



SHROPSHIRE FARM NEWS

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MINSTERLEY SHOW 2012

Through the mud three of us pushed the van onto the showground. Luckily a light breeze and sunshine quickly dried the top half of the ground to save the day. It was great to see so many familiar faces and plenty of spectators around the ringside. Many congratulations to all those involved in a successful show.

CELL COUNTS COUNT THIS SUMMER

A mild and very wet summer has meant that a lot of dairy farms are struggling with mastitis cases and cell counts. Where cost reduction and margin are in the limelight, it is essential to reduce cell count to ensure that you are receiving the maximum price per litre that your contract allows. Reducing cell counts will also help reduce mastitis rate, ensuring that you also spend less on antibiotics and discarded milk.

As a practice we invest heavily in the most up to date professional training courses for our vets, computer software for tackling cell counts and mastitis, and on specific equipment needed for cell count investigations.

Please ask us about our cell count monitoring and mastitis services. We understand how frustrating and wasteful it is for you to struggle with high cell counts and mastitis outbreaks, and we are well practiced at successfully tackling these issues with our clients in an economical fashion. Lower cell counts mean more milk sold at a higher price and less spent on mastitis – don't struggle on alone – give us a call and let's get it sorted!

IN HOUSE SCC TESTING

A reminder that we have a DeLaval Somatic Cell Count machine at the practice. We can test individual or bulk milk samples for a result while you wait at £3 per sample.

VACCINATIONS

I know we go on about vaccinations all the time, but with good reason. Vaccination is either a response to a problem, or you are looking to keep a problem away or at bay. Either way, vaccines only work when they are given at the correct dose, at the correct time and administered in the correct manner to the correct animals, having been stored at the correct temperature, and shaken before use. Any abuse of this will at best result in a sub-optimal response and likely cost you £££. If there is ANY doubt about the use of vaccines, please phone for advice. Also, it would be worth checking if you are due anything now.

WORMERS

If you can give us a day's notice, and are prepared to pay for your cattle/sheep wormers at the time, we will give you a very good price. Wormers are frequently abused and best advice remains that you check faecal egg counts to identify a need for worming – you may not need to! Also, there is a new pour on combination (treats fluke & worms) product for cattle of moxidectin and triclabendazole available from Pfizer called Cydectin Triclamox. This can't go anywhere near dairy animals, but could be very useful for everyone else.

DID YOU KNOW?

Digital Dermatitis, all Ulcers and White Line Disease make up 75-80% of lameness cases in Shropshire.

The average cost of lameness is £330 per case - Loss of yield and potential for shortened productive life, labour, treatment.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT - THE FUTURE IS 'COLOSTRUM'!

Some of you may remember a DairyCo meeting at Walkmills Farm earlier in the year where Sam Ledley, an American calf health expert spoke very well about the importance of the first few hours of a calf's life. Below are the FIVE key points adapted from his talk:

1. Help the dam grow and deliver a healthy calf

- Provide a late gestation ration that avoids excessive conditioning
- Provide a close-up ration that encourages the dam to eat enough in the week leading up to calving
- Ensure you assist calvings in good time and with the right equipment. If you do assist make sure you use appropriate hygiene, antibiotics and anti-inflammatories

2. Help the dam produce top quality colostrum

- As above, ensure the dam is eating well in the week up to calving as this is when colostrum is made
- Consider vaccinating dams in the dry period to increase antibodies in colostrum
- Milk the dam as soon as possible after calving to collect maximum amount of colostrum

3. Protect the newborn calf from pathogens

- Keep the calving area as clean as you can
- If the calf gets muck on its' head or in its mouth during calving, rinse it off.
- Dip the navel as soon after birth as possible with at least 7% tincture of iodine (iodine in alcohol)

4. Harvest clean colostrum and keep it that way

- Make sure the udder is clean before collecting colostrum
- Milk colostrum into a clean, disinfected container and consider testing quality with a colostrometer
- Feed it to the calf or chill it immediately to stop any bacteria in it multiplying
- Once chilled, if you are not going to use it within 2 days, freeze it

5. Use colostrum to build newborn calf immunity

- 3 litres in 3 hours is ideal, split into two feeds if necessary
- After 6 hours of life the calf's ability to absorb antibodies from the colostrum is down to about 60%, and is near zero by 12 hours
- Colostrum isn't just crucial to calves because of its' antibodies, it also contains lots of energy and protein which helps promote calf health.

