



# SHROPSHIRE FARM NEWS

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- Abortion in cattle
- Diseases around lambing time
- Are you getting the most from your vaccine?

## BACK TO BASICS

Calf Medicine – The following list is not meant to be exhaustive, but this is one of the highest risk periods for cattle health. Maybe now is a good time to ask yourself do I get these right enough of the time?

### COLOSTRUM

This is one of my drums so I am going to bang it; a minimum of six pints in six hours. We see a lot of calves that “have sucked” which a cheap blood sample subsequently proves they most definitely have not. Supplement with vaccines (when they are available!!) or colostrum substitutes if necessary, but make sure they get it. This is the future of your herd. Quite apart from the initial health benefits, there has been a lot of recent work linking colostrum status and growth rates in the first two months to lactation and lifetime yields. For the months of February and March, the “colostrum” test, or Zinc Sulphate Turbidity – ZST – will be half price and we would encourage you to use this. Suitable calves must be more than 24 hours and no more than 7 days.

### HYGIENE

Should be self-explanatory but growth rates and disease prevention are the priorities and compromising this with poor hygiene isn't going to help. Colostrum absorption can be reduced by more than 50% if cows teats or colostrum itself are dirty.

### BEDDING

Sorry, another drum. Good quality dry bedding saves so much disease (clinical and sub-clinical) that it is essential to provide. This involves frequency of bedding as well as stocking rate. This benefits cows and calves with less mastitis and metritis for the cow and better survival rates for the calves.

## SKILLS WEEK

We will be running our popular skills week ‘days’ again this year. We will be running the same course twice, on the dates shown below.

**Tuesday 4th – Friday 7th of March**  
**Tuesday 16th – Friday 19th September**

Both weeks will have days covering mastitis, lameness & foot trimming, safe use of medicines and calf health/youngstock. Please contact ‘new’ Sam at the practice to register your interest.

### A.I COURSE

Tim will be running his popular A.I course again from Tuesday 14th to Friday 17th October. Please contact ‘new’ Sam at the practice to register.

### DISPENSARY OPENING TIMES

Please note the dispensary opening times if you require medicines for the weekend.

<b>Monday-Friday:</b>	<b>8:15am – 5.30pm</b>
<b>Saturday:</b>	<b>Closed</b>
<b>Sunday:</b>	<b>Closed</b>



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## VENTILATION

Drum number 3. Get the buildings open, especially any ridge. Ventilation is more about the exit of stale air. Use smoke tests, try different options and unless you can afford new buildings, make the best of what you have; don't just accept something because it has always been there. A good building should clear a smoke bomb in less than a minute, and anything over two minutes is poor.

## TREATING AN ANIMAL

Treat early and always treat aggressively for enough time. Calves virtually always benefit from fluids and anti-inflammatories no matter what is being treated. More modern electrolytes, (eg Rehydion, that can be given in milk) are easy to administer. Withholding milk from scouring calves for too long is a common mistake. Remember that scour in

itself is not fatal, it is usually our failure to replace the fluids and energy that causes the losses.

## CALF VACCINATION

There are many vaccine programmes that are useful for calves but like all vaccine programmes they should be tailored to your farm; please ask us next time we are there.

In conclusion, I believe that calves should be viewed as an investment in your farm and future. Some of the above is pretty basic and that is the point. With more and more tech on farms now, we shouldn't lose sight of some of the simpler ways to look for profit.

*Alistair*

## ABORTIONS IN CATTLE

Abortions in cattle are always frustrating and costly. After the time and effort wasted in getting the cow in calf, the sight of cleansing hanging from a cow in mid-gestation is an unwelcome one.

UK average pregnancy loss rate is circa 2%, and on average, costs £670 per case owing to associated loss of milk, loss of calf, and added semen and vet-med spend. It is always worthwhile investigating, to ensure that the rest of the herd is not at risk.

The majority of herds now vaccinate against **IBR, BVD and Leptospirosis**. This yields great success in reducing the incidence of abortion, along with avoiding associated costs of lost milk yield, and poor cow and calf health. Whilst the protection is very good from these vaccines, on occasion some cows fail to respond to a vaccine – so investigate all abortions by contacting the practice first.

Monitoring for BVD with tissue sampling tags in new born calves is an excellent and cost-effective way to avoid PI animals entering the herd – especially in vaccinated herds where it is easy to assume you are safe.

