MBM Veterinary Group

DECEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

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2020 has been a very turbulent year for everyone and we at MBM Vets would like to thank you for your patience and understanding as we adapted to working in a number of new ways in a Covid world.

We would like to wish you all a very *Merry Christmas* and a *Happy New Year*.
Let's hope 2021 is a better year!
All the team at MBM

Gamaret

We have managed to source a limited amount of Tetra Delta equivalent milking cow tubes.
Please contact the surgery for more information.

Dairy Metabolic Profiling Explained - How It Can Benefit Your Herd? (Natasha McCappin)

What Is Metabolic Profiling?

Metabolic profiling is analysing blood samples from specific production groups around the transition period, with the aim of identifying energy/mineral imbalance issues, ideally before they become apparent on the farm. Blood alterations can highlight problems in specific groups and allow us to target our nutritional advice and prevent a herd going off-track.

Why Is It A Good Idea?

Dietary composition and nutritional management change regularly, with ration formulation, individual cow condition, feed barrier space, labour time, silage quality etc all impacting cow performance. Sometimes dietary issues are obvious e.g. a herd outbreak of acidosis. However often diet is unknowingly contributing to decreased performance and increased production disease. Metabolic profiling identifies issues in your highest risk groups, helping us to pinpoint where things are going wrong and make changes accordingly, to reduce common production diseases in your herd (Table 1).

Calving Difficulties	Retained Foetal Membranes/Metritis/Endometritis("Whites")
Displaced Stomachs	Ketosis (Excessive Negative Energy Balance)/Fatty Liver
Sara (Sub Acute Ruminal Acidosis)	Cystic Cows, Cyclicity Problems, Poor Heat Expression

Table 1 – production diseases commonly influenced by suboptimal nutrition

These diseases are not only costly in themselves, but then contribute to **poor yields, poor fertility, increased lameness and increased cull rates.**

When/Who/How

Blood sampling is the most accurate method of assessing if your herds nutritional needs are being met as it reflects the diet actually consumed versus the formulated diet (which may not be fed exactly). Testing is recommended at key times of year e.g. after a major dietary change, with 17 cows at key stages of lactation sampled:

- Seven cows in early lactation between 10-20 days calved
- Five cows in mid lactation between 80-120 days calved
- Five dry cows within 10 days of calving

Tests performed include:
Energy status - NEFA, BOHB, Glucose
Protein - UreaN, Albumin, Globulin
Minerals - Phosphate, Magnesium
Trace Elements - Copper, GSHPx (selenium)

The tests are run at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies as part of their Dairy Herd Health Planning Service (DHHPS). Please get in touch if you'd like to know more. Or further details and prices can be found at: https://www.ed.ac.uk/vet/services/farm-animal-services/dairy/blood-testing/dairy-tests

Calving Tips (Jennifer Hutchison)

Patience!

Premature intervention can disrupt the normal calving process, while delayed investigation may end with a dead calf (90% of calves dead post-calving, were shown to be alive at the onset of calving). Keep calving cows within easy reach of good handling facilities to allow prompt and stress-free examinations when required. Calving gates provide excellent restraint but are flexible if the cow goes down.

Useful markers for intervention:

- **Stage 1 of labour >6hours** (cow restless and isolated, appearance of the mucus plug)
- **Water bag been out for >1 hour** but no sign of calf
- Strong **abdominal contractions by the cow for >30minutes, but no progress**
- If the **cow starts pushing, but then stops for >30mins with no progress**
- **Signs of excessive fatigue in cow/swollen tongue in calf**

When correcting mal-presentations, be gentle, *clean* and use plenty of lube to reduce calf stress and the risk of post-calving infections in the dam.
Post-calving, check the cow for a 2nd/3rd calf and any vaginal tears or bleeding.

Stop if you are not making progress (max 10 minutes)

Can this calf be delivered naturally?

- When normally presented: 2 people pulling with reasonable (not excessive!) traction for <10 minutes should be able to extend the fetlocks (in forwards presentation) or the hocks (in backwards presentation) a hand's breadth beyond the vulva.
- **If no progress is made, the calf's legs start to cross or both legs can't be extended equally,** this indicates the calf's shoulders/hips are too big for the pelvis. **Seek veterinary assistance immediately** and **avoid** continued manipulation – this reduces oxygen delivery and increases calf stress (often indicated by increased calf movements in-utero).

Colostrum supplementation

The suck reflex at birth has a strong correlation with the likelihood of colostrum ingestion.

- 78% of calves with no assistance at calving, but a poor suck reflex, failed to ingest colostrum.

Check suck reflex at birth and feed colostrum (3L within 3 hours) when a poor suck reflex is present. Always supplement calves given an assisted delivery.

A Place for Scour Vaccination (Tom Crawshaw)

Calf scour is the most common cause of disease and death in calves during the pre-weaning period. A calf scour outbreak can be an extremely time-consuming, frustrating, and costly event. The long-term impacts on performance and profitability should be considered when analysing the total cost of scour on your farm.

The key to minimising losses is to keep infection pressure low and maximise calf resilience. Scour can be due to both infectious (commonly rotavirus, coronavirus and cryptosporidium) and non-infectious (nutritional) causes.

Prevention

- **Colostrum** – a calf should receive 10% of their bodyweight in the first 6 hours of life. If the delivery was difficult the dam should be milked, and calf fed with an oesophageal feeder as it will be too acidotic to suckle appropriately
- **Hygiene** – calves are born without antibodies. It is vital they are born into a clean area. Calving pens should be clean, dry, and individual as this is where they are likely to pick up infection
- **Nutrition** – dams should receive adequate protein, energy, and micronutrient nutrition during pregnancy to optimise colostrum quality and calf vigour
- **Vaccination** - calves are most at risk from infectious scour in the first 3-4 weeks of life and need a continuous source of protection through the passive transfer of antibodies in the colostrum. On many units, normal colostrum may not provide enough antibodies. Using a single shot vaccination 12-3 weeks before calving boosts colostrum quality, allowing high levels of antibodies against rotavirus, coronavirus and E.coli K99 to be fed in early life.

Please get in touch with us if you think calf scour vaccination would improve the health of your calves.