



SHROPSHIRE FARM NEWS

1st of March – will Spring spring????!!

Although it doesn't feel very springlike as I write, there is no doubt the evenings are starting to stretch out and the number of daffodils in bloom tell us that spring proper is surely just around the corner. I am sure most of you are desperate to get on the fields to get lagoons emptied and crops planted and growing but after the amount of rain we have had it will take some time to get the big machines active again.

The wet weather has definitely brought its health challenges too, especially to young calves. We have had a particularly bad year for pneumonia and calf scour. It is tempting to hope that this will all resolve itself once you can empty some sheds and get animals out. This is partly true but you can help speed up the process! The reason cattle seem to clear up many problems when they go out are complex but there are often a few key advantages.

1. Fresh air and sunlight- this will reduce the density of viruses and the concentration of gases like ammonia which damage the linings of the airways- a key factor to starting pneumonia. Sunlight naturally destroys some viruses but also allows Vit D production to occur in the skin – vital for proper immune function. However if the weather is bad young cattle can really struggle initially outside unless they have shelter and plenty of food (shock the same happens inside if they can't get warm dry and out of the wind and are well fed)
2. Spring grass – often high in energy and in protein and usually as much as they can eat. Under nutrition often is a key factor in depressing immunity and causing pneumonia- if you want to recuperate fast from an illness it helps to be on a higher plain of nutrition. Do you think enough about helping sick animals recuperation?
3. A clean comfortable place to lie on ground that has been rested for a few months- so the coats don't get covered in bacteria from the guts of other cattle- so less exposure to disease causing bugs. Lying time increases rumination. A healthy rumen has massive benefits on the immune system

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4. Room to spread out – so a healthy calf doesn't have to lie cheek by jowl with a sick one.

So why am I bringing this up? Well rather than wait for Dr Green have a think if you can improve the situation of your animals now while they are still inside. Ask yourself – do my youngstock ever run out of forage? Do I know what the quality of the youngstock forages is like? If its poor quality (and who feeds the very best forage to their youngstock?) then what supplementary feeding are you using and is it enough? if they look poorly could you improve what you feed them? Have the animals got a clean place to lie away from other animals s**t and does the atmosphere have a damp ammonia smell – it shouldn't! Have you isolated your sick animals away from the healthy ones? if not then wouldn't it make sense to vaccinate as a prevention? Could we rest pens or can we properly clean and disinfect between batches to provide a clean pen to start with? Do we provide enough light to encourage feed intake and vit d production or supplement it in a well specified mineral?

Small changes can have a cumulative effect so the closer you can make your everyday indoor environment to a warm sunny March/April day outside, the happier you're animals will look all year round. Then hopefully your stock will spring into spring (or even Leap into the Leap year!)

Tim

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Watery Mouth

Watery mouth is a common condition affecting newborn lambs usually within the first three days of life. This condition is caused by bacteria, primarily *E. coli* and less frequently by other pathogens, and poses a significant threat to lamb health and welfare, often leading to big economic losses for farmers.

Lambs affected by watery mouth typically exhibit a range of symptoms, including:

- excessive salivation – one of the hallmark signs of this condition is the presence of copious saliva around the lamb's mouth
- weakness and lethargy – lambs may appear weak, lethargic, and unwilling to stand or nurse
- loss of appetite – lambs will lose their appetite, leading to decreased suckling and weight loss
- dehydration – due to excessive salivation and reduced fluid intake, lambs may become dehydrated, resulting in sunken eyes and dry mucous membranes
- joint swelling – in some cases, the condition can progress to joint ill with lambs developing swollen and painful joints.

There are several factors that can contribute to the development of this condition, poor hygiene and poor colostrum management being the most important. Contaminated lambing environments, unclean bedding, and inadequate sanitation practices can increase the risk of bacterial infections. Environmental stressors, such as extreme weather conditions or overcrowding, can weaken the lamb's immune system, making them more susceptible to infections. Dystocia is another factor, difficult or prolonged labour (dystocia) can lead to physical trauma in newborn lambs, making them more vulnerable to

bacterial invasion. There are maternal factors as well, ewes with compromised or inadequate colostrum production may produce weaker offspring with reduced immunity, predisposing them to infections such as watery mouth.

