

TIMES ARE TOUGH

As we come towards winter, the effect of the latest round of milk price cuts and the continuing poor prices for beef and sheep will be starting to bite. No doubt many of you, our clients, will be trying to find ways to reduce the costs of production to offset some of this lost income. We are fully aware of how tough this must be for you and want to be here to give you the best advice that we can to keep your animals healthy and profitable.

In all cases your first port of call must be to have a look at your farming business as a whole. If you are an all year round calving herd, then your biggest cost is going to be your feed bill. If there is one single feature that all profitable dairy farms have in common, it is that they aim to make maximum use of the forage (fresh or silaged) they have available. The genetics on many of your farms are good enough to support 10,000 litres per cow so if you are only averaging 7,500 then you need to ask yourself why? If you want to have a low input, low output system great go for it (and have the right type of cow!) but don't have a high input, low output one!

Have a look at the graph below.

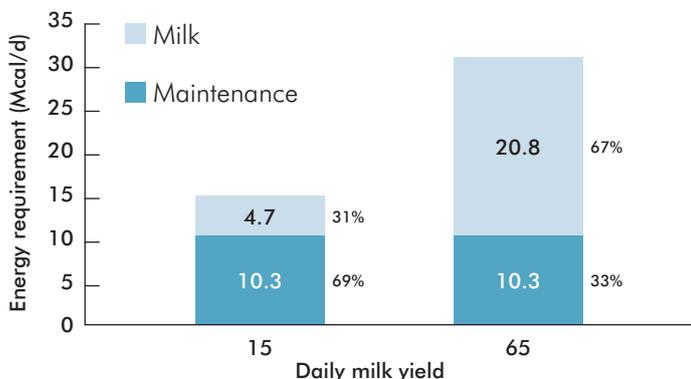


Fig. 1 The 'dilution of maintenance' effect (adapted from Capper et al., 2009)

This shows the percentage of feed that gets turned into milk at 65 litres a day versus 15 litres a day assuming the weight of the cow is the same. The key thing to see is that the amount needed for maintenance is the same for both cows, whether your cow is giving 15 litres or 65 litres. In terms of the feed you put in front of the cows it roughly equates to the first 10 kg of dry matter just going to keep that cow alive, walking, breathing etc. If you are a spring grazing herd then the cost of supplying that maintenance value is low and so your additional litres are high margin.

If you are all year round calving then the cost of supplying maintenance is going to depend on preserved or purchased feed at certain times of the year and be relatively expensive. So you have to get the litres to get a return. If you can get an

Continued overleaf

IN THIS ISSUE: November 2014

- Autumn/Winter Fluke Treatments
- BVD Update
- Lameness Part 3
- Coccidiosis in Pigs

SKILLS WEEK 2015

Skills week will be held from Monday the 19th of January to Thursday 22nd 2015.

Please contact Sam P at the practice for more details.

LAMBING COURSE 2015

We will be holding our popular lambing course with Nathan on Saturday the 17th of January. Venue TBC. Please contact Sam P at the practice to register your interest.

EBLEX REDUCING SHEEP LAMENESS WORKSHOP

EBLEX are holding a workshop on Sheep Lameness at Walford College on the 5th of November from 10:30am-3:30pm. The day will cover the 5 point lameness reduction plan and contains a practical and interactive session on treating and preventing sheep lameness.

The course costs **£40 + VAT**.

Please contact EBLEX directly on 01904 771211 or email brprevents@eblex.ahdb.org.uk to book your place.

OPENING HOURS

Office/Pharmacy:
Monday-Friday 8:15am-5:30pm
Shrewsbury Market Office:
Tuesdays from 9:30am-12noon.

Please order by 4pm on a Monday to ensure your order makes it to the market.

Please note the Office/Pharmacy is closed on Saturdays and Sundays.

From front page

additional 15-20kg of dry matter into these cows to get turned into 40-60 litres of milk you will have a much more profitable cow than the one that only eats 8kg more dry matter and turns it into 15-20 kg of milk. Keeping on top of your fertility means that you should have more cows in early and mid-lactation capable of eating more, putting higher percentage into milk and not into maintenance. Equally stale cows are relatively expensive to keep, so culling passenger cows and making space for good heifers can make sense

A very similar graph would be produced with ewes producing a single versus a double or a beef animal putting 0.5kg per day versus one putting 1.5kg per day.

