

GRANTS AVAILABILITY

There is a new programme of grants available for investment on farm called The Countryside Productivity scheme. This provides grants of up to 40% of the cost of certain investments predominantly technology driven that increase productivity on farm. Some of the investments that are eligible include LED lights, bulling activity monitors, rumination monitors, calving monitors, real time environment monitors for pigs and fixed handling and segregation facilities for cattle and sheep. There are also large grants available for eco projects such as water harvesting, energy saving and slurry spreading equipment. If you want to know more the link is:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-productivity-scheme

As ever these grants have a limited budget but if you are embarking on a new investment it will pay to have a look to see if anything on your wish list is eligible.

There are also water management grants of up to £10,000 to reduce the risk of pollution in catchment sensitive areas. You probably already know if you are in one of these areas otherwise contact natural England to get a map of the eligible areas.

Tim

NEW FACES

Those who have been to the practice in the past couple of weeks will have noticed a new face behind reception. Charlotte joined the practice on the 9th of March and will become a permanent fixture on the front desk. Charlotte comes from a background of studying geography and competing horses.

We have unfortunately had to say goodbye to Pedro, one of our TB testers. Pedro joined us at the end of July last year, and was a great asset to the team. He has left to go back to his hometown in Spain, to work with pigs. A new TB tester, Rosa, will be joining us from Spain in April.



BEEFING UP YOUR YOUNGSTOCK MEETING

We held our inaugural meeting for beef clients on Tues 24th February at the Four Crosses, Bicton. This was the first in what we hope will be a series of meetings on different aspects of beef management and we were very pleased with the turnout of 30 clients.

I started off proceedings with a brief overview of calf record keeping, benchmarking youngstock and common calf diseases. Ailsa Milnes from Zoetis (who kindly sponsored the meeting) gave a talk on pneumonia causes and prevention. I followed this up with section on buildings and ventilation and James finished the evening off with a talk on nutrition. After the talk we all enjoyed a drink and a delicious meal.

Many thanks to all who attended an informative and sociable evening. Please do let us know if you have any requests for topics of future meetings.

Ally

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IN THIS ISSUE: April 2015

- Beefing Up Your Youngstock
- Grant Availability
- New Faces
- Talk about a pounding headache!

BANK HOLIDAY CLOSURES

The surgery will be closed on the following dates:

April:
Friday 3rd and Monday 6th

May:
Monday 4th and Monday 25th

A vet will be on call 24/7 throughout this time for any emergencies.

AI COURSE:

Wednesday 22nd – Friday 24th April with Tim O'Sullivan.

Cost: £445 +VAT

Venue: TBC

MASTITIS COURSE:

Wednesday 29th April with Rod Wood and James Marsden.

Cost: £125 +VAT.

Venue: Shrewsbury Town Football Club in the morning, followed by an afternoon on farm. Lunch will be provided.

FIRST AID COURSE:

Saturday 16th May

Cost: TBC

Venue: Shropshire Farm Vets meeting room.

Non sub-contracting vets (whatever their reasons) will not be allowed to perform government paid tests and this obviously has the potential to create quite a messy situation! Pre-movement and private testing remains unaffected as this is a private contract between the vet and the client and can continue to be performed by their original practice.

Alistair

There has been a lot of nonsense printed in both the farming and veterinary press over the last few weeks regarding the TB tender. Now that the legal challenge has been withdrawn if anyone has any questions for me, I am finally allowed to discuss this matter, so if you have any concerns, please ask.

From our own clients' point of views, very little if anything will change. You will continue to be notified of tests by APHA and we will continue to send our own vets to perform the test.

All government paid testing vets will be audited regularly whilst testing to make sure that they are up to standard, and you may find that you are asked to fill in a satisfaction form although this will be randomised throughout the entire region.

You can stop reading here if you wish as what follows is only pertinent to other practices' clients.

A summary of the position on 20th March

XL Farmcare Midlands Ltd, of which Shropshire Farm Vets is an original shareholder, has won and now finally been awarded the contract for the Midlands region. This includes Shropshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire Herefordshire and West Midlands/Birmingham. This contract is due to start in England on 1st May (1st April in Wales) and is set to run for three to five years. This is a delivery contract and has nothing to do with setting policy (!!)

