

HERD HEALTH MONITOR

I mentioned in the newsletter a couple of issues ago about the introduction of a long standing idea to be more proactive in disease prevention, to do more than just filling in a yearly Herd Health Plan to satisfy. Farm Assurance has always seemed more a paper exercise than adding any great benefit to the farm.

However, and especially so in these bad economic times for the dairy farmer, making a more accurate assessment of disease on farm and acting upon it, can have a significant bearing on costs. If one looks at the losses from serious lameness problems in herds, it can soon mount up to 1ppl milk sold, mastitis, similar costs, and if one tailors in the cost of replacements with herds with high culling rates, the cost of disease and loss of production soon mounts up.

To be able to do anything about these costs, one has to monitor and produce data on disease that can be reviewed on a regular basis. With this information, we can produce plans to try and prevent disease rather than fire brigade treatments when things are going wrong. A lot of this prevention may just come down to management changes.

The Herd Health Monitor is designed to monitor cattle from birth to death, recording both growth rates as heifers to ensure that they will calve down at optimum weight and

age to maximise production and longevity from them. There are sections on mastitis recording, lameness, culling and miscellaneous diseases to show what is happening on farm. Some of these sections are requirements of Red Tractor, but accurate records allow us to meet those needs when filling in Herd Health Plans. And of course, you don't have to use all parts of the plan, if your interest is in your calf rearing program, you may consider this is the part you want to concentrate on to begin with.

I introduced the monitor on to some farms just under three months ago, and now will be the time where we can review progress over that time and make any management changes, disease control programs that may be necessary. I hope from that information we can make a positive impact on disease control and welfare. I will keep you posted.

I think also it wouldn't be too hard to adapt this for beef, sheep and even pig enterprises. I would hope that everyone in time will see the benefit of this project and will instigate it on farm. In the long run it has to have a positive effect on keeping costs down.

Please feel free to speak to one of the vets about the Herd Health Monitor.

Rod

LAMBING COURSE – JANUARY 2015

On Saturday 17th September, Nathan and I were joined by another group of keen delegates for our lambing course at Walford College. We spent the morning in the classroom with an interactive session covering the importance of successful lambings, pre-lambing management, the lambing process, common problems and when to call for help. In the afternoon session we ventured outside into the cold for a practical session. With the help of our new lambing simulator we were

able to set up various different lambing scenarios which gave attendees the chance to have a go at lambing in a controlled environment. People were also able to try out intramuscular, intraperitoneal and subcutaneous injections, as well as having a go at placing a feeding tube and learning how to castrate with elastrators. We then returned to the classroom for a session on common health problems in lambs and ewes.

The aim of this course is to give knowledge and confidence to those who have little or no experience with lambing, and to act as a useful refresher for those who have. Using the simulator means that attendees have the chance to practice solving difficult lambings, and so will feel better able to lamb their own sheep and deal with some problems as they arise. The group certainly seemed to enjoy their day and many people commented on how beneficial they had found the course.

Due to popular demand we have now added an extra date for this year. If you are interested in coming along on Saturday 7th February, please contact the office to book your place.

Ally

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SHROPSHIRE
**FARM
 NEWS**

FEBRUARY 2015

Well, no let up on the milk price chaos thus far. If you are struggling to see your way ahead and want a friendly ear please feel free to speak to us. We have not got all the answers but we may be able to help to clarify your thoughts.

In terms of the future the current crisis makes it clear that as an industry we must be much more focused on the market for our milk. The funds that DairyCo collect must go more and more into marketing and more importantly negotiating on behalf of milk producers with the processors to improve the marketing of the products that your milk goes into. A lot of your milk goes to Muller. Do the buying public see a Muller yogurt as an English product? Where is the marketing support for producers producing niche high value products such as Shropshire Blue-products that shout out to the consumer I am a local product and could command a premium.

In many ways the cost of production is irrelevant if your milk contract is so weak that you are always at the mercy of the financial success/weakness and greed of your buyer. There is no point at all in everyone reducing their cost of production by 2 or 3 pence a litre if the processors/supermarkets simply say "thank you very much we will pay you another couple of pence less". On that point, I feel strongly that farmers, consultants and Dairy Co are far too open in demonstrating and displaying the cost of production to all and sundry. When was the last time you saw the costs of production published for a John Deere or a parlour or bottle of coke? Think how much easier it would be to drive a deal on a parlour if you knew exactly how much it cost to manufacture? DairyCo should only show these figures directly back to farmers and under a strict confidentiality clause. The average figures, and even more importantly, the lowest figures, should never reach the public domain where they are available to the milk processors who then know how hard to push.