All well and good but how can you improve things now? Well, small things make a difference and no doubt most of you are doing these things anyway but some of the suggestions we come across that other farmers utilise are.....

- Make sure the blades on your shear grab are sharp and that you are meticulous on your pit maintenance. Poorly maintained silage faces will lead to spoilage and loss of feed value but also the risk of dietary upset and reduced feed intakes and in worst cases abortions.
- Clean out food troughs and water troughs regularly. Thirsty animals won't eat or milk as well as they could. Spoiled food will put the cows off and reduce intakes.
- Don't let disease eat your profit. Particularly lameness. On some of the farms that Roel has been running the Dairy Co lameness plan, the losses due to lameness, using the farms own figures, run into many tens of thousands. Roel will be doing a bigger article on this in the next newsletter but contact us if this is a big issue on your farm.
- If you are using in-parlour or out-of-parlour feeders check they are working and feeding what they are meant to. Check all the ID tags are working to make sure the cows are getting what they are allocated. Likewise with your activity monitors.
- Check your vaccine regime is up-to-date; if you are unclear we can check our records for you.
- Clean out your dry cow and calving areas as often as possible. Up to 60% of UK mastitis cases come from this period. If this means weekly clean outs then do it weekly.

There is no point in producing milk to chuck it away. By the same token do not stint on parlour maintenance. Getting an extra month out of your liners may cause much more expensive cell count and mastitis outbreaks.

- Don't tolerate calf health issues. Selling good beef calves or surplus heifer calves can be worth the equivalent of another penny or two a litre. Most calf issues relate to hygiene and having a dry, well ventilated bed. If vaccines or preventative treatments are needed then speak to us; let's make sure they are appropriate and timely.
- Push the feed up often and aim to never have cows waiting for food. This helps to increase intakes and helps the quieter feeders and heifers realise their potential.
- Get a grazing plan together for next year. Paddocks for spring grazing may need closing off now. If you are not rotational grazing you may have the potential to grow lots more grass for little extra cost. Get involved in the Grassland Society/Dairy Co or one of the grazing based discussion groups to talk to people already doing this.
- Get your medicines discount – we have always offered a 12.5% discount as long as your medicines are paid for on collection and your account is up-to-date.
- **Most importantly, take care of yourself.** Your skills are the most important asset of your business. Make sure you make space to have some time off and refresh the batteries. You will feel better for it and your business will see the benefit.

Milk Price Protests

We have conflicting feedback from clients as to whether or not we should be supporting the milk price protests especially at Muller. Obviously some of the drop is due to world market prices but how much is opportunism? Where there is obviously a clear case for action, (such as when Iceland cuts the price of 4 pints to 89p and takes a full page spread in a weekend paper to publicise it) we will stand right by you at the protests and also use our twitter feed to point out to the general public what is going on. Hopefully the market will bounce and when it does the pressure needs to really come on the processors to pass it back as quickly as they passed on the bad news.

Tim

BVDV AWARENESS: MEETINGS AND ON-FARM SCREENING

During November/December, we will be running lunchtime meetings to promote the XLVets BVD Check Tag Scheme. These are easy to use, easily recognisable white eartags for your cattle, which indicate the BVD status of an animal. You may even have seen them used in cattle in the market!

If interested in attending one of these meetings, please phone the practice.

Not sure whether you have BVDv in your herd? It's easy to find out

During your TB test, blood samples can be taken from a group of 6-10 unvaccinated animals that are 9-13months old. If the results show that these animals have been exposed to the virus, then further investigations may be necessary.

By sending in a bulk milk sample, an accurate assessment of the presence of the virus within your milking

herd (no more than 300 cows) can be achieved.

On Day 1 of a pre-movement TB test, we can also check the BVD status of the animals tested, using the white Check Tag. Results will be available on Day 4 at the reading of the test and you can sell your animals with confidence, knowing they are BVD free.

David



LAMENESS – PART 3

Previously I have considered cost, causes and possible ways of prevention of lameness in cows – the most visible form of illness, especially to the general public looking over the farm gate. Lameness reviews, locomotor scoring and records become an increasing part of farm assurance, so awareness and action plans to alleviate or prevent suffering become increasingly important. And of course, in times of falling milk prices, reaching the full milking potential of milking cows by preventing lameness becomes more significant.

