

SHROPSHIRE

FARM NEWS



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CHALLENGING TIMES FOR SHROPSHIRE DAIRYING!

Our county has a long history of milk production and is currently experiencing a great deal of investment and expansion. The future of the dairy industry seems certain to involve a consolidation of milk production into certain key areas.

Shropshire, with key processors such as Belton, Muller/Wiseman, Helers, Dairy Crest and Nom with major facilities in the county, is well placed to establish itself as a major milk field. We are currently seeing massive investments in new parlours and new units, as a more favourable milk price has allowed a new generation of farmers to look to the future and the opportunities that a growing demand for food and dairy products across the world will bring. However milk prices can (and do) drop overnight and we all need to be flexible enough to respond.

We are also seeing farmers taking stock and looking at their current system and considering whether it will provide them with a lifestyle that they are prepared to accept. At one end of the spectrum there are a number of producers who are pursuing an extensive grazing or New Zealand style system with great success but this system is not for everyone and we are also seeing a growth in high welfare, high production systems and also in robot milkers. Each system brings with it different demands and challenges but all demand an increasing amount of cooperation between farmers, vets, consultants and nutritionists at key times to get the best out of the cows for you.

We want to help our farmers explore the exciting opportunities that currently exist and **most of all** we want them to be successful in whatever system they choose. We are committed to providing a top class level of veterinary input onto our farms, by recruiting and retaining vets with a real passion for farm work, by investing in modern equipment and training, by liaising with other like-minded practices in XLvets across the UK and beyond so that we can bring the latest developments and best practice to your farm each, and every, time we visit.

SPRING CLEANING OUR IMAGE

We hope you like our new newsletter, tagline and logo which is part of a branding campaign to build the profile of the practice.

We continue to expand our services with your support, and over the next few months you will see us and our new image, popping up in your local market.

KILIMANJARO CHARITY WALK

At the end of June Rod is disappearing off to Africa to attempt a long time ambition of climbing the highest mountain in Africa, Kilimanjaro on a ten day trip. This is basically a long uphill walk to 5850 metres with limited oxygen.

“ In trying to succeed at this personal ambition, I have been persuaded to try and raise money for a local charity at the same time, so will try and raise as much as possible for Severn Hospice. If anyone would like to sponsor me, I and Severn Hospice would be very grateful. I will leave a sponsorship form in reception or contact me. ”

JOIN US AT BROCKHURST FARM ON MAY 10TH

Alistair and Tim will be in attendance in support of Rod Macbean and his family at their open day on May 10th.

Rod has recently installed two new Fullwood Merlin milking robots in a purpose built unit to house 140 cows. This has been a massive investment for Rod that will secure his future in milk production and allow him to enjoy a healthy lifestyle for himself and his family. However any change with cows always brings challenges, and Rod's cows had to cope with lots of change. New buildings, cubicles for the first time, robot milkers, bought in cows for the first time, changes of diets and expectations of increased yield have all presented problems that have needed to be overcome.

As well as seeing the milking machines and Rod's new zero grazing machine in action, you will get the chance to discuss these challenges with us and Rod on the day and see how lessons learned along the way can be applied to your farm. There will also be a chance to speak to the builders, Price Roberts and Graham Harvey, consultants Pand L Consulting and Fullwood themselves. So if you are interested in robots, cubicles, sheds or cows join us on May 10th at Brockhurst Farm, Aston, Wem SY4 5SB, 11am - 3pm.

SPECIFIC ISSUES AT BROCKHURST FARM

Adjusting to cubicles

The first major challenge to the cows was to adjust to cubicles. Having never seen cubicles before this was obviously going to be a challenge but as the cubicles in the new shed are excellent this did not take too long however it was not without its moments!