All practices in the region have been spoken to and all have been given the option to continue testing on their own clients' farms. Clients of these other practices will have to see whether their own practice signs up as sub-contractor of XL Farmcare Midlands, or not.

Those practices that do sign up will have to meet our QA, terms and conditions and subsequently, and despite already testing, will then have to be approved as sub-contractors by APHA. When approved, these practices will be allowed to perform government paid testing on their own clients' farms within the Midlands. Clients of practices who have signed up as sub-contractors will also continue to see their own vets testing on their farms so these farmers shouldn't see too much of a change.

If practices choose not to sign as sub-contractors, they will continue test on their own clients' farms until all tests allocated by APHA prior to and including 30th April are completed. For tests that have been allocated from 1st May, farmers will either be given a choice of two local sub-contracting practices (or they will be allocated a practice) and their government tests will be conducted by vets not from their own clinical practice; ie these farms will now have one practice to do government testing and another to do clinical work.



YOUNGSTOCK

Spring will soon be upon us, and hopefully a time when as the weather improves, the stresses of winter can be forgotten. For the dairy and beef industry, stock can go out to grass, for sheep, fresh growth for ewes and lambs to graze as another cycle of production begins. And for pigs, a time when less strain is put on the growing animal in just keeping warm, so their energy can go into growth and feed conversion.

Although winter tends to be the time we worry more about pneumonia, it never hurts to be reminded of the essentials in youngstock management to produce healthy animals for production. In the dairy industry, dairy replacements are not of inconsiderable cost, but in beef, lamb and pigs reaching the maximum potential of Kg sold, or in reaching the optimum weight as soon as possible is the key to achieving a profitable bottom line. Over the tail end of winter, we have seen a lot of neonatal disease in all species, most commonly scours and respiratory disease. Whatever the species, I would term most of these diseases as management diseases so it is worth reminding ourselves of the basics of rearing youngstock. If this article is generally calf based, the same principles also apply to lambs and piglets. To some extent, if we can manage the neonates' environment then we can prevent or reduce disease and infection pressures, and allow optimum growth rates.

The environment the calf is born into is the first consideration, an ample, well bedded calving box or shed, allowing plenty of space and regularly cleaned out, so that at birth straight away the risk of infection is reduced. This equally applies to lambing pens (helping reduce the incidence of Watery Mouth), and to farrowing houses which should be cleaned and disinfected between every batch (and does allow all in, all out systems for batch farrowing, so the whole building can be cleansed).

Colostrum:

Much has been said in previous newsletters about the importance of colostrums, but without adequate intake of good quality colostrums the immune system will always struggle to cope with disease in these early weeks of life as the calf tries to build up its own immunity.

So, the four Q's

Quality – source and IgG concentration

Quantity – at least 3 litres

Quickly – within the first six hours of life

Quietly – minimises stress.

Colostrum absorption through the gut does go on longer than this critical six hours, but rapidly diminishes, although there will still be local immunity provided to the gut lining. But remember, especially with those herds with John's problems, that only colostrums from the calf's dam should be given, and second best colostrums from known negative dams. There are commercial colostrums substitutes available, and colostrums can be frozen.

Here if one can manage the calf's environment to reduce infection pressures, then a lot can be done to reduce disease levels, or eliminate them.

Moisture and infection are closely linked. A damp bed not only allows bacterial multiplication, but also means energy is wasted by the neonate in keeping warm and drying to dry the bed. Therefore the provision of good drainage, maintaining a dry bed, general building maintenance in preventing water entering the building, and checking and minimising water loss from the drinking system will greatly reduce moisture and excess humidity in the calf house.

Fresh air is essential for the healthy lung. Virus survival in fresh air is a matter of minutes, but survival times greatly increase in stale air, and viruses such as RSV will survive and be transmitted quite happily if humidity and water droplet formation takes place in an enclosed environment. Therefore attention should be given to both air inlets and outlets to ensure a constant change of air, without creating damaging drafts at calf level which will encourage disease.