So, understanding the way the environment can affect the structures in the foot and the impact that has on the cow will go a long way to helping us reduce lameness incidence. As previously discussed, improving cow comfort, good hygiene in yards and cow houses to reduce the infectious load, the improvement of tracks, gateways, and areas around food and water troughs, transition cow management, and reducing stress areas in cow housing will have significant impact on lameness prevention.

It would be unrealistic to suggest that we can prevent all lameness. Early and effective treatment of lame cows is an important component of any proactive lameness control program. Studies have shown that delayed treatment was a management factor associated with higher levels of lameness, and that animals showing lameness in first lactation are more likely to become lame in subsequent lactations.

First we must recognise the problem. Although cows go through the parlour twice a day, lameness will only be seen if it is looked for. Regular Locomotor/Mobility scoring will identify these cows with problems so that feet can be picked up and looked at. Scoring every 3-4 months of the whole herd should be a minimum (although on the most successful farms this is done fortnightly, so that Score 3 cows should be done straight away, and Score 2 cows within 2 days), but that is not ignoring the fact that daily observation should pick out those who have gone acutely lame overnight. Scoring will also point you in the direction of external factors that can be looked at to reduce the incidence of lameness.

Training staff to treat lame cows appropriately is a key role, the correct methods of pairing are important, and the same principles apply whether trimming or lame. Correcting foot angles, maintaining the integrity of the toe thickness, the hoof wall and heel are essential while pairing out lesions. It is too big a subject to go into much detail here but overzealous trimming can be as bad long term as under trimming. Training and recognition of the lesions is paramount. Roel offers a very good foot trimming course covering the 5 step Dutch method and it can be a valuable investment. Techniques, the use of blocks, shoes etc. can be discussed.

The early stages of foot disease are usually easy to treat, respond more quickly to treatment and are less likely to recur. Therefore consequent treatment interventions are likely to reduce lameness severity, duration and prevalence.

Routine trimming: Is preventative and corrective. The question is when to trim to prevent lameness developing, if there is no foot imbalance or claw overgrowth then it is unnecessary. Certainly, ideal times for routine foot inspection should be:

- All cows at drying off (with the caveat that facilities should be suitable for heavily pregnant animals)
- 60-100 days in milk – to prevent the progression of claw horn lesions



- Heifers about 60 days pre-calving – where overgrowth is visible, to protect the integrity of the digital cushion
- All lame cows.

In the first 60 days post-calving horn wear exceeds horn growth so trimming should not be undertaken then. Appropriate antibiotic treatment can be undertaken with identification of the lameness cause, and don't forget, the presenting sign is pain so don't forget to address this. In extreme cases, surgery may be required, whether it be digital amputation or opening the sole to allow adequate drainage of pus and remove dead tissue.

Footbaths have an essential part to play both in prevention and treatment of infectious causes of cow lameness, remember positioning, chemicals used and dilution rates are important.

Identification, inspection, treatment are all involved in lameness management. It is important to review cases at seven day intervals, and intervene again if necessary.

The Dairy Co Healthy Feet program offers a good starting block for lameness recognition and prevention.

It is an important and costly disease with appreciable welfare implications, and cannot be ignored.

Rod

TB TESTING UPDATE

A few clients have been docked a percentage of their Single Farm Payment for late completion or processing of their TB tests. Please can we remind you that whilst we will always try to help arrange your test and fit you in even at the last minute, it is the keeper's responsibility to arrange the test in good time. The test not just needs to be completed by the end of your test window, but has to be done such that DEFRA actually have time to process it as well. We do book up quickly, so please bear this in mind when arranging your tests. We have three testers again, Pablo, Pedro and Pelayo – keep them busy!!

Alistair

Autumn/Winter Fluke Treatment



It is impossible to fully summarise fluke in this newsletter, so for more details, please speak to one of the vets or SQPs.

The fluke lifecycle and its ability to infect cattle is very closely linked to lifecycle of mud snails. Fluke eggs hatch in warm, moist weather and the resulting larvae then go in search of snails which breed and multiply well in the same conditions. More snails, more larvae, more fluke infected and affected cattle.

