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La Nina 2022

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In a world of turmoil, with a global pandemic hopefully starting to wane, and now the biggest threat to world peace since the Cuban missile crisis weather patterns in little old NZ look like small cheese.

The country is in the grip of a La Nina pattern that, coupled with global warming, is having significant effects on the farming community.

We are seeing a traditional drought prone area like Hawkes Bay having plenty of wet weather, thus flourishing pasture growth while, at the other end of the scale, our long standing grass reservoirs, Southland and the Waikato experiencing drought, in Southland's case as never before.

The short term ramifications are clear, Southland winters can be brutal on cows with low condition score and, rest assured, winter rain will come.

The old Southland adage “after the shortest day the days get longer and the weather gets strong-

er,” was not thought up by accident.

Longer term may be more dire for regions like Waikato. Noting that droughts are more common world wide with global warming, the third report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) this month warned of heightened risks unless more action was taken globally.

A normal water rich region like the Waikato is facing less water availability and the region needs to plan ahead.

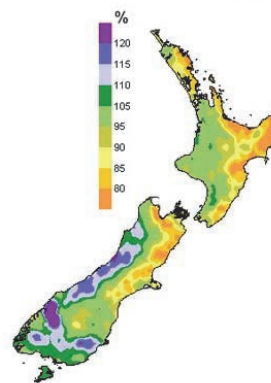
Comments in a Stuff article in April included, “Besides economic costs, there was also the risk of greater concentrations of contaminants in water-

ways if there was less water in the system.

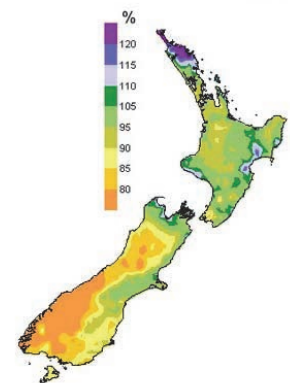
Besides the likes of reducing demand and new techniques, adaptation options for coping with drought include “harvesting” water from rivers at times of high-flow, such as winter, and storing for irrigation in dry times, as well as finding more bore water. Storing water could involve the use of natural features such as wetlands and gullies or constructed ones such as ponds and dams.”

These are big changes that take time to implement so the message from science is strong, farming changes need to be initiated sooner rather than later to have any hope of success.

Summer El Nino anomaly (%)



Summer La Nina anomaly (%)



A Special Mutation

One thing we do know about viruses is that they have a great ability to mutate. This is never more evident than what we have seen in the pandemic.

The original Alpha variant of Covid 19 was extremely virulent and transmission was rapid; it really turned the world upside down. Just as we were learning how to adapt along came the Delta variant, which was just as deadly but much more contagious, particularly via aerosol transmission.

Fortunately by this time effective vaccines had been developed, giving a huge amount of protection to the general populace but also putting selective pressure on the virus resulting in further mutations. Along came the Omicron variant which is a little less sensitive to the vaccines.

It is possible for fully vaccinated people to get, and even pass on the virus but in general they do not get so ill. Hospitalization rates are very much lower for the vaccinated sector of the population.

However the virus itself would not mind that as it is not in any parasite's best interest to have their hosts die on them so it was inevita-

ble that Covid 19 would mutate further, just like the Spanish flu virus of 1918, into an organism that would leave the hosts alive and able to continue transmission.

The result is that populations are starting to learn how to live with the virus and the virus is learning how to live with people (not that the virus is a sapient being).

That was the biggest change for the Omicron variant, a life changer for both virus and host, but there was another dramatic development again intended to aid viral survival.

While the Delta variant was dramatically more contagious than the Alpha variant Omicron is even

more so. Transmission, as with Delta, is predominantly via the aerosol route meaning mask wearing and avoiding closed in spaces gives the best protection.

However recent work has shown another intriguing feature of Omicron, survival on surfaces. Both Alpha and Delta had low rates of surface survival making mask wearing the main protection and resulting in hygiene standards slipping.

Omicron survives on surfaces and can be picked up from contaminated surfaces making hand hygiene much more important.

Vaccination has never been a substitute for sanitation so, when we look at the main tools in our armoury against Omicron, vaccination and mask wearing, especially in enclosed places are both vital. However hand hygiene and the sterilisation of surfaces are equally important.

"recent work has shown another intriguing feature of Omicron,"



Drinking Water

In the days of the British Empire the army was in the Egyptian desert one very hot dusty day.

The commanding officer sent a subaltern off to the Nile to get some drinking water but he returned without any water. The CO demanded why.

"The river is full of huge crocodiles," stammered the trembling

junior. "I was too terrified to go near the water."

"Nonsense man," shouted the superior, "take my word for it, those crocodiles will be fine, they will be just as scared of you as you are of them!"

"In that case sir," replied our young soldier, "the water will not be fit to drink."