More than 80% of milk produced in this country stays in this country so there should be no reason why that 80% of milk should not be able to be contracted at a fixed price for months in advance. Most dairy farms would be quite happy if they knew they were on a fixed long term price on a certain volume of milk and then took their chance on any volume above and beyond that. Why should that not be achievable?

I think that the general public are more aware than ever that farmers are getting a raw deal but we are not mobilising their power. Rather than getting them to ask what price their supermarket are paying for their milk (which obviously is only liquid milk on that date) we should ask the public to pressure the supermarkets to commit to buying **all** their dairy produce (including cheese and processed dairy products) from processors that offer their farms fair, and fixed prices for 12 months or more.

We published the picture opposite on our Facebook page last month. So far it has been passed on to other Facebook pages

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ORF VACCINE

The vaccination to prevent Orf in Sheep is now available again.

Please contact the practice to order.

Orf vaccine is supplied by MSD as Scabivax Forte.

INJECTABLE MASTITIS TREATMENTS

Unfortunately the imported product containing Penethamate Hydriodide is now out of stock due to manufacturing problems.

The original product containing this chemical is also still subject to a manufacturing delay.

Please contact the practice or speak to one of the vets for more information on alternative treatment.

Penethamate Hydriodide is supplied by Boehringer Ingelheim as Mamyzin and Virbac as Mastinject.

TB TENDER UPDATE:

Unfortunately the Tender process has become subject to a legal standstill period.

We will let you know as soon as more information is revealed.

by 280 people and viewed 14,632 times. In this modern age, bodies representing farmers must use every means available including Facebook, Twitter etc. to level the playing field with those who determine the price of milk and worry less about putting pressure on constantly reducing cost of productions which good farmers are working towards all the time anyway.

Tim



EWE NUTRITION MEETING

– 22nd January 2015 –

Stocking density was high in the Arthur Rowley Suite at Shrewsbury Football Club on Thursday night. This was Shropshire Farm Vet's inaugural sheep farmer meeting, sponsored by MSD. Approximately forty-five people attended, and after refreshments enjoyed an interesting and useful talk by sheep vet Kate Hovers BVMSc CertSHP MRCVS. Topics addressed were the importance of having breeding ewes in peak body condition at tupping to achieve optimum scanning percentages, getting ready for lambing and how to avoid certain clinical conditions, e.g. vaginal prolapses, hypocalcaemia and twin lamb disease.

Emily finished the evening by explaining how we (S.F.V.) were offering to help produce tailor-made Sheep Flock Plans and the services we could provide (flock health calendar, date generator). It is hoped that from the feedback received on the night and the healthy turnout, more evenings like this can be arranged in the future.

If anyone who attended, or missed the evening, is interested in creating an individual Sheep Flock Plan or would just like more information, please give the practice a call.

David

PRE-LAMBING VACCINATION

Enzootic abortion of ewes (EAE/chlamydia abortus) generally occurs in the last three weeks of pregnancy and can result in weak lambs being born but not surviving despite intensive care. The highest risk for this is introducing infected replacements into your flock. If animals are infected less than five to six weeks pre lambing there is potential for them to carry the infection on to the next lambing season. Aborted ewes may also breed again normally but be carriers so it is wise to keep them separate.

Use of long acting oxytetracycline at around 100 to 120 days gestation (approximately 110 days) can reduce the severity of an outbreak and can be repeated every ten days to fortnightly however, this is **NOT A CURE**. It is also important to note that EAE is zoonotic (transmissible to humans) therefore pregnant women should avoid handling sheep. There is a vaccine available for EAE which can be given before tupping.

Clostridial and pasteurilla vaccines are also due six to eight weeks before lambing. There is a wide range of clostridial diseases but often the presenting sign is sudden death. Replacement ewes require a primary course of two injections four to six weeks apart whereas animals treated the previous year will require a booster.

Emily

SAVE A LIFE, GIVE BLOOD

This is a great sentiment, and doesn't only apply to humans. Over the past few months we have carried out a number of successful transfusions on cows, not only saving the cow's life, but also in many cases allowing them to continue being a productive member of the herd.

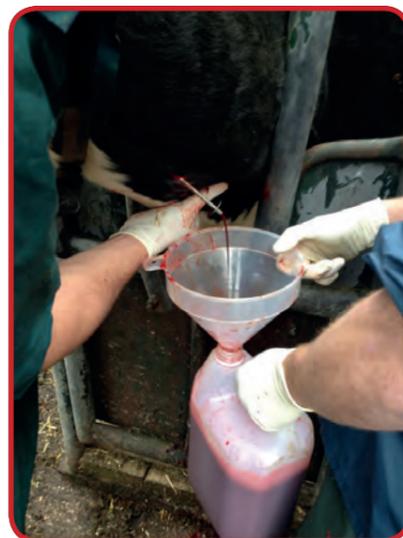
What does it involve?