**Neosporosis** is now the most common cause of abortion in the UK herd, and is a parasite that has a life cycle stage in the dog.

Cows contract Neosporosis in one of two ways:

1. Pregnant cows are infected by ingesting the infectious life-stage of Neospora from dog's mess in pasture or on forage. Infected cows are 3 to 4 times more likely to abort than the rest of their herd mates. These cows then usually become immune to further cases of abortion.
2. Heifers born normally to infected mothers become infected in the uterus. These grow into adult cows, which are permanently infected with neospora, and remain 3 to 4 times more likely to abort than their herd mates on average.

Neospora causes abortion at any stage of pregnancy but primarily in the last trimester. There is no licensed or indicated treatment for Neospora, and the only vaccine

(available in the USA) is ineffective. The best method of control is to avoid allowing dogs access to cows' placental material or aborted material, and to avoid letting dogs mess in pasture or near food stores or feed passages. Farm dogs are around 30 times more likely to be infected with Neospora than pet dogs, so ensure yours are under control before tackling the inevitable issue of the public exercising poorly controlled dogs on your pasture!

Salmonella intermittently appears as a cause of bovine abortion around Shropshire. It is usually an opportunistic agent, killing the calf after initial placental damage by another disease such as BVD or Neospora. Most herds will usually have a few isolated cases in quick succession, and then these will stop just as quickly. However, in some herds it becomes a persistent and financially damaging problem, for which vaccination is the best solution. Whilst the Salmonella vaccine is relatively expensive when compared with IBR, BVD or Lepto vaccinations, it is highly cost effective, and more often than not, farms find that after 3 years of vaccinating against Salmonella they can cease without further cases.

In the case of any bovine abortion:

- Isolate the cow
- Remove any aborted material and disinfect any soiled ground or bedding
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- Contact the practice to agree on suitable course of action on a cow and herd basis
- Repeated abortions within a short timeframe may still merit an investigatory visit paid for by DEFRA.



*James*

## TWIN LAMB DISEASE/GESTATIONAL KETOSIS/PREGNANCY TOXAEMIA

As lambing time gets closer it is time to prepare for every eventuality. Hopefully cases of twin lamb will have been kept to a minimum by scanning and feeding according to number of lambs however, there is always the exception. Animals most at risk of twin lamb are those that are older, over-conditioned, carrying twins/triplets or a combination of these.

Clinical signs of twin lamb include distancing from the rest of the flock, blindness, inability to get up and depression. If any of these signs are seen it is vital to treat as twin lamb can be fatal to mother and lambs. Recent research has shown that an injection of flunixin meglumine along with calcium and a source of energy can save both ewes and lambs. For further information on this ask any of the vets.

*Emily*

## WATERY MOUTH

Watery Mouth is a disease of lambs which usually occurs within the first 72 hours of life. It is caused by a gut infection of *Escherichia coli* and 80% of those affected are likely to die. It is therefore very important to recognise the symptoms, treat cases promptly and prevent it occurring when possible.

### Clinical Signs:

- Dull and depressed
- Reluctant to suck
- Twins and particularly triplets, 12-72 hours old
- Salivation and a wet lower jaw
- Tears and puffiness around eyes
- Cold mouth and face, progressing to hypothermia
- Abdominal distension

### Treatment:

Injectable antibiotics should be given to treat the infection as soon as any clinical signs are noted. The disease can progress and lead to death very quickly. It may also be important to give a NSAID to prevent the lambs from going into toxic shock. Dehydration and hypothermia increase the likelihood of death so supportive therapy should be given, particularly oral fluid therapy and intravenous fluids in the worst cases.

### Prevention:

- Ensure lambs receive adequate colostrum (50ml/kg colostrum, 5kg lamb needs 250ml (½ pint) in first 4 hours)
- Give oral spectinomycin straight after birth if there is a history of the disease
- Clean and disinfect lambing pens between each ewe
- Proper management and nutrition of pregnant ewes to prevent outbreaks.

*Ally*

## MORE CHANGES AT SHROPSHIRE FARM VETS

You may be aware that at the beginning of January Cris left us to go and work in Wales. We have replaced him with Alba, who started on the 13th of January, and she will be out TB testing soon!

