



QUARTERLY DISEASE REPORT OCTOBER—DECEMBER 2021

A further three beef herds had **Johne's disease** diagnosed. Animals had a variety of clinical presentations including weight loss, scour and bottle jaw (submandibular oedema). Recent introduction of a Johne's disease monitoring programme by our external laboratory has made whole herd testing more affordable



and attractive to commercial herds.

A severe **bacterial bronchopneumonia** was the cause of death in a 4 year old dairy cow found dead one morning following a short period of malaise before developing severe respiratory signs.

On post-mortem examination approximately 75% of the available lung field was consolidated with extensive pleurisy throughout the chest cavity. Adult animals are usually resistant to pneumonia of this kind with infection often a result of immune-suppression e.g. metabolic disease (fatty liver and trace element deficiencies), concurrent disease (Johne's disease) or infectious diseases (BVD, IBR).

Neospora was the cause of abortion in two beef herds this autumn. Both were in animals which aborted around four to six months gestation. The parasite is spread by infected dog faeces after dogs have scavenged an infected afterbirth/foetus. Similar to Johne's a herd monitoring programme for Neospora is offered by our external laboratory making testing easily accessible and more affordable.

Please speak to our vets if you are interested in one of the monitoring schemes, they are a very attractive package to commercial suckler systems!

Sheep-



Parasitic Gastroenteritis was the cause of death in five animals across three farms. A post-mortem of one lamb revealed a high worm burden in the abomasum and small intestine. The group had been dosed with Zolvix two weeks previously yet a group worm egg count showed 5000epg indicating resistance. A small number of Zolvix resistance cases have been reported since the first case in 2018 however this is the first reported by our practice. (*Photo- chronic parasite damage in the abomasum of lamb, courtesy of Ben Strugnell, Farm Post-Mortems Ltd.*)

Trace element deficiencies continued to be a problem during this period with several flocks having Cobalt, Selenium and Copper deficiencies diagnosed. The clinical signs varied with some flocks having poor growth rates in lambs and others having pneumonia outbreaks despite being fully vaccinated.

FEED, FORAGE, FAKE NEWS?

Forage analysis, ration planning, metabolic profiling... these are all terms sheep farmers have heard about, mainly I'm sure, from your farm vets harping on about them! But what are the benefits?

The key in all farm animal production comes down to nutrition, good nutrition=good animals, that is fact. From colostrum to feeding in preparation for lambing, nutrition is vital for a good farming system and at the end of the day, **PROFIT!**

Poor nutrition will inevitably lead to poor performance and this can come in various ways such as increase in disease (twin lamb, hypocalcaemia, mastitis), poor lamb survival (low brown fat, poor colostrum), loss of productivity (skinny ewes, poor fertility, low milk yields, ill thrifty lambs), trace element problems (poor fertility, stillborn/weak lambs etc...), increased culling, the list goes on!

So, what do you as farmers need to be thinking about?

- ⇒ Scanning- Knowing the feed requirements of your ewes, is the building block to working out the nutrition and ration planning.
- ⇒ Body Condition Score- hands on palpation of the ewes, can ascertain the level of feed needed to hit target scores at tupping, lambing and weaning.
- ⇒ Forage analysis- as good as your nose is, unfortunately having a good sniff of some silage or hay can't count as an in depth analysis! The key is sending samples from centres of the bales, collected with a corer, off to the lab to ascertain how good the level of nutrients is.
- ⇒ The variability of forage means that the amount of concentrates you need to feed to make up the shortfall in energy or protein will vary from year to year. Therefore if you have good quality hay, you can save money by reducing the amount of concentrates you feed. BUT you can only know this with forage analysis.
- ⇒ Your vet can do all the hard work and do the maths to get the correct amount of feed to give but we do need the information beforehand! Forage analysis is available for £25 plus VAT.
- ⇒ Metabolic profiling- this is done by blood testing the ewe 3-4 weeks before lambing to 'ask the ewes' what they think of their diet and we can then alter accordingly. We sample a variety of singles, twins and triplets to give a good overview of the flock. We then check the ketone levels to see if there is any negative energy balance and albumin and urea for the protein levels, which is important for quality of colostrum, milk yield and therefore lamb growth rates.

If anyone is interested in any more information on this please contact your vet who will answer any questions you may have.

Ration planning and metabolic profiling packages are available. Please ring the office for more information.

So remember the 6Ps= "Proper planning prevents piss poor performance"!