All animals and especially neonates have a critical temperature below which they must burn energy to keep warm. This means that food is taken away from growth and production. In a newborn calf, this temperature is 7°C, often below this in winter, and if you factor in damp bedding, and drafts, a lot of energy can be wasted, and extra stress put on the calf. Heat lamps, as in creep areas for piglets, and for lambs can offer some heat, calf coats are becoming more popular, and one can just increase the ration, but obviously this increases the expense.

In discussing housing, the stack effect is often talked about, but in young calves, they will not produce enough of a temperature difference to create this effect. Creating their own micro-environment can help, whether using straw bales and a roof within existing sheds, or the use of igloos or hutches, of which I am a great fan of certainly seems to more healthy calves.

Lastly stocking density is important for a number of reasons, for allowing the young to express normal behaviour, to reduce stress, to allow adequate feeding space, and to reduce the pressures on disease transmission. These are all important components in the reduction of disease.

With that, it is important not to mix groups of different ages, groups with different levels of immune-competence, so they are not sharing the same air space.

Certainly calves up to 3months old, have the highest risk of both morbidity and mortality, with the knock on effect of poorer growth and metabolic parameters in young calves, and increased mortality in older animals.

These same principles apply for lambs, though they will be turned out at a very young age, but clean, dry lambing pens, warmth, adequate colostrum from mum and freedom from drafts. For piglets, though they will tend to live in a more controlled environment, again the provision of heat for a basically hairless animal and a clean dry lying area is essential.

These management issues can make a vast difference to successful rearing, along with disease monitoring and recording, the making of an accurate diagnosis in the face of disease outbreak so that successful treatment protocols can be undertaken.

Vaccines play their part in disease control, but management is far more important as no vaccine will work successfully if the environment breeds disease.

Often it is not an expensive exercise to make little changes which will greatly enhance the health and welfare of this vulnerable age group.

Rod



TALK ABOUT A POUNDING HEADACHE!

I recently saw a case that was a bit out of the ordinary. It was a case of Gid, in a 10 month old pedigree Texel tup that had been showing some unusual neurological signs for the past few weeks.

Gid is caused by the larval stage (coenurus cerebri) of the dog tape worm taenia multiceps. It is spread when sheep graze where affected dogs have mucked, and then

the larvae migrate through the body and form a fluid filled cyst, usually within the skull. Over time (it can take months) this cyst, which is full of juvenile tapeworm heads, squashes the brain leading to unusual clinical signs and behaviour. These include: circling (usually in one direction), head pressing, dullness, blindness (often in one eye), wobbly on feet.



Holes drilled into skull (spaced 1cm apart)



Initial exposure of cyst (sac approx 1" diameter)



Cyst being floated out of the skull

Treatment:

Once present, Gid cysts cannot be treated medically, and will continue to grow with an increasing level of clinical signs until they kill the animal. The only course of treatment for these animals is surgical removal of the cyst. If the animal survives the surgery then recovery rates are around 80%. Commercial animals close to fattening weight are usually sent for slaughter, however, as this tup was of a good pedigree then we went for the surgery.

Under heavy sedation and local anaesthetic, a flap of muscle and skin was lifted, allowing exposure of the skull. I then drilled through the skull in three places, and used a saw to cut through the resulting triangle of bone. This was then removed and the cyst was freed from the inside of the skull. Sterile water was then introduced into the skull behind

the cyst, which helped to float the entire cyst out intact. The wound was then closed up and the tup was sent home with a course of medication. Eight weeks later he is doing well and has improved a great deal!

Prevention:

Dogs catch the parasite through feeding on raw sheep carcasses (especially heads) – so mostly comes from farm dogs. Prevention in sheep is difficult, but is relatively easy in dogs assuming that they are adequately wormed. The most effective wormers for treating tapeworms are ones which contain the drug Praziquantel*. Other drugs, while licenced to treat tapeworms **may be less effective**. Dogs should be treated for tapeworms every 3 months.



Cyst after removal in jam jar



Tup 8 weeks later – doing well!

*Wormers that include Praziquantel include Drontal and Milbemax

Nathan