Initial high cell counts

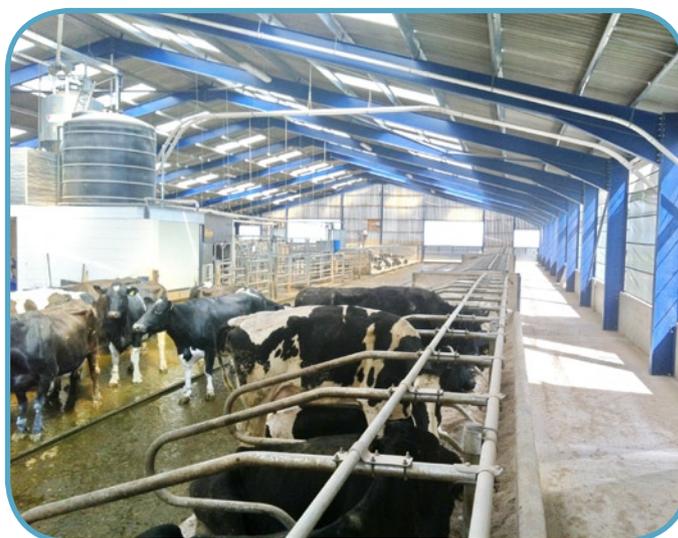
Initially the cows responded to all the stress and change by having a major spike in cell count. This is where Rod's good relationship with his milk buyer and Fullwoods came into play. We were confident that once the cows settled and the robot's settings fine tuned things would come together and from initial readings of 300,000 the current readings are now well below 133,000.

Feed Space Requirements

We continue to have some reservations about the level of feed barrier space, but this is being addressed with additional feed areas in the yard.

Transition cow management fertility action plans

There were some initial problems with cows retaining



placentas and having milk fever. Once addressed, by producing a bespoke dry cow mineral and getting a better dry cow diet, we have seen a really positive improvement in fresh cow health.

Buying in stock

After years as a closed herd Rod has bought in some animals to increase milk in the tank as quickly as possible. A full vaccination regime is in place to protect the cows but the aim is to get back to home produced replacements as quickly as possible.

Controlling digital dermatitis

One disease that these cows did bring was digital dermatitis.

Coping with chronic metritis

Intensive treatment of these cows has paid dividends.

Education

Rod has taken advantage of some veterinary nutrition training to gain a better understanding of control strategies.

Identifying the most useful data from the robot

Loads of data but what is the important stuff? Come and see.



SPOTLIGHT ON JAMES MARSDEN

I joined the team back in 2007 after a year and a half in mixed practice in Berkshire, having firmly decided to pursue a long term career in farm animal practice.

My wife Caroline, who is also a vet, grew up in Shrewsbury, and was actually seeing practice here when Tim suggested to her that I might like to phone him for a chat about a job that had come up. After speaking to Tim, and having met some of the client base through Dorrington young farmers that Caroline was a member of, moving to Shropshire seemed a sensible option. Having settled in here, and been made welcome by the hospitable and vibrant local farming community, I am staying in Shropshire for good.

From a work perspective my main priorities are fertility management, and problem solving on the herd and flock level. There is nothing more satisfying than resolving a problem on farm, be it on a herd/flock basis, or for the individual animal that needs medical or surgical attention. Working alongside our farmers to achieve these results and make a positive impact is the highlight of the working day.

After being at the practice for several months, I had started to accumulate a list of questions from challenges we face every day in practice. Questions such as; “why do cows develop ovarian cysts?”; “why do some cows not come cycling and what can we do about it?” and “how else can we intervene on farm to reduce the

incidence of LDAs, milk fever and whites?” Whilst the wealth of experience in the practice meant that I could tackle many of these problems as a recent graduate with the help of my colleagues, it was Tim who first suggested that I think about enrolling on the Diploma in Bovine Reproduction (DBR).

The DBR is run at Liverpool University, and is an excellent course for proactive farm vets, looking to advance knowledge, experience and expertise in cattle health and reproduction in a way that can directly translate science into practice on farm. The course covers aspects such as achieving and maintaining high pregnancy rates in cattle; the interacting of fertility with nutrition and milk yields, understanding genetics and how to use them to successfully achieve breeding goals on farm as well as how to tackle the major reproductive and production diseases on farm. All of this is delivered at the course by experts on their field, who relay the results and implications of the most up-to-date research available.

Some benefit from the DBR is already being realised. Practically, you may have noticed that we have started scoring vaginal discharges on cows post calving, giving us a more objective assessment of uterine disease status and the response to treatment. Some of our clients have approached me with problems such as reduced conception rates, post calving metritis and LDA rates, which we have resolved by working together, applying principles from the DBR. As a practice we find it more and more useful, engaging in discussion with farm consultants and nutritionists, and by working together with these advisors and the farmer, the combined benefit is much greater.