AND THEN ON TO COW NUTRITION

“A common perception among producers is the higher rates of feeding during the dry period will result in heavier and larger calves at birth. However, research does not, in general, support this”

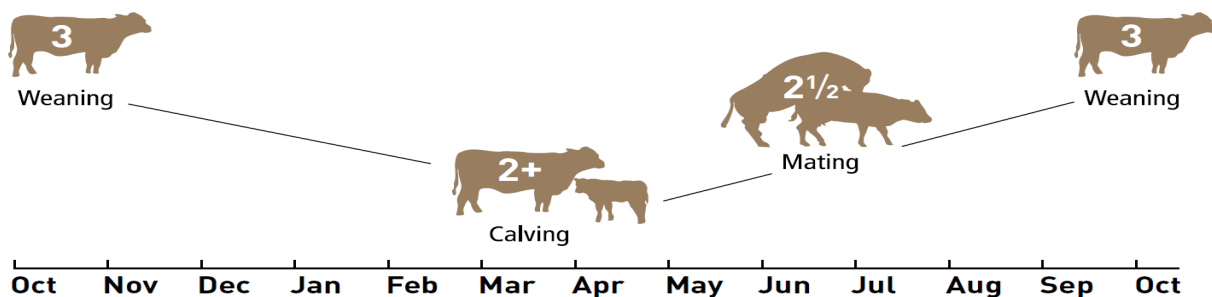
Drackley, J.K., 2011. The other side of the transition: Effects on colostrum and calf. In *Proc., Tri-State Dairy Nutrition Conference, Ohio*

In fact, over restricting feed pre-calving could lead to weaker calves, calving difficulties, poorer colostrum quality and quantity and delayed onset of oestrus. As above in the item on sheep nutrition, in cows pre-calving is all year-round planning too.

The main take home messages here are:

- ◆ **Body condition scoring** is key in avoiding dystocia, improving fertility and making optimum use of available forages. Target scores for a spring calving herd being:

Spring Calving



Source picture: 'Guide to improving suckler herd fertility' by QMS

- Group your cows on the basis of their BCS (ie thin, normal, fat) and adjust diet accordingly.
 - Cows in good BCS at the start of the winter can afford to lose some condition by restricted energy intake and with that save on winter feed costs. Loss of one body condition score is equal to a tonne of silage (for a 750 kg cow)
 - Overfat cows at calving cause dystocia due to fat deposition in the pelvic area. Whereas thin cows cause dystocia due to lack of energy.
 - Don't forget your first and second calvers are still growing and could therefore go in with the thin group to get fed that bit extra.
- ◆ Get **forage analysis** done, only by knowing the energy and protein levels in the feed will you be able to make sure your cows are fed the required amounts. Next to getting the right energy levels it is important to meet protein requirements for optimal rumen function and produce high yields of good quality colostrum.
Underfeeding pre-calving will affect calf health, overfeeding will lead to dystocia.
With analysis available we can make an accurate feeding plan
 - ◆ Make sure you know your trace element status and supplement if need is there.
- All in all sheep and cows don't differ that much when it comes to the principals of nutrition, the key is in planning ahead and getting the body condition right throughout the year!

MEDICINE HUB

We are all aware of the need to use antibiotics responsibly when treating our farm livestock – the right amount of the right product, given at the right time. Not only does this make sense in terms of clinical outcome (and for your pocket!), it will also contribute to reducing the development of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Whilst it is a legal requirement to record medicine use, and with many farm assurance schemes requiring an annual veterinary antibiotic review, it can still be difficult to know how your antibiotic use compares to other similar enterprises – are you at the top of the league, or is there room for improvement?

The Medicine Hub is a free, online tool that farmers can use to input and review medicine use for each of your enterprises – and over time, it will enable you to see trends in your own antibiotic usage as well as benchmarking against similar farms. Medicine Hub works with data from dairy, beef and sheep enterprises, and it's compatible with many farm management software packages, so there's no need to enter your medicine data twice. Cliffe Farm Vets are very supportive of this initiative, as not only will it allow us to better understand and advise on antibiotic use on your farm, but will also mean that we are contributing to a national dataset. This data can then be used to prove our antimicrobial stewardship credentials to consumers and competitors around the world – as is already being demonstrated in the pig, poultry and aquaculture sectors.

All farm level data held within Medicine Hub is safe and secure, and will be anonymised for benchmarking – meaning you can see your own data, but won't be able to see the records for the farm down the road. However, if you choose, you can give us 'third party access' rights, which means that we can help you to upload, edit and submit your data as we currently do for some dairy farms.

To find out more about Medicine Hub, please visit www.medicinehub.org.uk or contact the practice on 01273 473232