

FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2019 KEEPING CALVES COSY THIS WINTER



Research has shown that maximising daily live-weight gains of heifer calves before weaning results in extra milk production when they calve down. An extra 100gm growth per day up to two months of age can result in 250kg of extra milk in the first lactation. As vets we encourage farmers to have good ventilation in calf buildings to remove stale and humid air, helping to reduce the incidence of respiratory disease.

However, it is also important that young calves should be kept warm!

As a general rule, when the air temperature drops below 10°c at night, the calf uses up extra energy just to keep warm, therefore its growth rate will be reduced. If the calf is in a draft or has damp bedding, the temperature at which it uses additional energy to keep warm will be higher.

The use of calf jackets to keep young calves warm to help maximise their growth rates is becoming increasingly popular and is proving to be very successful!

We currently stock 'Cosy Calf' Jackets at a price of £20.00 plus VAT per jacket (direct debit/cash sale price). For more information on the benefits of calf jackets and protocols for when they should be used, please speak to one of the farm vets on a farm visit or call the surgery on 01729 823538.

FLUKE UPDATE

We have been blood sampling lambs on four farms located in various areas within our practice to identify fluke activity. This testing informs us when we have 2 week old fluke within the lambs, therefore allowing us to time our dosing accurately.

The last samples were taken in the second week in November and showed **NO** evidence of fluke. Other practices in the area have also been sampling revealing similar results. In contrast to this the national SCOPS and NADIS forecasts are predicting a moderate to high risk of fluke in some parts of the country. SW Scotland and Northumbria have had some acute fluke cases in September and October.

WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN AND WHAT IS OUR ADVICE? Farms with a low fluke burden will be ones:

- Where the livestock had a clear out dose last season
- Have low contamination levels
- Had no boggy or wet areas of land in September or October
- Have controlled fluke well in the last years, identified their drug resistance and been treating strategically

If we get a cold spell now any emerging fluke should be frozen and will not continue their lifecycle and we should have a low risk of fluke all season.

The farms we would have concern about in terms of fluke are farms with unknown status of fluke and which have had poached or flooded areas where sheep have been grazing for the last few months.

The fluke dosing regime needs to be tailored to your farm. Please phone and speak to one of the farm vets for individual advice, an update and a dosing plan.



JOHNES DISEASE IN CATTLE

Johnes disease is a chronic, contagious bacterial disease of the intestinal tract that primarily affects cattle and sheep. It is characterised by a slowly progressive wasting of the animal which, in cattle, is usually accompanied by increasing severity of diarrhoea.

Youngstock (calves under 3 months of age) are most susceptible to becoming infected but because of the long incubation period (length of time from picking up infection to showing symptoms) clinical signs usually first appear in young adulthood (4 years plus). Infected animals shed the bacteria in manure, colostrum and milk. Infection is most often acquired in young animals through faecal contamination of environment or ingestion of contaminated milk from an infected cow. Faecal shedding of the bacteria begins before clinical signs are noticeable so these 'silent' carrier animals can be an important source of transmission.



CLINICAL SIGNS

The organism causes a chronic thickening of the gut wall resulting in the body being less able to absorb nutrients and fluids from the intestines leading to chronic reduced performance (reduced milk yields) and weight loss despite a good appetite and normal temperature. The disease symptoms become gradually more severe and lead to malnutrition, debility and eventually death. There is no treatment for the disease.

In dairy herds, animals carrying the disease (even before they show clinical symptoms) are twice as likely to have a cell count over 200,000 and are twice as likely to have milk yields 25% below their adjusted herd average.



DIAGNOSIS AND SCREENING

In animals showing clinical symptoms, the diagnosis is easily confirmed from blood samples (detecting antibodies) or dung samples demonstrating the presence of the organism. Screening of apparently healthy animals which may be incubating the disease presents more of a challenge as antibodies in blood samples (or from individual cow milk samples) may only be detected in the 6 months before an animal starts showing clinical symptoms.

One screening protocol which may be used on dairy farms which have seen no clinical cases is to carry out a 30 cow screen on blood or milk samples taken from higher risk animals (older cows, lean cows, scouring cows, high cell count cows, cows not milking as well as expected etc). This gives a snapshot of the likelihood of the disease being present in the herd. Alternatively, in herds which milk record, every cow can be sampled every 3-6 months for early detection of infection.

CONTROL

Control can be difficult because of the long incubation period, shedding of infection by animals before they show clinical signs and diagnostic techniques with poor detection rates in the early stages of disease.

Practical control measures that can readily be adopted to limit losses in a diseased herd include:

- Rapid culling of diseased animals
- Minimise faecal contamination of food and water sources and pasture e.g. by raising feed and water troughs, use of piped mains water rather than surface/pond water, avoiding spreading yard manure on pasture and maintaining good hygiene in buildings/yards and calving boxes in particular (reducing exposure of young calves to adult cow faeces)
- In dairy herds, separate new-born calves from dams at birth and rear by bucket with artificial colostrum/milk
- Do not feed waste milk to calves
- Do not raise calves from known infected dams as breeding replacements.

