



### Farm Medicines Course (Red Tractor Approved)

We are going to run another one of these following the break due to Covid. Any livestock farmer with Red Tractor Farm Assurance needs to have completed an approved Medicines Course within the 3-years preceding their Assurance visit.

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021. 12 midday to 14.30 @ Messrs Brown, Fortacres Farm, Gatehead KA2 9AY. Lunch provided. Attendance certificate will be issued  
Cost: £50 per head exc. VAT. Limited to maximum of 10 attendees.

**Please contact the office on 01563 522701 to reserve a place.**

### Environmental Mastitis in Dairy Cows

This is caused by bacteria in the cow's environment, usually from cows faeces. Commonly the bacteria *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) and *Streptococcus uberis* are involved. *E. coli* can cause severe mastitis resulting in the loss of the quarter or even the cow.

However, more commonly *E. coli* causes mild clinical mastitis or subclinical mastitis (the milk, quarter and cow appear to be normal but the cow's cell count goes up temporarily). Warm summers often cause an increase in cases. The higher the level of faecal contamination of the cows teats the higher the risk of mastitis. Infection can occur during lactation but also in the dry period or calving pen. If you have a high number of cases in the first 30 days in milk the infection is most likely mainly occurring in the dry period or the calving pen.



The risk of environmental mastitis is proportional to how dirty the flanks, legs, tail and teats of the cow look. If your cows are dirty, they are more likely to get mastitis and environmental hygiene needs to be addressed. A brief summary of the **main** factors affecting teat hygiene and the risk of environmental mastitis is shown in the box.

1. Clean dry bed – not overstocked, well drained base, sufficient bedding renewed daily, well ventilated building (reduced humidity). Straw yards should be cleaned out frequently, preferably fortnightly.
2. Avoid pooling of slurry in the passages or collecting area which can be splashed onto cows teats.
  3. A poor cow hygiene score suggests 1. and 2. above need to be looked at.
4. Good pre-milking teat preparation resulting in a clean, dry teat for milking; including the end of the teat. Pre-milking teat disinfection can help provided a **licensed (efficacy and safety data has been scrutinised and approved by the veterinary medicines directorate) pre-milking teat dip is used**. Many pre-milking products in use are not licensed dips. Check if your pre-milking product is licensed here <https://www.gov.uk/check-animal-medicine-licensed>
5. Correctly functioning milking machine. Vacuum fluctuations or worn liners cause reverse flow of milk (teat end impacts) which can enter the teat and introduce environmental infection into the udder. You can often, but not always, tell if you have a problem if you hear excessive episodes of air entering the teat cups during milking.
6. The vast majority of dairy herds in Scotland will benefit significantly from using a teat sealant at dry-off to prevent new infections during the dry period and reduce environmental mastitis cases.
7. Calving pens: calves being left on the cow for more than 6 hours or cross suckling cows increases the risk of mastitis.
8. There are other factors not listed here.

## Weaning Management of the Spring Born Suckler Calf

Abrupt weaning is a traumatic event for the cow and suckled calf. Weaning breaks the maternal – offspring bond and removes milk from the calf's diet. It is estimated that the diet of a 275kg spring born suckled calf preweaning consists of ~1.2 kgs dry matter (DM)/ day milk and ~5.8 kgs DM/ day forage. Naturally, weaning would be introduced gradually and later than generally practised by suckler herds. Separation stress is often compounded by other husbandry practices occurring at the same time i.e. diet and environment changes, and transport/ selling. This stress results in reduced liveweight gains and increased disease susceptibility. It is far better, and profitable, to avoid all these stressors happening at once.

Separation anxiety can be reduced by removing the COWS from the CALVES. This can either be achieved via a good sturdy electrified fence line, pre-housing (fence line weaning), for more than 4 days or by housing cows and calves together and using a creep barrier. Keeping calves in a steady environment will ensure calves are familiar with the location of food and water. Sound and smell contact between dam and calf is important for reassurance, for both sides, and will prevent reductions in feed intakes. Anti-suckling devices (QuietWean™) can be useful as they prevent suckling but still allow feeding and physical interaction with the dam. They are reusable and should be applied for 4 – 7 days.



Milk provides a high-quality protein source to the suckled calf. Transitioning directly onto a post weaning diet of grass silage and grain will result in a dramatic reduction in dietary protein. Creep feeding will increase weaning weights and will help the calf adjust to the postweaning diet. A diet containing ~18% good quality protein has been suggested for the first month post weaning. This should be based on good quality silage (multiple cut system) and supplemented with a high-quality protein source i.e. NovaPro/ UltraPro, soya, beans, rape meal etc. The protein content of the diet can then fall to 15-16% for the next 2-3 months; however, providing a good quality protein rich diet post weaning will minimise growth checks and disease incidence. Trace element supplementation may or may not be required post weaning. Bloods can be collected and analysed ~ 6 weeks post weaning to ensure a true reflection of the post weaning diet.

Housing environment is vital for the weaned calf. High air quality can be achieved by avoiding dusty feeds and bedding (bedding machines) and ensuring good ventilation. Naturally ventilated buildings are ventilated by the wind most of the time. Wind speeds more than 1m/s will drive the air through gaps in the sidewalls, meaning stale air leaves the building on the opposite side. The target for most cattle buildings is to ensure a design that maximises ventilation potential on a still day. This is possible and relies on ventilation via the stack effect. Heat generated by the livestock in the building warms the air, which rises, to be replaced by fresh air coming in at a lower level through the eaves. This is only possible with sufficient air outlets. At MBM Vets we can perform a housing audit for you assessing inlets and outlets if required. Ventilation, and bedding material, will also help reduce shed humidity. A well-ventilated shed will not only help increase calf comfort but will reduce disease incidence and bedding costs.

Housing also coincides with disease challenges to the weaned suckled calf. These are typically; gastrointestinal worm, lungworm, fluke, lice and viral/ bacterial pneumonia. Protocols should be in place in your health plan to help minimise this risk.



Disease outbreaks always result from a breakdown between infection pressure and calf immunity. Reducing infection pressure can be achieved by a stable uniform calf group and by providing a good housed environment for the calf. Calf immunity to disease can be increased via pre-housing/ weaning vaccination, decreased housing/ weaning stress (clipping backs will help reduce sweating) and reduced post housing/ weaning nutritional stress.

Please get in touch if you would like to discuss your weaning management further.

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