We also have another new vet starting on the 10th of February called David O'Neill. David is joining us from Ireland, after graduating in 2011. I'm sure David will tell you more about himself in the next Newsletter.

*Jayne*



## NOTICE FOR SHEEP FARMERS

It's come to our attention that some clients who are purchasing Footvax from sources other than ourselves are not being informed of the potential danger of using Cydectin 1% with Footvax. If you do use Footvax you will be unable to treat with Cydectin 1% for any future worming strategy. This combination has caused seizures and has been known to have fatal consequences.

For further information please call the surgery and ask to speak to one of the vets.

*Emily*

## SIX MONTHLY VISITS

If you have recently received a letter from the practice regarding a six monthly visit, please be aware that this is not a mandatory regular visit. Rather, if you require POM-V medicines from the practice and we haven't seen you in the past six months you will need to arrange for us to come and see your animals.

This is so that we comply with the laws that are tightening around medicines, and that your flock/herd are healthy.

If you have no requirement for POM-V medicines at the moment then we have no need to see your animals until such a time that you do.

## VACCINE PRINCIPLES

We are still asked a lot about vaccines so I thought I would write a quick reminder for the main herd vaccines. (Sorry if this seems like stating the obvious)

Vaccines are used primarily to prevent disease and they work best when -

- they are kept in fridge until use
- are fully and properly mixed
- are administered to healthy animals
- are administered BEFORE a period of risk
- are administered in the proper manner – I/M, S/C
- are administered at the proper timings – **this is by far the commonest problem**

Vaccine	Cows	Heifers
Leptospira	Booster jab in spring ideally 2 weeks pre turnout – must be no more than 12m before booster	2 injections (4wks apart) in spring ideally minimum 2wks before turnout, then slot into cow programme
BVD	In most circumstances annual boosting will protect the cow, but many experts now recommend BVD vaccination every 6m	2 jabs (4wks apart) before first service, then slot into cow programme
IBR*	No matter the brand, jab herd every 6m (some herds are every 4m)	Depends on vaccine brand – Bovillis IBR – inject once then every 6m with cows. Rispoval Live – 2 injections 4wks apart then Inactivated every 6m. Rispoval Inactivated – 2 injections 4wks apart then every 6m

\*Live IBR vaccines are better at combatting new infections, whilst inactivated IBR vaccines are better at preventing reactivation of existing disease. Most of the time, inactivated vaccine is probably a better choice.

**Buying in animals** – is a whole story on its own. The correct procedure is to isolate all newly purchased animals from the rest of the herd for six weeks. Of course this isn't going to happen but unless you are 100% certain that bought-in animals have been vaccinated (and properly), you should always vaccinate them upon arrival and four weeks later, just as if they are heifers. Ask, what vaccine?, when administered?, kept in a fridge? You could well pay the price for someone else's mistakes.

Alistair

## SMALL BUT PERFECTLY FORMED

I have twenty ewes, what's the best way to get them to all lamb together? When should I start offering my suckler calves creep feed? Two of my eight hens have started scratching, what is the most likely reason for this, should I be worried about the others? If these, or questions like them sound familiar then we have the answer for you.

At the end of January we launched our new small holders club, "SFV – Grunters, Grazers and Gobblers". This new service will have some of the attributes common to many small-holders organisations, but with the distinct advantage that it is led and delivered by vets. The club will have quarterly meetings, each with a separate general theme (ie medicine use and handling, housing etc), a quarterly newsletter packed full of useful, practical information particularly targeted at holdings on the smaller side. Members will have access to services such as our vaccination club and will also be eligible for discounts on some other services (such as training courses and health plans).

If you would like further information on this new and exciting service please contact the practice

Nathan

## FARMING FUNNIES

A man is driving down a country lane when he is passed by a brown blur. Confused and curious, he speeds up to find that he is barely keeping up with what appears to be a six legged cow running at nearly 90 mph!

He follows and eventually it runs up a path to a farm. He pulls up to the house and knocks on the door.

He asks the farmer "What are those things?" The farmer says, "Just what they appear to be, six legged cows! I used to be a geneticist and it occurred to me that if I could get cows to be six-legged I could carry more beef per carcass and use less feed. I genetically combined the cows with tiger beetles and after years of research got what you see out in the field."

"That's amazing! Do they taste any different than a regular cow?" The farmer says, "No idea; I haven't been able to catch one yet."

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