



Countryside Veterinary Clinic

July 2016 Newsletter

Physical Exams: What you need to know.

Mark J. Thomas, DVM

Treating sick dairy cows can be very challenging especially if the primary problem has been misdiagnosed. Diagnostic mistakes can result in treatment protocols that are ineffective, expensive and possibly harmful to the patient. For example, giving a cow that has a displaced abomasum (DA) antibiotics will likely not solve her immediate problem. Appropriate antimicrobial therapy and/or supportive care initiated after a diagnosis has been established will likely improve the chances for a successful outcome. In our May 2016 newsletter, Dr. Mark Thomas provided a detailed description of a thorough physical exam for a dairy cow. Realizing that most problems occur early in lactation, honing your diagnostic skills will help you achieve diagnostic success during this very critical transition period.

When discussing fresh cows that are off feed several questions need to be addressed. A good history and a few simple diagnostic procedures will help you answer why your fresh cow is not performing as expected.

1. Did she have twins or any other calving difficulties? Twins and dystocias often lead to retained placentas (RP) resulting in uterine infections.
2. Did she clean? Does she have a red fetid vaginal discharge? Sometimes it's difficult to ascertain whether or not a cow has passed her placenta and is starting to develop a uterine infection (metritis). Often cows will start to develop metritis but not run a fever. Because of this it may be necessary to perform a vaginal/uterine exam checking for uterine infection or the possibility of a retained twin. Thoroughly clean the vaginal area with warm water and soap prior to examining the uterus with a clean rectal sleeve.
3. What does her manure look like? A rectal exam will help you examine the manures quantity and consistency. In addition with practice, the rumen, left kidney, uterus and intestines can be evaluated during the rectal exam.
4. Are there any signs of milk fever such as cold ears, mild bloat, weakness or stiff manure? IV calcium or Bovicalc boluses may be warranted. Hypocalcemia (milk fever) is often responsible for many of the problems fresh cows encounter.
5. Is she ketotic? Using the "Precision Xtra" blood test meter which only uses a single drop of blood, clinical or subclinical ketosis can accurately be diagnosed. Urine "Ketostix" strips can also be used. Cows that don't respond to dextrose or oral propylene glycol should always be checked for a DA.
6. Does she have an elevated temperature? Because good mercury thermometers are getting difficult to obtain, inexpensive digital units are now very popular. Temperatures exceeding 103 degrees may indicate mastitis, metritis or pneumonia.
7. Can you ping a DA? Hearing DA's will take some practice given their various tones, sizes and locations. Have your veterinarian let you listen to the next DA on your farm if you're having trouble. Owning a good quality stethoscope is key to hearing the diagnostic "ping".
8. Have you checked her quarters? Using a paddle and CMT solution will make it easier to diagnose clinical or subclinical mastitis.
9. Has there been a recent feed change for your cows? Recently harvested forages that are still fermenting can cause mild to severe indigestion especially in fresh cows.
10. If your completely stumped take a blood sample (5-8cc blood may be collected in a red top tube or even a syringe) for analysis at the clinic. Contact your herd veterinarian to discuss which laboratory tests should be run. Most samples are run the same day and we will call to discuss the results.

Over ->

Simply observing the cow from a distance will also help you identify patients that need closer inspection. Is she bright and alert or dull and depressed? (Dan Hrim) What do her eyes look like? Is she glassy eyed showing signs of dehydration? What does her rumen fill look like? Are there any quarters that are swollen or is the entire udder slack? Are there signs of labored breathing or coughing? How does this cow compare to her neighbors?

With a little practice and good coaching a basic physical exam can be quickly and accurately accomplished on all dairies. In order to arrive at an accurate diagnosis a complete physical exam must be undertaken. Treatment protocols should be initiated only after a diagnosis is made. Your herd veterinarian will be happy to assist you in improving your skills in this critical area.



Lewis County Fair!

July 19 – 23 * FREE admission *****

\$5 parking - \$15 parking pass good all week!
Available at Countryside

All parking is off Bostwick Street again this year.

Friday – **“Logan Mize”** in Concert – 8:00 p.m.
(Grandstand \$15, Festival Trackside - \$20)

Saturday – **10 a.m. Dog Show**

See you at the Fair!

www.lewiscountyfair.org

Mark your calendar!

Countryside Veterinary Clinic’s Farmer Client Appreciation Picnic!



Thursday September 1st
7:00 p.m.

Lewis County Fairgrounds Pavilion

Call to reserve your spot today – 376-6563.

We don’t want to run out of food so please help us get close to correct number by calling and making reservation (376-6563) with how many adults and how many kids will be attending. **Door prizes will be given out (including 3 - \$100 gift certificates to Countryside) – BUT you need to be on the reservation list in order to be able to win!**

Lowville Free Library Garden Tour – Sunday July 31, 2016 - 12 noon to 5 pm. 5 new gardens and one favorite on tour. Help support the Lowville Library and revel in some beautiful gardens. \$10 donation which gives you booklet with garden descriptions and directions. Tickets can be purchased day of event or at Library before.



Read our newsletters: Remember that if you spot your name in our newsletter and call us within 5 days of the billing date, we will give you a \$10.00 credit on your bill.