 **May**  NEWSLETTER **2020**

***Mental Health Week and Mother’s Day—Coincidence?!***

Happy Mother’s Day! None of us would be here without one and we celebrate mothers and what they do in our lives! Mothers have always managed to juggle it all and with COVID-19 it seems the demands on mothers are more than ever. Reading a book about marbles with our daughter’s grade 2 homework I am starting to be convinced I have officially lost mine! I cannot imagine I am the only mom out there struggling to keep all the wheels turning so to all of you, and to me, I tip my hat. Many years ago I sat in the nursing home visiting my Great Grandmother whom was in her late nineties and I still echo her words in my mind each day as the tasks begin to pile up—"gotta keep a goin’.” Keep on keeping on! Find joy in every day and simply do your best.

***COVID-19: Ongoing Provincial Restrictions***

Animal care remains our purpose and priority and we remain fully operational while taking steps to maintain provincial recommendations and restrictions. We are pleased to see a provincial phased relaunch strategy emerging and can now begin to incorporate what were considered non-essential veterinary services back into our schedules. Thank you so much for your patience and understanding while we, along with all of you, have navigated these past number of weeks. One area we continue to try and iron out is our phonelines. We apologize for many that have had trouble getting through. Our three phone lines have literally been continually lit up during business hours, particularly with clients needing to call from the parking lot, telemedicine adaptations and the like. It feels like a radio contest trying to phone the clinic these days! We are encouraging staff to place outgoing calls with their cell phones to keep our internal phone traffic a minimum. Please continue to be patient with phoning in and please do leave messages as necessary so we can get back to you as quickly as possible.

With the provincial recommendations in mind we have implemented the following measures:

* We are open regular hours for business and maintain 24/7 Emergency Service; we are screening clients for specific risk factors such as recent travel or symptoms of illness
* Enhanced sanitation for human safety above our regular practices and between EVERY client
* Limited attendance in clinic—vehicles or trailers arriving must call the clinic per posted instructions and receive instruction from staff before entering the clinic
* Physical distancing in place for protection of human health and safety; personal protective equipment and handwashing available as necessary
* Telemedicine available when needed and extensions for prescriptions when necessary
* Farm calls as usual with physical distancing, handwashing, and other measures as necessary
* Production Animal Medicine (farm animals) products/services remain in place and please read on below for a couple supply interruptions and notes

Thank you for your understanding, patience, and willingness to work with us to keep all our clients, staff, and critters safe!

***Lead Toxicity: Check for Lead Before Pasture Turnout***

With spring upon us it seems timely to remind producers to check pastures and grazing areas for potential lead exposures. Curious calves and cows are remarkably proficient at finding old batteries and the like, being mainly attracted to the lead salts. Following winter freeze/thaw cycles, many old batteries can be further worn and cracked and new exposures possible even in old junk or rock piles. Old equipment left in fields may have batteries and is worth a quick check.

When lead levels reach toxic levels clinical symptoms and death can occur. Mainly affecting the nervous and gastrointestinal systems, signs can include: ataxia (wobbly or uncoordinated), bloat caused by rumen stasis, colic, dullness, transient constipation followed by development of diarrhea, blindness, head pressing, teeth grinding, hypersensitivity to stimuli, and progressive incoordination. Acutely high exposures can also show blindness, salivation, twitching eyelids, jaw champing, teeth grinding, muscle tremors, convulsions, and death. Low level exposures can sub-clinically impact animals causing ill thrift, low fertility, abortions, and sometimes pneumonia because of poor ability to swallow properly and food entering airways.

Lead toxicity in food animals is an animal health, food safety, and public health concern. Lead levels above the maximum acceptable concentrations in meat (0.11 mg/kg) and milk (0.020 mg/kg) make these products unsafe and ineligible for entry to the food chain. To minimize the risk of this happening, the Reportable and Notifiable Diseases Regulation of the Animal Health Act requires food animals exposed to lead sources be reported to the Office of Chief Provincial Veterinarian. Given that not all animals will necessarily show clinical signs, it is important to identify all cattle potentially exposed and test them for elevated lead levels. Cattle producers are required to keep separately all the animals who might have been exposed until they can be tested. In addition, the source of the lead exposure in the pasture must be determined and removed to prevent additional exposure. All animals that have blood lead levels above the acceptable limit (>0.11 ppm) will be placed under quarantine by the Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian and will not be allowed to be sold or shipped to slaughter until the blood lead levels drop to an acceptable level. These animals can move between different pens or pastures, as required for calving, feeding, processing and other routine management. A farm visit by a provincial government inspector to place official quarantine and any follow up testing to monitor the blood lead levels will be done at the owners’ convenience. It can take some time for the body to eliminate lead levels, so blood sample collection is typically not recommended more frequently than every 90 days. Depending on individual animals and the level of exposure, it is not uncommon to see animals with different levels in their blood and differing time requirements to clear it from their system. The quarantine will be lifted on individual animals as they reach acceptable blood lead levels, at which point they are cleared to go to slaughter or to be sold. The Office of the Chief Provincial Veterinarian will pay all costs for private veterinarians to collect and ship the blood samples. All the testing of the blood will be done at no cost in the Alberta Agriculture and Forestry laboratory. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us here at the clinic!

***A couple things to mention…***

We have been informed the cost of isopropyl alcohol has risen dramatically and as such products containing this ingredient are expected to rise in price. Pour-on ivermectins may experience a significant price jump heading into fall. Implants through Merck Animal Health including Revalor G, S, H, 100, and 200 are not available for 2020 and Merck apologizes for the supply interruption and alternatives exist so please call! SafeGuard crumbles remain unavailable with a suspected distribution date of July. In the interim, liquid and powder forms remain available. Vision 8 Somnus in the 50-dose form was limited however we’ve managed to grab a good quantity and have it in stock again. Andrea works hard to find supply for the clinic and keep interruptions to a minimum. Feel free to call Andrea or Jackie for any of your special-order needs!

***Around the Clinic***

We continue to remain fully staffed and operational with a few modifications. Human safety is our priority and staff are being careful to honor the extra measures we’ve put in place. We apologize as our phone lines continue to be very overwhelmed these days and many clients have trouble getting through. We are using our cell phones when possible in clinic to keep lines free for incoming calls. We do appreciate your patience and understanding! Take care, stay safe, and be healthy! Happy Mother’s Day to many beautiful Mothers out there and to the SVC Momma’s in here! To all the farmers working out in the fields- stay safe!

**Calling Long Distance? Use our toll-free number 1-888-GET VETS (1-888-438-8387)**

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