WORMING & FLUKE TREATMENT - FROM NOW UNTIL HOUSING

As we approach the back end of the grazing season, calves and yearlings are especially at risk from ostertagiasis(PGE), particularly this autumn following the wet summer.

Clinical signs are profuse diarrhoea and rapid weight loss, which can affect the whole group. There are many control options and these should be planned ahead of the grazing season as part of your annual herd health plan. Biosecurity is as much about risk assessment (what could they have, how likely are they to have it, how big a problem would it be etc) as about the physical things that are done to try and prevent disease spread.

Calves can be bled for pepsinogen levels to evaluate your worming strategy and potentially save you money. Blood pepsinogen is a direct indicator of gut damage caused by gut worms; high pepsinogen suggests you are under-worming which will affect growth rates over winter, whilst low or zero pepsinogen levels point to over-worming, leading to a greater risk of developing resistant worms the following season and unnecessary expenditure.



The recent wet weather also means that we can expect outbreaks of lungworm to continue through September. Grazing strategies alone are rarely successful in avoiding disease and calves should be vaccinated and or given a long acting anthelmintic treatment. If calves do not receive an adequate level of exposure to lungworm (or vaccine) during their first grazing season, they will not develop a strong immunity. This therefore leaves them (in subsequent



seasons) at risk of being clinically affected by the disease. So far this season we have already seen a number of such cases in adult cattle which have not built up enough immunity through natural challenge. Remember, without prompt treatment, affected animals can suffer from reduced milk yield and even die.

This coming autumn and winter is likely to be a high risk fluke season, thanks to the June rainfall. If you have a history of fluke on your farm, or are concerned that you may do, contact us for advice with regard to faecal, blood or bulk milk sampling – all of which will help you decide if you need to treat for fluke or not.

- Dosing stock with a flukicide now (mid-summer) should reduce the amount of pasture contamination this autumn/winter. This will reduce the risk of animals being infected next spring
- Treating with a flukicide around housing (October) will prevent fluke developing, helping to maximise productivity over the winter
- Treatment with a flukicide 8 to 10 weeks post turnout (around May) should be incorporated into strategic worming regimes, as this reduces the chances of stock suffering

KILIMANJARO, THE ROOF OF AFRICA.

A brief account of my trek as promised. Kilimanjaro, the highest and standalone mountain in Africa and climbed without oxygen assistance at 5895 metres.

Leaving Heathrow early evening with a stopover at Addis Ababa, I arrived at Kilimanjaro airport the following day. I met up with the other four who were doing the trek with me. It turned out that one of them was the chief rugby correspondent of the Independent. Great, I can talk rugby for the next week!

A relaxing swim at our hotel, a beer, and a chat about the climb before dinner was to be our last luxuries for a week. The following morning saw us being taken by jeep to the start of our trek, along good roads to dirt tracks and finally treacherous tracks through forest, where we met up with our porters and started climbing from 1800 metres. Pole, pole (slow, slow) was the order of the day to get used to diminishing oxygen, and slippery paths, being observed by the odd monkey. On route we were passed by locals carrying AK rifles, to shoot marauding buffaloes if they enter the camp. First camp was reached at 2780 metres, tents already pitched by the porters, and our first taste of the wonderful food that was to be prepared for us over the next few days. Darkness comes early in Africa, and

the temperature drops rapidly so by 8 we had usually retired to our sleeping bags by necessity to keep warm. I found sleep impossible.

