



SHROPSHIRE FARM NEWS

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'WATCH OUT GIRLS! JAMES BREEN IS COMING TO CAST AN EYE OVER YOUR FIGURES!'

At our recent mastitis meeting, in conjunction with DairyCo we delved into the analytical approach to mastitis investigation.

James Breen, our animated speaker from Nottingham University, shed light on the numbers of mastitis, and the hidden information in our milk records. He also stressed the importance of recording clinical mastitis cases. Clinical cases can provide the clues to where the mastitis originates from, thus better enabling us to prevent, **and** treat. It is quite common nowadays, on modern dairy farms, to have low somatic cell counts, but to struggle with clinical mastitis cases. A lot of data is collected when milk recording, and these figures can provide crucial pointers to the areas we most need to focus on, when combatting mastitis.

The four areas to consider are:

- Dry cow vs. Milking cow
- Contagious vs. Environmental

The biggest improvements are made when you concentrate your efforts on the right area! We have 3 'DairyCo Mastitis Plan' trained vets that can work with you and help to point your efforts in the right direction.

NADIS parasite forecast for October still reading very high for fluke and worm incidence.

<http://www.nadis.org.uk/parasite-forecast.aspx>

PROFITABLE DAIRYING

The milk price has fluctuated wildly of late but it is still by no means the only player in terms of factors influencing farm profit.

- The biggest dairy costs are feed, labour, machinery/power and herd depreciation, together swallowing up 75% of dairy farm income in costs.
- We can help you reduce feed cost per litre; address ways to increase milk yield per labour unit and limit herd depreciation by maintaining herd health and reproductive performance.
- Cows which reproduce efficiently, produce efficiently

Check out Milkbench on the DairyCo website to rate your herd profit performance, or call us for more details

FIZZY FEED....

Hopefully most of you with maize will be harvesting this month. It is now proven beyond doubt that maize under performs its analysis initially and matures into a much better feed with time in the clamp. This year there will almost certainly be an additional problem with mycotoxins. This is because most mycotoxins are formed on the growing plants, especially stressed plants. Anybody got any maize that could be described as perfect this year? Using an anti- mycotoxin product from a company with a recognised expertise will probably be a good investment this year.

HAVE YOU EVER GIVING BIRTH TO A BOWLING BALL?

Since, for many, we are about to go into a seasonal peak of calvings, I thought I would borrow a question from Robin Williams – “have you ever given birth to a bowling ball?”

Well, I have to say that I haven't and if I ever did, I would sell myself to science and make a mint. Since this isn't likely, why the question?

Calvings are simple, aren't they? The cow calves, then she milks/suckles. So what happens when this nice story doesn't happen?

We have all helped cows and heifers calve. It is the immediate follow-on that I am more interested in; the associated rates of retained foetal membranes, metritis, endometritis, delays in return to bulling and in-calf rates; especially as in many cases, one condition leads to the next.

Pain is a major factor in how this cycle starts. Pain may be brought on physically from the calving, and/or from bacterial toxin release. Nearly 100% of cows have bacteria present in their uterus and it is now known that there are strains of E coli, specifically adapted to the bovine uterus, which if present will release toxins leading to metritis – a very sick cow that is in need of urgent treatment. These toxins can also reach and sit in the ovaries leading to very poor egg quality and associated poor fertility. This can be before the more chronic endometritis (whites) sets in at around 3-4 weeks post calving.

In addition to antibiotics for cows with difficult assisted calvings, pain relief is also a major part of treatment, at least it should be. In this circumstance, I would be using a suitable cephalosporin antibiotic AND a pain killer/NSAID, and ideally at the time of calving, not five days later!! The antibiotic debate will rage on, and your own attending vet is the one to advise you on what products are effective for the job on your farm, along with dose rate and for how long. However, to not use a pain killer/NSAID is just bad treatment. It is the job of NSAIDs to mop up toxins as well as acting as a pain killer by reducing swelling, and they are generally very effective.

In an as-yet unpublished trial, the benefits of NSAIDs at calving were manifested as increased rumination, leading to significantly less post-calving problems; and the cull rate from poor fertility was significantly reduced. In fact the positive

effects were so good that the farmers involved wanted to give NSAIDs to all calving cows (although there are risks with this approach).

It is difficult to directly assess pain in cows, but we know its negative effects. In my opinion, at risk cows such as assisted calvings, heifers etc should always be given pain relief as the effects massively outweigh the risk or cost. So, back to the original question about bowling balls....all I will say is, if I ever pass a bowling ball, I really hope someone is there very quickly to give me some pain relief!

CEVAXEL RTU

Shortly, we will be replacing “Readycef” for **“Cevaxel RTU”**. Cevaxel is exactly the same as Readycef, has the same dose rate (1ml/50kg im for 3-5 days (cows) and 1ml/16kg im for 3-5days (pigs)) and same withhold period (nil milk, and 8 days meat (cows) and 5 days (pigs)). You may however notice that it is considerably easier to shake up and use in the syringe.

HEALTHY FEET PROGRAMME



We are currently running the DairyCo Healthy Feet Programme on 10 of our dairy farms. Our initial lameness findings are staggering!

Based on Mobility Score results and lameness records we can calculate the average loss on each farm through lameness. Currently the average loss on our farms is £20,790 per 100 cows per year!!! This shocked me, and I hope it shocks you too. The good news is that a massive saving can be made and it doesn't have to cost an arm... or a leg. My favourite success factor for lameness reduction has to be: “Early lameness detection with prompt and effective treatment. “ More often than not this includes lifting the foot and a sharp knife... that's all.

