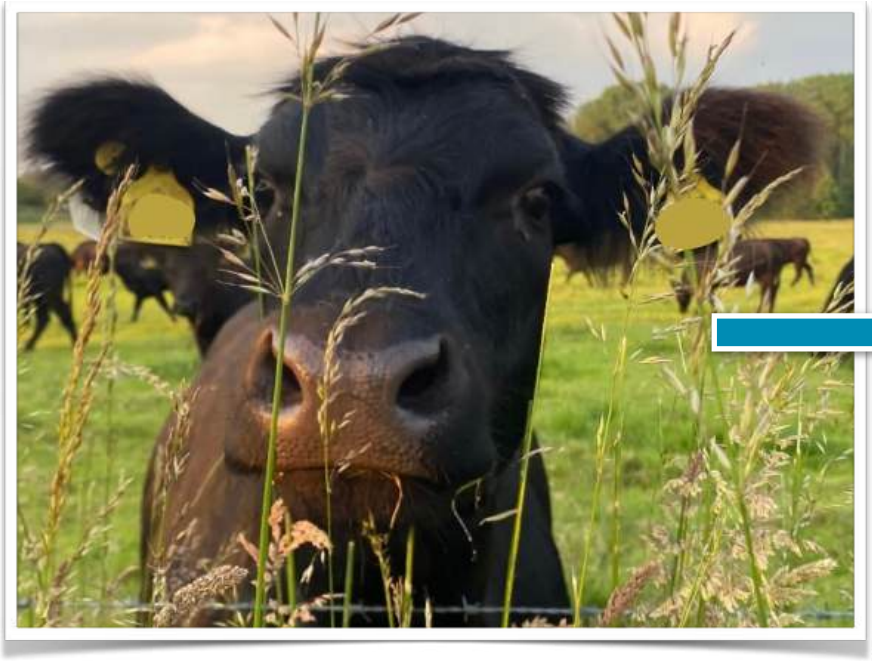
WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER



Preparing Cattle for Housing – Avoiding Problems Before They Start

As we move into October, most herds are coming off grass and back into sheds. The change from pasture to housing is a high-risk time for disease – but with a bit of planning, you can reduce the risk of the most common problems.

1. Parasite Treatments

Worms & Fluke: Cattle often pick up a parasite burden at grass, and if left untreated these can cause poor body condition scores, diarrhoea and weight loss once indoors. Now is a good time to test for worm eggs in faecal samples and fluke eggs can be detected in faeces 8-12 weeks following the start of housing. If possible, weigh stock to dose correctly and reduce resistance risks. Then conduct a faecal egg count reduction test 10-14days after treatment by bringing us another pooled sample from each treated group.

2. Pneumonia Prevention

Housing brings youngstock into close contact with stale air, dust, and sudden changes in temperature.

These stressors can set calves up for respiratory problems and pneumonia outbreaks.

- Ventilation: Check airflow, aiming for fresh air in and stale air out, without creating disadvantageous draughts.
- Stocking density: Avoid overcrowding pens as this can increase the risk of all contagious diseases and causes stress and competition which can contribute to illness.
- Vaccines: If pneumonia vaccines are part of your plan, make sure doses are given in good time before housing.

3. Nutrition & Transition

Silage Analysis: Get forage tested so rations can be balanced - it's cheaper to adjust early than chase growth later.

Minerals: Ensure youngstock and in-calf cows are receiving the right trace elements.

Introduce concentrates gradually to avoid acidosis or digestive upsets.

4. Lameness Checks

Housing season often exposes foot problems. Monitoring for lameness at the point of housing and throughout the housing.

- Foot bath routines should be in place before problems flare not only in response to disease or lameness.
- Trim only where needed - don't over-trim.
- Keep passages clean and scrape frequently.

5. Safety & Facilities

Prior to housing is the perfect time to check handling systems, lighting, and gates before they are needed. Efficient and secure restraint is essential for both stock and people. Good lighting also helps early disease spotting.

Key Takeaway: Housing is not just a change of postcode for cattle – it's a stress point that needs careful management. A few simple steps now can mean healthier, more productive stock all winter. Please call us on 01328 864444 if you would like help or advice during the transition to housing.