Over the following days we climbed steadily, out of the rainforest onto moorland and heathland and our first view of Kili. We would walk to the next camp, rest and then usually go up another couple of hours and down to adjust to the altitude. The scenery had changed to volcanic desert, laval screes, frozen streams from melting glaciers and sparse vegetation. The Barranco wall offered a challenge, a 1000ft rock wall we had to haul ourselves up – no mention of that in the brochure!

On day 7 at midnight we set off on our summit climb. From 4640 up to 5895m, in sub-zero temperatures, the hardest six and a half hours I had ever endured. Reaching the summit at sunrise I was too exhausted to take in what I had achieved, glaciers, snowfields and Uhuru peak. Descent was rapid though hard on the joints. It was only the following day sitting on the lawn in a bar with a beer that I was able to look up at the peak, and think "I DID IT".

Along flight back, including a bomb scare at Addis Ababa and I was back to a cold wet day at Heathrow after the extremes of the mountain.

The risks, someone died on the mountain the day we summited, but a fantastic experience in fulfilling an ambition, met some wonderful people, great memories, and some cash for Severn Hospice.

Thank you to all who have shown an interest and supported me in my quest.



IS SHE THE 'PERFECT 3'?

Correctly managing the condition of your ewes at tupping will have a major impact on your lambing percentage and profits next spring.

Ewes which reach a high level of body condition at mating will have higher ovulation rates and hence higher lambing percentages. Those ewes in low body condition will take longer coming into oestrus and are more likely to have singles or be barren.

It is essential that this year's crop of lambs, are weaned in enough time to allow ewes to achieve their target condition at mating – 3 to 3.5 for lowland ewes and 2.5 to 3 for hill ewes. Remember; ewes should be fit and not fat.

To ensure that ewes are in the correct body condition at tupping it is necessary to assess condition scores 8 - 12 weeks earlier. For a ewe to gain half a condition score unit (5kg for a 75kg ewe) per month she requires the equivalent feeding for a ewe carrying twins two weeks off lambing!

Where ewes are leaner than ideal, flushing on good grazing for three weeks before the tups go out will compensate by boosting fertility. Concentrate feeding at grass is not needed if grass quality is high and sward height is maintained at 6cm. Lean ewes should then be allowed to gradually gain some body condition after tupping, to prevent problems with thin ewes at lambing. If ewes are thin at tupping (body condition score <2), at a time when they really should be in peak

condition, they should be culled rather than being bred from. Particularly as this lack of condition may suggest the presence of other problems (ie worm resistance) which you would be doing well to try and get rid of anyway.

After tupping, once you have achieved the correct condition and a high feed intake the next challenge is maximise embryo survival. Regular body condition scoring throughout pregnancy is vital to assess how well your ewes are having their nutritional requirements met. If you require further information on your ewe nutrition or are unsure how to condition score we are happy to help!



TOP TUP!

Do you know if your ram is working properly? The time for tupping is fast approaching and it is essential that your rams are working to full capacity.

Within a group of rams, fertility levels can vary significantly. If this is the case, the more fertile rams will have to work harder to cover for those that are less fertile. This invariably leads to a lower overall flock fertility. This is particularly true if one or more of the more dominant rams is sub-fertile, since they will suppress the mating ability of a subordinate ram which may well be more fertile.

Sub-fertile rams can have a dramatic effect on flock performance and profitability with high barren rates (target <5%), low lambing percentages and a longer lambing period.

At Shropshire Farm Vets we offer full ram breeding soundness examinations including physical exam and semen testing,

if required. This can all be done either on farm or at the practice.

Any valuable ram should pass a breeding soundness examination as a condition of purchase – after all, you wouldn't buy a car without at least a test drive!

Remember that Tups are part of the flock, and as such should always be included in any vaccination programme.