Preventing watery mouth in lambs requires a varied approach aimed at minimizing exposure to pathogens and optimizing lamb health.

- Implementing rigorous hygiene protocols during lambing, including cleaning and disinfecting lambing pens and feeding equipment, providing clean bedding, and promptly removing afterbirth materials.
- Ensure lambs receive an adequate intake of colostrum within the first few hours of birth to acquire passive immunity against pathogens.
- Maintain optimal lambing conditions, including adequate ventilation, temperature control, and sufficient space to minimize stress and reduce the risk of infection transmission.
- Regularly monitor newborn lambs for signs of illness, and promptly intervene with appropriate veterinary care if watery mouth is suspected. In severe cases, antibiotic therapy may be necessary to control bacterial infections and prevent complications such as joint ill.

Watery mouth remains a significant concern for sheep farmers everywhere around the world due to its impact on lamb health and productivity. By implementing effective prevention strategies and promptly addressing cases with appropriate veterinary care, farmers can minimize the incidence of watery mouth and promote well-being of their flocks.

Mihail





Growth Rates

Now that spring is coming, focusing on monitoring calf growth rates will be of special importance for spring calvers. Subsequent milk yield of heifers is related to their early mammary gland development, and therefore early growth rate in heifer calves can have a measurable impact on their lactation yield as first calvers.

Measuring growth rates provides very useful information about how well the calves are growing. This is one of the best ways of monitoring calf health; a healthy well-fed calf will have a higher feed conversion efficiency and will put in more weight. It is also a great way of identifying problems related to calf management. For example, if half of the calves in a group are growing much less than the other half, could there be a competition problem? Could the poorer calves have had poorer colostrum management?

We should be aiming to get every single calf to grow >0.8 Kg/day in the first 2 months of life. If this is achieved, you will not only be able to get heifers in calf by 15 months, but they will also be producing more milk from the first lactation.

Top Tips:

- Target optimum growth rates during milk feeding as growth is the most efficient in the first two months of life
- Weights should be taken at birth and at weaning (but the more regular the better);
- Weight bands are the easiest and most practical way to measure weight, and can be done while tagging the newborn
- Pre-weaning growth rate is calculated by subtracting birth weight from weaning weight, then dividing this by the age of the animal at weaning (in days).

Duarte

Pastures New..... Zealand

For anybody who didn't know already, it was with regret that the end of February saw Chloe Davies, our Vet Tech and long-standing colleague, head off to pastures new. Chloe started at the practice on reception back in 2015, then moved into the then-new Vet Tech role in 2019, quickly picking up routine clients across our area. I think everybody that worked with her will agree that nothing was ever too much work, too big a job or too unsociable an hour for her – a safe pair of hands through and through, except perhaps when it came to keeping her van on the road.

The office will be a quieter place without Chloe (interpret that how you will) but there is no doubt that we'll all miss her constant energy and enthusiasm about the place. It's a rare thing to come across such a bubbly personality- maybe it was all the champagne.

Safe travels Chloe – we look forward to seeing you back in Shropshire again in the future!

The Whole Team





Event

Bentley Ford Farm Strategic Dairy Farm Launch

*Thursday 21st March 2024, 10:30AM – 2:30PM
Bentley Ford Farm, Longnor, SY5 7QH*

Join us as we introduce you to our new strategic dairy farmers, David, Cheryl, and Robert Higgins, from Shrewsbury.

The day will feature a tour of the farm and give you an opportunity to find out more from David, Cheryl, and Robert about their operation, performance figures and goals for the next three years being a Strategic Dairy Farm.



ahdb.org.uk/events

TB UPDATE

Last month we tested 11,188 cattle over 73 tests. There were 47 reactors and 55 inconclusive reactors.

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Please keep a note of the mobile numbers for the vets should you ever need them

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