NATIONAL JOHNES MANAGEMENT PLAN

Most milk buyers are signed up to the National Johnes Management Plan which each year requires producers to obtain a declaration signed by a BCVA Johnes Certified Veterinary Advisor stating that they will be implementing one of 6 recommended Johnes control strategies depending on the level of infection in the herd. All of our farm animal vets are Certified Johnes Advisers and able to give advice on management of Johnes disease on your farm.



KETOSIS

Over the next few months we will be approaching some of our dairy clients to assess the risk of sub-clinical Ketosis. If there is milk recording data available, then the ketosis risk can be estimated from the milk protein and butter fat produced by the cows in the first 30 days of lactation. If milk recording data is not available, then an estimation of the prevalence of subclinical ketosis can be made by milk sampling all cows from calving to 3 weeks in milk and multiplying the percentage going positive on a ketotest strip (1.2 to 2.9 mmol/dlitre) by 3.5. The aim of the project would be to illustrate the level of disease on our farms and anonymously rank these herds to give people an insight into the scale of the problem and where savings could be made.

Ketosis is one of the most common post calving problems seen on UK dairy farms (up to 40% of cows). This is a function of a lack of energy, mainly due to intake, in the weeks following calving. With a good quality diet and a low body condition score loss from calving, ensuring good feed intakes, this can be minimised.

There are some herds and some cows in all herds that are more prone to the problem and go on to develop disease.

Ketosis and sub clinical ketosis costs farms in the region of £400 per cow as it reduces milk yield by 250 -500 litres per year and the chance of becoming pregnant by 50% in the first 100 days.

Ketosis also increases the risk of:

- Twisted stomachs (3 times more likely)
- Retained cleansings (1.75 times)
- Dirty cows (1.5 times)
- Lameness (2 times more likely)
- Cows are more likely to die or be culled than cows without sub-clinical ketosis (2 times more likely).

More recent research shows that if the individual cow is ketotic in the first week rather than first three weeks after calving then all the above risks are **doubled**.

If problem herds can be identified, then cows in the herd at risk of ketosis after calving can be predicted. There are a number of preventive measures and treatments that can be used on these high risk cows. For further information on preventing ketosis or joining the project please contact the practice.

MSD SUCKLER HERD PEFORMANCE CHECKLIST

Many of you will have seen mention in the farming press recently the launch of the **'MSD Suckler Herd Performance Checklist'** which is a vet-driven, on-farm audit tool, aimed at helping suckler herds identify and address health and performance issues on their farms.

The checklist provides a structured approach to help the farm's vet assess performance across 5 key areas:

- Optimising fertility and managing pregnancy
- Getting calving and neonatal management right
- Managing young calves up to 6 weeks of age
- Managing older calves from 6 weeks to weaning
- Setting goals and measures

Working through a series of questions in each of the 5 areas highlights areas where changes can be made to improve overall herd performance and profitability.

To find out more about the suckler herd performance checklist please speak to one of the farm vets.



PRODUCT NEWS



'INMEVA' ENZOOTIC ABORTION AND SALMONELLA VACCINE FOR SHEEP

Traditional Enzootic abortion vaccines (Enzovax/ Cevac Chlamydophila) can only be administered to non pregnant ewes at least 3 weeks before tupping which can be impractical for people sourcing replacement ewes to put to the tup straight away.

'Inmeva' is an inactivated Enzootic Abortion and Salmonella vaccine which can be administered to ewes during the middle third of pregnancy to provide protection. Two doses are needed 3 weeks apart. For more information please speak to one of the farm vets.



DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

OUR ANNUAL SHEEP MEETING!

Tuesday 21st January 2020

At: North Ribblesdale Rugby Club, Settle BD24 9RB

To Discuss: Itchy Sheep—The Control of Sheep Scab

Further details in the January 2020 Newsletter. Book your place now! Extra discounts available on lambing list products for attendees on the night.

Lest & Lest & Lest & Lest & Lest & Lest THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS ON THE FARM T'was the night before Christmas, and all round the farm, All beasts were settled, quiet and calm. The sheep in the fields, the cows in the shed, Each and every one, tucked up in bed. Up came the sun on Christmas Day, But t'owd farmer and his wife, still had to bed and hay. Cows to be milked, calves to be fed, By gum when it's cold, it's a job getting out of bed. When all was done up, it was time for a beer, After all, there's only one Christmas Day each year! Once family had gone, and all food consumed Night-time drew in, and milking time loomed. But whilst in the shed, doing his checks, T'owd farmer took stock and called 'ring the vets!' He'd been met with the sight of a calving cow, And with the size of those feet, it needed a tow! The vets came out in their usual hurry, Fighting their way through the wintry snow flurry. A spatter of lube, and a good old pull Then out came the calf... a great big blue bull! With a gesture of thanks, and the season of merry, T'owd farmer gave vet some mince pies and a sherry! We would like to wish you all a very merry CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR LIKE US ON DECEMBER www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk aceboo 2019

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