The DairyCo Healthy Feet Program is a cost effective and comprehensive approach to reducing lameness and increasing profits.

If you'd like to know your score please contact me via the office. Roel.

BEING TOO LOOSE IS NEVER A GOOD THING... JOHNE'S - THE SILENT THIEF

As we approach the latter part of the year, and everyone thinks about getting ready for housing, it is worth having a look at your stock's dung. Whilst on pasture (particularly in the spring) cattle often have very loose faeces, however, once they have been housed for a couple of weeks (and so are on predominantly silage) this should firm up a fair bit. If however some continue to be very loose then this could be an indicator that you have a Johne's problem (high worm or fluke burdens could also cause this).

JOHNE'S DISEASE:

Johne's disease is a chronic bacterial infection of the intestines of cattle, sheep and goats. Clinical disease is usually seen in older animals (usually but not always, over 5 years in cattle) usually around times of stress (such as calving/lambing/kidding). Clinically affected animals present with profuse diarrhoea and weight loss, despite being bright and often eating well. For every clinical case there could be 7 sub-clinically infected animals lurking in the herd. Most of these will never develop the disease but may still be infectious. An American study showed that a Johne's positive cow may produce up to 3,400 litre less milk in a given lactation – that could be over £1000 lost per positive cow! Johne's has also been shown to increase the risks of high SCC's, lameness and reduced fertility.



SPREAD:

Most infection occurs during the first 3 months of life; with Johne's positive cows able to pass the infection to their unborn calves in the womb, and in their colostrum and milk (hence the advice against pooling colostrum). However, the main route of infection is faecal-oral contamination from cow to new-born calf (basically "S**t-in-mouth-disease!"). The bacteria can survive in the environment for up to 6 months, so one Johne's positive cow in a calving pen could potentially infect every single calf born in that pen for the next 6 months!

The best and easiest way to break the cycle is to find out if any of your cows are affected, and if they are, make sure that their faeces goes no-where near any calves. Hygienic collection and delivery of colostrum is crucial.



HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM?

Up to 65% of UK dairy herds may have Johne's positive cows. If you have ever had a confirmed clinical case, you have a problem. If you haven't, then you can conduct a targeted 30 cow screen of blood or milk (this can be done either by us or as part of your NMR routine milk recording). Cows to be included for an initial screening should be greater than 5 years old and have other health issues such as chronic lameness, poor fertility, high SCC or poor yield. These have the best chance of showing up positive.

Johne's has been in the news more and more over recent years. With the suggestion (as yet unproven) that it may be a possible cause of Crohn's Disease in humans, it is set to stay there. If you are interested in finding out more about your Johne's status and what can be done to manage and control the disease please speak to one of our vets.

GRASS ROOTS SHEEP WORM CONTROL MEETING - WALFORD COLLEGE 17/9/12

We had a good turn-out at our first worm control meeting at Walford College. Here, along with a group of our sheep farmers we discussed wormer resistance, how best to avoid it and how to select and administer wormers to minimise resistance development. Some of the main take-home messages included:



- Take Faecal Egg Counts (FECs) to see if you have a worm problem that needs treating in the first place. If you don't then you probably don't need to worm at that stage FECs are relatively cheap and will probably enable you to use less wormer and reduce your chance of developing resistance. (NB: FECs don't help give an indication of the levels of *Nematodirus Battus* infestations)
- Use accurate weights, equipment and technique when dosing animals
- Quarantine all bought in stock – Treat with ZOLVIX + ML (Clear) injection (for scab) + fluke treatment. Then leave to stand on concrete for 24-48hrs (dispose of manure after this) and then place onto 'dirty' pasture (away from other stock) for 3 weeks
- Change wormer CLASS as often as is possible (so rotate through white, yellow, clear and orange drenches)
- We at Shropshire Farm Vets can help you tailor a Flock Health Plan, that is specific to your set-up and hopefully will help you achieve better returns – Your business is our business!

If you would like any further information about any of these things please contact the practice.

PORK SCRATCHINGS!

The pig industry is going through hard times as the prices of fatteners do not keep pace with escalating feed prices.

The numbers of breeding sows in this country and across Europe is falling rapidly as margins continue to increase in a negative way. This could lead to pork shortages in the not too distant future and hopefully a rebound in prices but in the meantime we would reiterate these BPEX points:

- Don't scrimp on feed quantity or quality, or vaccination programmes
- Don't hold pigs back causing stocking density and disease problems
- Keep culling rates up to maintain an efficient herd
- Consider reducing slaughter weight to reduce the cost of production through enhanced feed conversion ratio
- Ensure optimal diet specifications with your nutritionist
- Reduce wastage.

Disease prevention and treatment will play a part in reducing potential losses, the more live pigs that can be produced in the quickest possible time is important in profitability (or reducing losses). Therefore biosecurity is important for those buying in pigs to fatten, or to breed from, assessing the risks to reduce buying in and spreading disease. If you haven't got robust biosecurity speak to us at your next quarterly visit.

In the face of disease outbreaks, accurate diagnosis is important to instigate the correct treatment or prevention protocols, and to this end, post-mortems become a valuable tool in disease recognition either on farm or the VLA. We are fortunate to have the VLA so close at hand to us to use their knowledge and facilities.

Correct treatment, and/or vaccination are not necessarily cheap but should be viewed as an investment in health, not a cost. It may be that there are some management changes that will assist and ultimately reduce the need for treatment or vaccinations. One thing is certain, inappropriate treatment is far more expensive.