Clinical Signs:

Individually, clinical cases will show weight loss (or failure to gain), general malaise, scouring, paleness (internal bleeding) and death are all common. Lower levels of fluke (sub-clinical cases) frequently presents more as a herd/flock economic problem, usually with reduced production levels being the first sign prior to clinical cases.

Treatment:

There are a number of products that are effective against fluke, but only a few are licensed for use in cows producing milk for human consumption.

Douvostome is now no longer available, but another product – ZaniL – has the same active ingredient and has a milk withhold of 72 hours. However this product only treats mature fluke so repeated treatments may be necessary.

Fasinex 240 is the only triclabendazole product that is permitted for dairy use. It is not allowed for use during the lactation, but can be used during the dry period and in pregnant heifers. There is a 50 day milk withhold, and this will treat immature and mature fluke.

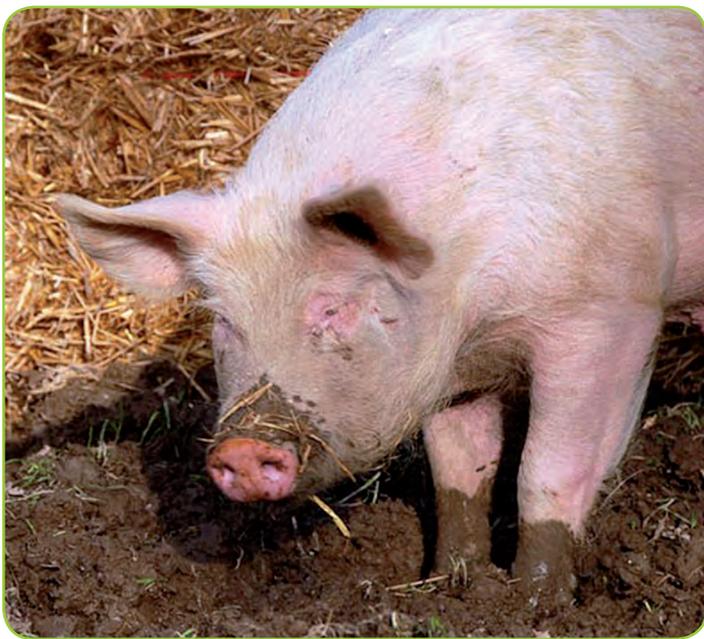
Please be very careful using any other products, including Fasinex 10% as many of these are no longer permitted to be used as treatments, even in the dry period.

Monitoring:

It is important to monitor fluke on farm and a sample of at least 40g of faeces is required for fluke egg counts. However, it can take up to 3 months for eggs to be produced following an infestation so care is needed with interpretation. Milk & blood tests can pick up the presence of immature larvae prior to treatment and may be of more use when trying to diagnose sub-clinical fluke.

Nathan

Coccidiosis in Pigs:



It's always good to report successful outcomes to disease outbreaks on farm, so just a brief article on this from one of our clients. In terms of pig clients, we don't have a large client base, so don't see the outbreaks of disease seen in more intensive pig areas like Yorkshire.

Neonatal scours can have a big effect on pig performance in pre-weaning mortality, growth rates and the feed conversion rates. Coccidiosis is one of the agents that can be involved in this problem, commonly presenting as yellow pasty diarrhoea

in the second or third week of life, with possible stunted growth and dehydration. Increased variations in litter weights will occur and this is related to the damage coccidial oocysts have on the gut wall. Sub-clinical effects can often occur with no other visible signs of disease.

Peter Woodhall at Stretton was experiencing this scenario. Discussions with myself and testing implicated *Isospora suis* (Coccidiosis) as the cause of this problem, and having reached a diagnosis, we instigated a program of treating all new born piglets at with an oral coccidiocidal preparation. Batch farrowing made this an easy move to initiate. Biosecurity and good hygiene are also important in the control of this disease, and this is true across all species.

Since initiation of treatment to all piglets, a significant increase in performance has been noted, in terms of reduced pre-weaning mortality, increased weaning weights, numbers reared per litter, and also post-weaning mortality. This has resulted in more pigs being sold, improving the bottom line.

In times of falling prices, this is obviously important. Prompt action has produced a noticeable financial and disease control benefit. It shows the importance of making a prompt diagnosis so that correct treatments can be started.

Rod

Find us on social Media



www.facebook.com/ShropshireFarmVets



www.twitter.com/ShropFarmVets