Fit For Transport

Autumn is not a great time of year if you are an older dairy cow. Most cows that are culled are sent away from now on as feed dries up and milk levels fall. Transport becomes an issue with the risk of cows going down while being transported and, in cramped conditions, severe and inhumane damage can occur.

Recent research has shown that one of the most important causes of the problem is low calcium levels and this may even be exacerbated in the North Island by zinc supplementation; it may be great for facial eczema prevention but does interfere with calcium absorption.

Following research at Massey University Dairy NZ is now recommending on their website calcium supplementation for transported

dairy cows, from parenteral injection to calcium slurries.

Parenteral injections are short lived and also run the risk of infections and/or injection site lesions, while slurries are either poorly sol-

"While the picture appears complex the solution, as in many complicated situations, is actually quite simple."

uble salts, hence low efficacy, or highly irritant resulting in inflamed mucosa affecting both efficacy and animal welfare.

While the picture appears complex the solution, as in many complicated situations, is actually quite simple. A dose of tried and trusted Calol the morning of transport will alleviate all problems and ensure the cow arrives at her destination in a fit condition.

Sending a cow to the works is not the easiest decision and we owe it to the animals to treat them with dignity.

One dose of Calol is easy to administer, ensures animal welfare and, from a purely economic point of view, it is very cheap insurance.

Calol is only available from veterinary clinics!



The Oral Exam

A railway signalman was applying for a promotion so he had to sit an oral exam.

"What would you do if two trains were approaching each other at speed on the same line?" asked the examiner.

"I would go to the switch box in the office and divert one of the trains to another line."

"And what would you do if there

was a power cut and the switch box malfunctioned?"

"I would rush down to the tracks and manually try to lever them apart."

"But what if the tracks were jammed and could not be moved?" persisted the pedantic examiner.

"Then I would dive over to the emergency button that would shut everything down and press that."

"But there has been a power cut, most likely the emergency button is not working, what would you do then?"

"Then I would quickly ring my Uncle Bob."

"Why would you ring your Uncle Bob?" queried the puzzled examiner.

"Because he has never seen a nasty accident!"

A Marketing Coup

Back in the 1970s the now defunct New Zealand manufacturing company BOMAC came up with one of the all-time great marketing moves, namely the development of a propylene glycol based product for the treatment of ketosis in dairy cattle. Their product contained mainly propylene glycol but also iodine, cobalt and choline. The science for the period seemed sound but now, half a century later, some of it is open to question.

BOMAC marketing was extremely good and soon the product had wide acceptance in the veterinary field, before they then opened it up to the farm shop market where it soon came to be the 'go to' product for most farms.

It was also coloured pink and the marketing was so well done that most veterinarians would now think of propylene glycol as being pink when in actual fact it is colourless.

Once it came off patent other companies followed suit as it was an easy formulation to copy and marketing was on the same routes.

Then, around a decade ago, horror of horrors, some began marketing

straight propylene glycol as an oral nutrient. Wise old heads concurred and said it would not work as it did not contain cobalt or choline, missing the point that the sole ingredient of any benefit was the propylene glycol itself.

When we look at the other ingredients all are superfluous. There is some case that could be made for iodine as New Zealand is traditionally low in iodine so it could have some nutritive benefit but not a lot can be said for cobalt and choline except to say that they are marketing points only and they increase the overall product price.

Cobalt deficient cattle are low in Vitamin B₁₂ and cobalt supplementation enables Vitamin B₁₂ to be made by rumen microorganisms.



This is a long process but if a transition cow has a need for Vitamin B₁₂ she needs it right now, not a day or two down the track. Injectable Vitamin B₁₂ is the solution and many parenteral solutions have Vitamin B₁₂ included.

As to choline, while it is extremely important to dairy cow nutrition those rumen microorganisms again come into the picture. Feeding either methionine or choline direct to ruminants is a total waste as the rumen microorganisms gobble it all up for their own use and none is available to the animal. The only solution is to feed rumen protected choline that can bypass the rumen and be digested further down the track and there are options to do this, especially Hep Ora.

In the meantime, propylene glycol alone serves as an extremely valuable source of energy for the transition cow with its propensity to drive fatty acid synthesis towards the propionic acid cycle rather than the ketogenic butyric acid. The added benefit is that, without the superfluous ingredients, it is much more economical and so more cows can conceivably benefit.

The Chicken At The Library

This chicken goes into the library, goes up to the desk and says, "Book, book, book." The librarian proceeds to give her three books.

The next day the chicken comes in again saying "Book, book, book.". Again the librarian gives her three books.

Yet again the following day the chicken appears, goes to the librarian and says, "Book, book, book."

Once again the librarian gives her three books but, wanting to know what is going on, surreptitiously follows the chicken when she leaves.

