



# Updates from the hospital

## News

### Millie the calf

Some of you might have noticed the strange sight of a four legged animal being led across Goulburn St on a lead near CVH. You probably took a second look and thought, "That's not a dog, but in fact a very small calf".

Yes, Millie is in fact much smaller than average, born at a whopping 8.8kg (about 4 times smaller than the average new born calf). She was born an estimated 6-8 weeks premature. She faced a massive uphill battle to survive and with no reported cases of calves this premature surviving for very long, the team at CVH put in a huge effort to get her to where she is today. For the first week of her life she was unable to stand or drink, she needed to be tube fed every 4 hours and was given physiotherapy to get her limbs working. Dr Ciara has been the main surrogate mother for Millie, getting up in the middle of the night for feeding and toileting needs. Millie slept in a porta cot until recently when she out grew it. She has now moved up to Karen's as she has out grown her town house. We are not sure how big Mille will get...., hopefully not too big!!



## Snake Bite

As the weather starts to warm up, snakes start to come out of hibernation. Unfortunately, our pets often come in contact with snakes as they are inquisitive and their hunting instinct often gets them in trouble. Around the Southern Tablelands the main venomous snakes we see are Eastern Browns, Tiger snakes, Copper heads, Red belly blacks and Black snakes. All of these are highly venomous with the Eastern brown being the 2nd most venomous in the world and Tigers coming in 7th. Approximately 80% of pets survive snake bite if treated quickly. The survival rate is dependent on the type of snake, how much venom has entered the system and the time taken before treatment is instigated. Snake venom contains a wide variety of toxins and enzymes that vary from species to species. Often you don't see your pet get bitten. The following are signs we often see with snake bite in dogs—

- Trembling
- Vomiting
- Salivation, drooling, frothing
- Diarrhea
- Weakness in the back legs, unsteadiness
- Dilated pupils
- Respiratory distress
- Bloody urine
- Continuous bleeding from the bite wound
- A flaccid paralysis leading to coma or respiratory failure

Cats on the other hand are usually found with weakness in the back and front legs, or a strange gait, dilated pupils, they often become quite floppy.

Without treatment most dogs and cats will die. In dogs antivenom is extremely important in increasing the rate of survival, however in cats we find that with the appropriate supportive care, intravenous fluid therapy and temperature regulation, in most cases, don't require antivenom and have a high rate of survival.

Following administration of the anti-venene, intensive care with I/V fluids, oxygen and constant monitoring for dehydration and temperature will assist in recovery. Unfortunately in some instances, the bite will still be fatal regardless of treatment – the earlier treatment starts the better the chance of recovery.



# Updates from the field

## Grass Tetany

Cases of grass tetany, or hypomagnesaemia, are likely this spring. With the rapid new growth of grass and the potential for inclement weather, conditions are perfect. A potentially fatal metabolic disease of cattle, grass tetany can lead to high fatalities. Grass tetany is probably one of the least understood metabolic diseases. Many factors contribute to this complex disorder. Lush green spring growth is often lower in calcium and magnesium. Cows can store only very small amounts of magnesium in their bones and soft tissues. Magnesium is removed out of the body in milk, urine and digestive secretions, and unless this is quickly replaced, grass tetany will result.

Hypomagnesium is most often seen in older, high milk producing cows pre-calving or with calves at foot, the disease is also initiated when high potassium levels reduce magnesium absorption from the rumen – classically on heavily fertilized pastures.

Contributing factors include:

- Stress of calving and lactating, especially in older cows with lower reserves and poorer absorption of magnesium (low calcium occurs at the same time, particularly in lactating cows)
- Grazing on tetany-prone pastures – grass dominant, cereal crops, acid soils, potassium fertilisers
- Cold weather, particularly sudden drops in temperature
- Other factors include the stress of feed changes, transportation, periods of starvation

### Signs of Grass Tetany

Unfortunately for most farmers the first signs of a grass tetany is finding dead cows. There is usually froth coming from the mouth and nose. The ground is rubbed where the animal has been thrashing on the ground.

- Excitement and muscular spasms are commonly seen.
- Early stages—Twitching of the face and ears a stiff gait
- As it progresses—the cow becomes wild, her front legs goosestep, may seem blind, will try and chase you.
- Excitement, galloping and bellowing are the last signs seen before she goes down and starts thrashing on the ground. Once at this stage cattle may die within minutes.

### Treatment

Needs to be rapid. A veterinarian will usually give magnesium and calcium into the vein, this has to be done carefully as too much magnesium and calcium can also kill. Magnesium and calcium is also put under the skin. Some animals may take time to recover and need further doses of magnesium over the next few days. Sometimes there won't be enough time to ring a vet so having bags of 4 in 1 is always a good idea during periods of high risk. These can be put under the skin over the ribs or neck of the cow. You can purchase 4 in 1 bags over the counter from CVH.

### Prevention

The most effective method of prevention is supplying Causmag with hay. Cows should be feed 60-100 grams/hd/day of Causmag. Causmag needs to be feed for up to 2-3 days before levels in the animal are higher enough to protect them.

Lick blocks are an expensive source of magnesium and are reliant on cows licking them. Magnesium capsules are relatively expensive but provide protection for 80 to 90 days. In periods of high demand they may not give high enough levels.

Unfortunately there is no perfect preventative however Causemag on hay and or capsules is the best preventative available.

## BLOAT

With areas around the Southern Tablelands receiving some good rain and the warm weather, there has been sudden growth in pastures and pastures containing high levels of legumes such as clover and Lucerne. Unfortunately, as good as legumes are as feed they can be fatal to cattle. Ruminants produce large volumes of gas which normally they belch out. However legumes produce a foaming agent which causes foam to build up in the rumen preventing the gas from being able to be belched out. Pressure begins to build up in the rumen, with the first sign being a bubble on the left hand side behind the last rib.

Signs of bloat also include; no longer grazing; becoming distressed, not moving, vocalising; eyes bulging; straining to urinate and defecate; rapid breathing—mouth open; staggering. In advanced stages animals will go down on their side usually on there right side, death comes rapidly as the pressure blocks blood flow to organs and compresses the lungs.

**Treatment** — is aimed at getting rid of foam so the gas can be released, paraffin or vegetable oil 250-500mls/hd orally can help or in severe cases releasing the pressure by making an incision through the abdominal wall with a thin sharp knife (10cm below the last rib and 10cm below the short ribs). This should be a last resort and should only occur if the animal is going to die before a vet can get there.

**Prevention** — Monitoring the legume content of pastures. Restricting access to high risk pastures. Having hay available, not allowing hungry cattle onto pastures with high legume contents. Bloat blocks can be helpful. Unfortunately nothing is 100% effective at preventing bloat.



Left - cow with grass tetany



Right—cow with bloat

### Contact us

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

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