

farm news

Safe handling at TB tests

Sue Ivings



As we all know, safety should always be top priority when handling cattle.

Using well designed and constructed handling facilities, suitable for the size and temperament of cattle to be tested, will help avoid unnecessary stress for you and your cattle at TB testing times.

Here are some tips and guidelines:

- A collecting pen with plenty of room will help cattle enter the race easily. Races should ideally have a funnel end.
- High sides can help prevent animals from jumping out and making a bid for freedom.
- A race that curves works well, but try to avoid tight corners/turns.
- Positioning the crush in a well-lit area helps the animal "see the light at the end of the tunnel" and move towards it.
- Once in the crush the animal should be well positioned so that work can be carried out safely around it. It's a good idea to secure the crush to the ground or to a vehicle if it's mobile.
- Having a locking front gate and a self-locking yoke will allow you to hold the



animal's head firmly whilst a rump rail/bar will minimise forward and backward movement.

- Hinged or sliding doors that open easily with little noise and are operated from the working side of the race will help contain the leading animal while it waits for its turn.
- Avoid using flimsy makeshift gates and hurdles. Using sticks and prods to strike animals will only cause agitation and

increase the risk of injury. Flags can work very well for gently directing cattle.

- Most importantly, maintenance should be carried out on a regular basis and, as with all equipment, staff should be familiar with how it all works. The best handling system in the world is no use if there is nobody fit, able and adequately trained on how to use it!

Lameness in calves after handling

Carolyn Baguley



We'd like to draw your attention to a recent outbreak of lameness in a group of 100 nine-month-old beef calves in Scotland that were handled through a crush three times

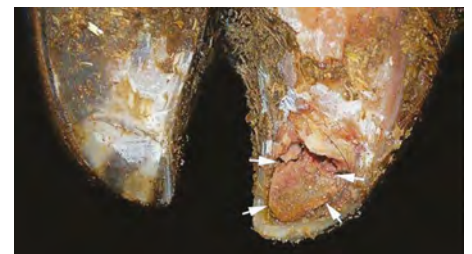
soon after housing for worming and vaccinations. Over the next few weeks, 30 calves developed lameness and coronary band swellings, and were diagnosed with toe tip necrosis syndrome (TTNS).

TTNS occurs when white line damage at the toe allows infection to track into the hoof capsule and pedal bone. The pedal bone becomes infected and dies off. TTNS can be caused by repeated trauma or wear when calves (especially wild ones!) are moved off pasture and onto concrete yards or hard floors, leading to impact damage.

The risk of TTNS can be reduced by:

1. Ensuring that calves coming off pasture and requiring multiple handlings have minimal standing time on concrete/rough surfaces.
2. Ensuring that any surfaces they do stand on (concrete, crush floors, trailer floors) are well padded by rubber, straw etc.

We can all learn from this incident – calves' hooves are delicate structures and can be permanently damaged by just a few rough handlings. Look after them!



White line separation at the toe, caused by repeated trauma, can lead to severe pedal bone necrosis and infection, pedal bone fracture and septic arthritis of the coffin joint. This picture shows toe tip necrosis syndrome in a calf. Part of the sole has been removed to show the necrotic pedal bone (arrows).

Blindness in Cattle

Vicky Rhodes BVSc MRCVS



Blindness is fairly uncommon in cattle, but it can occur for several reasons.

Blind cattle may be seen circling, knocking into objects and have no menace response (i.e. they won't blink when a hand is waved in front of their eye). Some of the most common causes are described below:

Vitamin A deficiency

Normally seen in young beef cattle who are not being fed grass or other green foods, or who are born to cows on a poor, dry pasture. This leads to a dietary deficiency of the vitamin A precursor, carotene. Vitamin A is needed to regenerate retinal tissue and for normal growth of the cranial bones in the head. Deficiency in older animals can cause retinal dysfunction, and in younger animals the bone around the optic nerve fails to develop properly, leading to physical constriction of the optic nerve and subsequent blindness.

The first signs of vitamin A deficiency before complete blindness develops can include poor ability to adapt to bright light and night blindness.

Listeriosis

The typical one-sided facial paralysis and circling caused by listerial encephalitis can also be accompanied by blindness in one (or occasionally both) eyes. Listerial infection of just the eye itself causes silage eye, and animals are often blind on the affected side.

Lead poisoning

Lead paint, batteries and pipes are all possible sources of lead on farm, and can be ingested by curious

animals. Affected animals will initially salivate and then become ataxic and blind. Convulsions, coma and death may follow. Some animals will show colic signs due to the lead irritating the alimentary mucosa. Lead poisoning can be diagnosed by measuring lead concentrations in blood samples.

Cerebrocortical necrosis CCN

Vitamin B1 is destroyed in the rumen by the microbial enzyme thiaminase, produced by *Bacillus* spp. and *Clostridium sporogenes*, leading to a deficiency. These bacteria grow quickly when animals are fed a high concentrate diet or one containing high ammonium sulphate levels, commonly used to prevent bladder stones. CCN is most frequently seen in 3-6 month old calves and can be seen in individuals or groups.

Calves will appear to be blind. Incoordination, head pressing and frothy salivation is followed by recumbency and then death. These cases must be treated as soon as possible – a full recovery is possible if treatment is begun quickly enough.

Closantel toxicity

Closantel has a narrow safety margin compared to other drugs, therefore toxicity is more likely to occur. Blindness is a consistent clinical symptom. To diagnose toxicity, brain histopathology is needed to check for concentration levels. It is important to accurately weigh animals before treating with closantel to dose as accurately as possible, and any combination products should be thoroughly mixed.

If you have any concerns about eye conditions or blindness in your cattle, please do not hesitate to call the surgery.

Preparing for housing

Emily Sycamore BVetMed MRCVS



Every year time seems to go faster and before you know it autumn (and the prospect of winter housing) has crept up on you.

Planning ahead now can save you time and money in the long run, so it is well worth considering the points below.

Check over your buildings. Are there leaks in the roof creating overly wet bedding? Are all the water troughs clean and fully functional? Is there enough space in the shed to house the number and size of cattle that you intend to use it for? Was the shed properly cleaned out and disinfected at the end of the last housing period?

All of these factors are vital to ensure that your cattle remain fit and healthy over winter.

It is difficult to assess the ventilation requirements of a building before it has animals in it, especially if you intend to use smoke bombs to look at air flow, but measurements of the building can be taken and a recommendation of stocking density made to allow optimal ventilation. If you are interested in an assessment of your buildings and ventilation, please contact us for more details.

Make sure you have any vaccines and/or wormers in stock that you may wish to administer at housing. Being prepared and only handling the cattle once as you bring them in will save you time and save the animals stress!

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