- Blood! – Around 5 litres is taken from a quiet, fit donor cow (ideally a barren cow with no underlying systemic disease history) and given directly to the cow at risk.
- Transfusion kit
- Cows have different blood groups, but unlike humans, they do not require a type match for the first transfusion that they receive
- The transfusion is of minimal risk to the donor cow, as they only lose 5L of their 35-40L blood volume (equivalent to a person giving ~1 pint)

What situations can they be used in?

- Acute (fast) bleeds – e.g. sudden onset ulcers, large bleed from milk vein
- Chronic (slow) bleeds – e.g. cotyledon bleed post-calving, slow grumbling abomasal ulcers

Most animals that are suffering from a serious degree of bleeding could benefit from having a blood transfusion. The transfusion won't necessarily solve the problem, nor treat other underlying problems such as an infection, however, they will give the animal more time and resources to deal with the situation (without which they would otherwise die). Some bleeds, such as a uterine artery bleed following the replacement of a prolapsed uterus are unlikely to benefit from a blood transfusion, because the bleed is too big and too fast.



Blood is collected from the donor cow –
thankfully she was quiet



The blood is then transfused into the recipient –
she is now doing well and giving 27L!

What do cows suffering from bleeds look like?

- Dull, quiet, often with cold extremities
- Pale, often white/ivory mucous membranes – conjunctiva around the eye, inside the mouth and tissue inside the vulva
- Bleeding may be obvious if external (e.g. bleeding milk vein, or abomasal ulcer causing dark faeces) but less so if it is internal (e.g. uterine artery bleed)

If you would like more information regarding transfusions, or have a cow that needs one then please contact the practice.

Nathan

CHOOSING A BULL

Purchasing a bull can be an expensive process, but the value that he brings to your herd can be worth far more than his initial cost. It is important to consider what you want from your bull before choosing him, and once you have chosen, to ensure that he is healthy and fit for purpose.

Understand your market

Your production system will govern which traits you should be identifying as important in selecting your bull. For instance, beef producers selling progeny at weaning, Calving Ease (direct), Birth Weight, Muscle Area and 200 Day Growth would be important.

For those producers finishing stock, 400 Day Weight is paramount and Fat Depth must be considered. Those breeding their own replacements need to also consider Calving Ease of Daughters, 200 Day Milk, and Scrotal Circumference. Scrotal circumference is closely related to the fertility of daughters and they will reach puberty earlier.

For dairy herds considering a beef bull to maximise the value of surplus calves, looking at traits such as Calving Ease, Low Birth Weights, and Shorter Gestation (Calving Value) are important to reduce costs associated with dystocia and also to reduce calving interval. In addition if the progeny are to be sold as young calves then 200 day weight is also important.

Breeding for specific objectives enables strengthening of current herd genetics', and improvement in areas which are deficient when breeding replacement beef heifers. Dairy producers, selecting semen for artificial insemination of cows for replacements use PTAs (predicted transmitting abilities) or proofs to advance herd genetics. This will ultimately enhance herd profitability. EBVs (estimated breeding values) a measure of genetic potential of a given sire, measured from collecting data from known relatives, can help in selection of your bull, looking for traits as mentioned above.

Ensure breeding policy forms part of your herd health plan discussion with your vet.

Fertility status

A fertile bull should be able to get 90% of 50 breeding cows in calf within 9 weeks. Producers with a tight calving period, including block calving dairy herds using a sweeper bull, need to know that the bull is going to achieve those targets. A sub fertile, infertile or sterile bull will not achieve this and will result in costly extensions to calving interval, so get your vet to perform a pre-purchase examination. This usually consists of a thorough physical examination, including assessment of internal and external, sex organs, and a semen test. Your vet will obtain a semen sample which will assess the volume, density, motility of the sample and assess sperm for defects. Do this before the breeding season begins.

A semen evaluation does not assess libido or mounting ability, and therefore does not confirm the ability of the bull to breed.

Health Status

Try to avoid bringing in disease. For closed herds this is often the only animal coming onto the unit, and the herd may be relatively naive (susceptible to disease).

Establish from the vendor, their herd Johnes' status as it is difficult to test for in young animals. Other infectious diseases, such as Leptospirosis, BVD, and IBR should be tested for, or vaccination status should be established. Campylobacter is a venereal disease causing infertility and is spread by bulls. Have your bull tested for this before he is allowed to serve any cattle. Quarantine your bull on arrival and treat him for internal and external parasites; fluke, worms and lice, and observe for any signs of disease.

And lastly, find out the diet that the bull has been fed to ensure as smooth a transition as possible and promote rumen health.

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