates from the field

Frustrating atopy

Atopy, or atopic dermatitis, is a chronic inflammatory skin disease associated with allergies and yes, it *is* a frustrating condition – for the pet, their owner and often, the vet. Fortunately new treatments such as Apoquel are proving to be effective in CVH patients.

Atopy is one of the most common allergic skin diseases in dogs (it's rare in cats). The allergic reaction can result from exposure to normally harmless substances such as grass, pollens, mould spores, house dust mites, flea bites and other allergens in the pet's environment.

The condition usually appears between 1 and 5 years of age and almost always remains for life (it frequently worsens with age). It's thought most dogs with atopy have a genetic predisposition that causes an inappropriate immune reaction to allergens. The skin's barrier function may also be impaired, allowing allergens to more easily penetrate the skin and trigger a reaction.

Symptoms

Chronic and incessant itching, scratching, chewing and licking are the primary symptoms of atopy. The condition may be more severe in certain seasons (think pollens in spring). Irritation is often focused on the face, feet, underarms and lower abdomen, but hypersensitivity can occur anywhere on the body. Pets may chew their feet, or rub their face along the carpet in an effort to relieve the irritation. Constant scratching creates red, moist and inflamed lesions, often with hair loss. Some pets develop recurrent ear infections or damaged, infected skin.

Treatment

Treatment of canine atopic dermatitis can be challenging and it's usually impossible to remove all causative allergens from a pet's environment.

Treatment has traditionally relied on a range of therapies, from medicated washes, topical creams and antibiotics to medications such as corticosteroids. Used as a last resort, cortisone-based drugs can cause serious side effects with prolonged use.

Apoquel is a new medication that's delivering excellent results in CVH patients. It's a non-steroidal drug without the side effects of corticosteroids and it works by blocking the molecular receptor that triggers itchiness.

Regular use of medicated shampoos and conditioners (stocked by CVH) can also provide relief from irritation, normalise the skin's barrier to allergens, and help reduce secondary infections. It's critical for owners to maintain a year round flea control program to prevent flea bites.



Pets with atopy experience relentless, stressful irritation – feet chewing is a common symptom.

Nutrition can also make a difference. We stock a range of special diets that can improve the skin health and wellbeing of atopic dogs. We also recommend the use of Megaderm or similar veterinary supplement containing Omega oils.

Prognosis

Atopy is a lifelong condition and owners must be prepared to manage their pet's allergies long term. This requires patience and dedication but our vets work closely with owners and their pets to ensure atopic dogs are healthy, comfortable and enjoy a good quality of life.

Pink Eye vaccine

Vaccinating cattle in early spring against pink eye is the most effective way to protect herds against this painful and debilitating condition.

Pink eye can spread rapidly through a herd and, if left untreated, can lead to permanent blindness.

The vaccine is much less effective once the infection is established in a herd (long-acting Opticlox ointment is the best treatment for clinical cases).

Timing is critical and producers – especially those with a history of pink eye in their herds – need to take preventative action right now.

CVH stocks pink eye vaccine and treatments – please contact us to discuss the appropriate management for your herd.

Contact us

Opening hours 8.30am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday | 9am – 12pm Saturday

24 hour emergency service on (02) 4832 1977

Telephone: (02) 4832 1977

Fax: (02) 4832 1459

Email: info@crookwellvet.com.au

Web: www.crookwellvet.com.au

Find us: 220 Goulburn Street, Crookwell NSW 2583