The chicken goes down to the local pond and stops in front of a frog. She drops the books down and says "Book, book, book."

The frog takes a quick glance and says "Read it, read it, read it."



Transition Nutrition

Nutrition for the transition cow encompasses energy, minerals and also vitamins, and all serve a definite purpose.



The major problem is with cows that are low in one or more of the nutritional needs and what to do to restore the equilibrium.

Simple hypocalcaemia and hypomagnesaemia cases are straight forward; supply the required mineral so that the animal recovers.

However cows low in energy that are also ketotic are a different story. Clearly all require some energy supplementation but what else? It really is a matter of degree. Some require parenteral therapy to at least get over the acute stage.

The question for follow up management is whether it is by therapy or nutritional management. It is the latter in the vast majority of cases but what form should the nutritional management take?

It really depends on finding of the cause of the initial malnourishment.

If it is a case of simply low feed supply then rapid energy in the form of propylene glycol targeting the worst affected animals will suffice.

However if the underlying cause is poor liver function, and that can be via a myriad of instigating factors, then there are benefits in supplying nutrients that aid liver function.

These nutrients principally include vitamins and amino acids such as choline, methionine and carnitine.

If fed orally of course, then methionine and choline both need to be rumen protected if they are to have any effect.

A Country Accident



Lost on a back country road a tourist collided with a local at an intersection. He and the local got out to inspect the damage.

“Well it doesn’t look like much,” commented the local, “Why don’t you take a nip to settle your nerves,” and he grabbed a bottle of whisky from his battered pick up truck., opened it and handed it to the tourist.

After taking a good slug the tourist handed the bottle back to the local who put the top on and put it back in the truck.

“Aren’t you going to have some?” asked the tourist.

The local shook his head, “Not until after the police get here!”

Easter Planning

Wife: What are your plans for Easter?

Husband: Same as Jesus.

Wife: What do you mean?

Husband: Disappear on Friday, reappear on Monday.

Wife: Awesome, if you do that I’ll also do like Mary.

Husband: What do you mean?

Wife: Show up pregnant untouched by my husband!

Husband stayed home all Easter.



Pain Relief For Lamb Docking

An interesting paper appeared in the latest edition of *Grazing Gazette*, the official publication of the Sheep and Beef Cattle Veterinarians Branch of NZVA. It was written by Dave Robertson of Oamaru and concerned pain relief for castrating lambs.

As he pointed out in the introduction this is not mandated in law at the moment but “an overseas processor is requiring a certain standard.” This is akin to what we have long feared in the antimicrobial world, the concept of retailation. This is not a typo; this is a made-up word to describe the concept of major players in the retail world dictating veterinary practice.

However, although pain relief for castrating lambs is not law of the land at the moment it may well be in the near future. Whether prompted by the overseas processor, or more likely by genuine welfare concerns NAWAC, the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, is seriously considering whether to make this mandatory.

While NAWAC does not make the law, that is the Government’s job, NAWAC’s functions include recommending codes of welfare for issue,

and making recommendations on legislative proposals including regulations relating to surgical procedures and traps and devices, and identifying research needs.

Codes of welfare are being developed for all animals, many at the minimum standards stage but could well proceed through to best practice in time. The upshot being that changes to farming practices will continue to occur over time.

While pain relief for castrating and/or tailing lambs represents a seismic shift in farming operations it really is a case of when, not if. Arguments against the process can, and probably will, be put forward. Rubber rings are currently deemed to be not severe but, as Dave Robertson noted, there is considerable stress post application and pain relief helps with that.

One could argue that lay people administering injectable pain relief may cause more stress than the whole process, which is very quick and efficient. However not many refuse the injection

of local anaesthetic at the dentist, even for minor procedures.

“a bit like arguing against the totally ineffective anti-smacking law.”

At the end of the day arguing against change is a bit like arguing against the totally ineffective anti-smacking law. All the proponents needed to say was, “So you want to belt your kids, do you?”

It is a no-win situation which makes it more certain that change will come, if not immediately then sooner rather than later.

Adapting to change is the best means of survival and this is much easier if that change can be anticipated.



Magic In The Jungle

An explorer deep in the jungle was captured by indigenous tribesmen and taken back to their local village.

He was almost paralysed with fear when they presented them to their chief, a gigantic man with teeth filed to dagger points.

Desperately trying to find a way out of what seemed to be a very precarious situation he pulled out

a cigarette lighter and with one flick it burst into flame in front of the ferocious looking chief.

“Look, magic!” said the panicking explorer, hoping to impress the fearsome figure in front of him.

The chief’s eyes went wide with astonishment.

“It certainly is magic,” he said, “I have never before seen a lighter ignite on the first try!”

The Right Channel

Occasionally ACVMG get calls from practitioners informing them a particular product is unavailable and asking the reasons why.