The DBR also involves a research project, so my on-going study is the effect of body condition score of cows towards the end of lactation, on their fertility performance in the next lactation. Nearly 1000 cows are being followed for this, hence my slightly stressed expression of late along with all the clip boards with cow details on, floating around the car! Watch this space for the latest information on how thin of fat cows in Shropshire should be in order to hold to 1st service!

Outside of work I have been playing rugby for Bishop's Castle, until recently injuring my neck tripping over a mole hill on the pitch! Happily enough, I am not too badly injured, and as a result have a lot more time free for working on my DBR. Otherwise, my wife and I like to take advantage of walking in the beautiful Shropshire hills, with Tilly the Labrador, who many of you will have seen sitting in my car, keeping my seat warm.

CATTLE EXPORTS

We are having an increasing number of requests about exporting cattle to mainland Europe and Ireland, so just a few notes on the protocol you need to follow to export cattle.

1. When you know you have cattle to export you will need to apply for an Export Licence, supplying Ear numbers for those cattle to:- Cattle Exports Carlisle (AHVLA), Hadrian House, Wavell Drive, Rosehill Industrial Estate, Carlisle. CA1 2TB. Tel. 01228 403600.
2. A Tuberculosis test needs to be carried out on the cattle no more than 30 days prior to the export date.
3. Some countries require further tests to be performed, e.g IBR in some parts of Europe that are free of the disease.
4. A veterinary inspection of the intended cattle needs to be carried out by us, no more than 24 hours before transportation. A route plan should have been provided by the transporter by this time. Carlisle provide us with various forms including the Export Certificate which have to be completed by us, stamped with an official LVI stamp, photocopied, with the original accompanying the cattle and copies retained by us and Carlisle. The forms are quite laborious and not all of the vets are registered to sign so as much notice as possible is a great help.

SUCCESSFUL SHEEP MEETING....

Sheep clients were informed about the importance of the main abortion agents in sheep and the cost benefits of vaccination. This was demonstrated with the sheep abortion cost calculator. The cost calculator and slide show are now available for download to any of you who missed the meeting.

...Also at the meeting it was spotted that there was a typo in the last newsletter with regard to the timing of insertion and removal of Teaser tups. Teasers should be introduced to previously isolated ewes 17 days before tupping. The teaser is left in for 14 days and then replaced by the "real" tup.



121 FTC (ONE-TO-ONE FOOT TRIMMING COURSE)

For a while now at MacPherson O'Sullivan Ltd we have been running Foot Trimming Training Courses. At least once a year we run a beginner/ refresher course with the emphasis on the bovine foot anatomy, structures involved in lameness and the industry's standard "5 Step Dutch foot trim". This gives clients a good starting point for doing their own trimming and more often than not corrects bad habits that have crept in over time.

The 121 FTC was introduced last year after clients asked for a follow up training for more advanced DIY foot trimmers. These "one-to-one" sessions, which run for a morning or afternoon, give clients a real boost in confidence to tackle more serious lame cows and give more guidance on when you really need to call the vet and prevent amputations or worse. These intense sessions are run on your farm, on your cows at a time that suits you.

The 121 FTC is also the time to assess the herd's mobility score and/or instruct clients how to record them. A herd approach

to treating infectious lameness causes are also addressed at this meeting.

"Attending the Basic Foot Trimming Course gave me a good introduction into being able to trim and treat our cows' feet. Following this initial training up with a one-to-one session on the farm with our vet was essential. It consolidated the initial training & has given me so much confidence in tackling even the most lame cows, furnishing me with the skills to know how far I can go in each case and getting the satisfaction of improving the mobility of each animal. It will pay for itself over a very short time given that I can treat animals immediately and correctly thus reducing the animals suffering and the need to call the vet in when a case goes 'too far'."

- Jill Blythe

Please contact the office for further information on when the next beginner/refresher course is or if you are ready for an intense 121 FTC. With the latter you get more out of it if you have done a beginner/refresher course first, be it elsewhere or with us. The courses are available to clients and non-clients alike.