

## **Unique calcium treatment gets the thumbs up from vet turned dairy farmer**

A chance offer in the middle of calving last spring led to new and better management of metabolic cows for Te Awamutu large herd equity partners Jennie Macky and James Kinston.

Now they are converted to the first and only dairy treatment of its type in the New Zealand market, not least because it's easier and safer to administer than oral drenches.

The TRANSITION™ Calcium Bolus contains calcium chloride, calcium propionate and calcium carbonate, plus Vitamin D. It is formulated to provide both immediate and sustained release calcium to newly calved cows. Easy to swallow, TRANSITION is also more palatable than drenches or pastes.

Genesis Industries NZ Ltd is a sister company to MAI Animal Health which was founded and remains owned by veterinarian Dr Mark Anderson. MAI Animal Health features multiple manufacturers and brands servicing the animal health industry, with businesses based in USA, UK, Australia and New Zealand. TRANSITION Calcium Boluses join other well-known products such as Estroject™ Heat Detectors that Mark Anderson has developed and manufactures.

An experienced dairy vet, Jennie Macky is no stranger to metabolic disorders in cows. But that doesn't automatically make transition cow management any easier or more successful, she says.

In 2014, for example, "we had phosphorus deficiency like you've never seen it before. We lost 36 cows in a matter of three weeks and had to put 90 cows on once a day after calving. It was a nightmare spring for us."

Since then, post parturient haemoglobinuria (PPH) caused by low P levels has become more widely diagnosed in NZ, especially in the South Island where many cows are now wintered on fodder beet. At the time however it was relatively under diagnosed.

Thankfully, subsequent metabolic issues in the herd have been more typical and less complicated for Jennie and James, but even so, they remain a seasonal challenge.

The pair came to the current property at Parawera in 2008, when they bought into an existing dairy business as 20% partners. Since then, they've gradually built up their stake in the farm as well as its size and scale of production.

Starting with 610 cows on 186 ha producing 225,000 kg milksolids, they're now running close to 1000 Friesian cross cows on 225 ha. Total production in 2015/16 was 453,000 kg MS and in 2016/17, is expected to be 460,000 kg MS.

Over the years the farm has evolved to become a System 5, with more than 50% of feed imported. Supplements include maize silage, palm kernel (PK), dried distillers grain (DDG), tapioca and canola.

Previous cow lameness issues are now resolved in the wake of this change, but herd metabolics have been 'rubbish' all along: "that would be one of our biggest challenges here."

Their usual treatment for down cows is two bags of injectable calcium in the paddock, followed up by a home-made oral mineral drench when they've recovered enough to get to the dairy shed.

But as James and Jennie point out, oral drenching is often complicated by cows' swallowing difficulties and there always the risk of drowning if administration is not executed carefully.

Last August, a little over half way through calving the herd, Jennie called into the local vet clinic for supplies and was offered a box of TRANSITION calcium boluses to try instead of oral treatment.

“We’d never seen them before, but we’re always keen to give anything a go so I brought them home and started using them. The staff liked using them, because they were easier and safer to dose, and we liked them, because you can’t drown a cow with one of those.”

Over one hundred TRANSITION boluses later, she and James had worked out a new, safer, more effective and cheaper metabolic treatment regime which they intend to implement across the whole herd this spring, namely one bag of injectable calcium in the paddock, followed by one bolus in the shed.

“For some cows two bags in the paddock was too much, so there was always a bit of a risk of losing a few off the needle. This way, we get them back up on their feet, then with the bolus we know they are covered with up to 12 hours of calcium release.”

Not all the first batch of TRANSITION boluses was used on downed metabolic cows; Jennie and James also administered some as a prophylactic treatment to old cows which had calved but did not show clinical signs of metabolic disease.

“It helped prevent milk fever when they were in the colostrum mob, and it felt good to know we’d given them 44 grams of calcium to keep them going.”

The pair plan to order about 200 TRANSITION boluses before calving this spring. “You only have to prevent one cow from drowning to more than pay for the price of them.”

James and Jennie have had their eyes set on farm ownership since they started in the NZ dairying as sharemilkers in 2003, having met in England where Jennie was vetting and James was dairy farming. “People ask if we think it’s still possible to reach ownership, and the answer is yes, you just have to get your priorities right and stick to them,” she says.

As well as the main farm, they also sharemilk 230 cows at Kihikihi, run the Teaser bull Co leasing vasectomised bulls and have five children.

TRANSITION Calcium Boluses are packed in individual inserts and are sold in boxes of six

To find out more about how this unique treatment can improve your metabolic cow management this spring, talk to your veterinarian.

For more information:

Genesis Industries NZ Ltd  
3A Marken Place Glenfield  
Auckland  
Phone 09 444 2115

Kevin Hinton – Sales Manager  
027 870 4353 [kevinh@genesisindustries.co.nz](mailto:kevinh@genesisindustries.co.nz)