This, of course, is not their function. ACVMG are regulators, and pretty rigorous ones at that, but they are not in a position to tell if and when a particular product is available to the market. This is the responsibility of the registrants themselves.

It is akin to a client asking a doctor for advice about a sick cat. The probable response would be “give it some paracetamol and call me in the morning,” as we know that is very bad advice for the cat.

All information is about going to the right source.

We recently had a situation where Boehringer, as is their right, announced that the company was shutting a manufacturing facility in Auckland.

This prompted calls from some practices, using their products to request information from ACVMG as to the whys and wherefores.

One major reason for multinationals decommissioning products is competition from generics and, despite claims to the contrary from product pioneers, the generic is not inferior and in some cases can even be superior.

The classic case decades ago was the incredibly popular xylazine

first marketed as Rompun by Bayer. The plethora of generics, once it came off patent, dropped the price to such a degree that Bayer discontinued their product and the iconic name of Rompun has vanished into pharmacological history.

The famous Cola wars of the 20th Century were about the pioneer product Coke competing with Pepsi.



In one battle the latter used a random taste test showing 52% preferred Pepsi and, despite this showing virtually no difference launched a massive and successful marketing campaign with the slogan “Taste the difference.”

Coke eventually countered by altering a 99 year old formulation but customers rejected it totally in a marketing disaster, only salvaged by rebranding the original as Classic Coca Cola.

The point is that, even with something as complex as personal taste there is little difference between

generics despite claims to the contrary.

So message one is that, if your favourite product is unavailable, look to the generic if there is one.

Message two is about how to find that particular product. As stated above it is not the role of ACVMG .

A couple of years ago there was a mooted shortage of lignocaine that had animal welfare concerns and rightly had NZVA extremely apprehensive.

“It is akin to a client asking a doctor for advice about a sick cat.”

Eventually NZVA approached individual companies who were able to give assurances.

That set the template for a more recent issue, again a storm in a teacup, that was quickly resolved by involving the Industry Branch of NZVA. This proved to be the most successful approach.

However there is a better, more logical way. Virtually all registered veterinary medicines are listed in the IVS annual. All you need is the name of the active ingredient and any generics are easily found.

Then contact with the registrants themselves will establish how well placed they are to continue supply.

Accident Insurance

Nagy applied for an insurance policy.

“Have you had any accidents?” asked the insurance agent.

“No,” said Nagy. “A horse kicked me in the knee a couple of years

ago and last year a dog bit my hand.”

“Wouldn’t you call those accidents?” said the agent.

“No,” Said Nagy, “They both did it on purpose”

FOR ANIMAL TREATMENT ONLY

PROPOL

Energy supply for cattle and sheep at calving and lambing.

<p>CONTENTS / 100ml: 1:2 Propylated 85.96 gm Potassium iodide 137 gm</p> <p>DOSAGE: CATTLE: 240 ml twice daily SHEEP: 120 ml daily</p>	<p>ADMINISTRATION: By oral dose as a drench. Propol dose rates may be diluted with water up to ten times & given in three to four divided doses daily. Store at or below 25°C.</p>
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By law the user must take due care, obtaining expert advice when necessary, to avoid unnecessary pain and distress when using the product other than as directed on the label.

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KeadIONE
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Vitamin K1 10mg/ml, Vegetable Oil.

DIRECTIONS
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5 to 25 mg /10 kg. i.e. 0.5 to 2.5 ml/10kg.

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250ml

FOR ANIMAL TREATMENT ONLY

PROPOL

Energy supply for cattle and sheep at calving and lambing.

CONTENTS / 100ml:
1:2 Propandiol 85.86 gm
Potassium Iodide 0.17 gm

ADMINISTRATION:
By oral dose as a drench.
Propol dose rates may be diluted with water up to ten times & given in three to four divided doses daily.
Store at or below 25°C.

DOSAGE:
CATTLE: 2-40 ml twice daily
SHEEP: 1-20 ml daily

By law the user must take due care, obtaining expert advice when necessary, to avoid unnecessary pain and distress when using the product other than as directed on the label.

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2% Lignocaine Local Anaesthetic
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Net Contents: 500ml

Security

A newly married couple booked into a downtown hotel.

That night, as the husband was about to turn off the light his bride asked, "Do you think the room is bugged?"

"Of course not sweetheart," he replied, "that does not happen in our country."

"But what if there is a microphone somewhere? I'd be so embarrassed."

So the groom searched under tables and behind pictures. Then he turned back the rug.

Sure enough there was a funny looking gizmo on the floor. He took out the screws, got rid of the hardware and got back into the bed.

The next morning the newlyweds were awaked by a hotel clerk who wanted to know if they had slept well.

"We certainly did," replied the groom, "why do you ask?"

"Well it is really quite strange," replied the clerk, "but last night the couple in the room immediately below yours had a chandelier fall on them!"

