

Welcome back Hollie and hello Morgan!

This month sees the return of Hollie after her maternity leave with her son Jasper. She has certainly made the most of her time off exploring with her daughter Alex and Jasper in tow but she is very much looking forward to coming back and reconnecting with all of our clients. She will be back in work from the 14th August on her usual days of Monday, Thursday and Friday.



Morgan

Morgan recently qualified from the University of Glasgow. Originally from the United States, she completed a master's degree in ruminant nutrition prior to pursuing veterinary medicine. Morgan enjoys all aspects of farm animal practice, but is keen to utilize her cattle nutrition background along with previous small ruminant experience. Outside of work, she plays competitive roller derby and enjoys exploring the countryside with her two beagle mixes.



Medicines stock changes

Loxicom is the new version of Metacam/meloxicam that we will be stocking from now on. We have made this change to keep prices as low as possible for our clients. The withdrawal periods, dose rate and route of administration all remain the same.

Parasites warning

Hopefully with the arrival of August we may see some more summery weather again but with that will come more and more issues with parasites. Haemonchus is one of the worms that we see a lot of in the warmer weather. It is usually identified by weak and fading lambs although they will not always be scouring. It can affect cattle, alpacas and goats as well so regular worm egg counts are a great way to identify it before it causes too many issues.

Lungworm will also become more prevalent as the grazing season advances. If your cattle are not vaccinated (Huskvac), it is an important condition to consider if you hear coughing in the fields. Give us a call if you want to discuss suspected cases.

New competitive pricing for parasite treatments

After extensive negotiation at a group level, we are now able to access very competitively priced POM-VPS products (wormers, flukicides and fly products etc.). Traditionally vets were not considered for sourcing these products due to a perception that the prices were higher. In some cases, this was true as we could not benefit from the same wholesaler discounts afforded to the merchants by their bulk purchasing.

We are now pleased to say that prices have been agreed which now allow us to offer very competitive rates. Where we do not have the exact brand you ask for, we will have access to a direct equivalent. For anything we do not have on the shelf, we can have it in the practice the next morning, as is the case for most other medicines. Please do not hesitate to ask us for a quote for a product.

Body condition scoring

Individual quarterly body condition scoring of any animal regardless of species or purpose is a great way to monitor your herd/flock. By following changes throughout the year adjustments can be made based on upcoming production stage or lifestyle. Critically we do not want any animals that are outliers nor do we want large swings in scores. We use a scale of 1-5 to assess body condition score and are more than happy to assist you in performing this if you would like to get it implemented on your holding. It is important to always have the same person scoring to allow for direct comparisons to be made between scores. Below are some top tips for timings based on the type of unit you have.

Spring block calving herds

The next couple of months are a really good time to assess what the body condition status of your herd is. Taking note of individual scores now allows you to identify any cows that are over or under conditioned and gives you time to correct it prior to drying off. During the run up to calving we want to keep condition as stable as possible as this will prevent a variety of transition issues at calving and prevent oversized calves. Ideally it is a good idea to perform individual body condition scoring quarterly to assess change throughout the year and at critical time periods – ie service, calving, mid-lactation and dry-off. The aim for this time of year in suckler herds is around 2-2.5 and in dairy herds it is around 2.5-3.

Autumn block calving herds

As we approach calving it is important to note the condition of the cows at this stage to allow for planning for service and peak yield. The aim for this time of year in suckler herds is around 3 whereas in dairy herds we are aiming for around 2.5-3.

Sheep

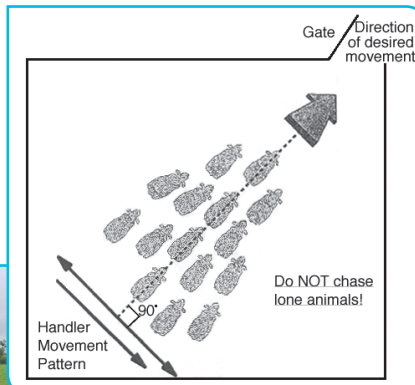
As we approach tupping for some flocks it is critical the sheep are in the best possible condition to allow for maximum fertility. The targets for sheep are based on elevation level of the land and should be for this time of year: 3.5 for lowland, 3 for upland, 2.5 for hill.

Pet alpacas, goats and sheep

As pet animals go through fewer stresses on their bodies and have a less changeable lifestyle they have a tendency to veer towards over rather than underweight. Year round we would like to keep them in body condition 2.5-3.5, heading into winter in slightly better condition and staying lean over the warmer weather. Especially with large fleeces it can be tricky to assess body condition so it is vitally important to use a hands-on approach. Our vets can help to explain how to do it and there are some great resources we can pass on as well.

Cattle handling

Working with cattle will always involve some risk, but sensible health and safety is about managing risks, not eliminating them. That is why every farm that handles cattle should have a decent handling system. By improving cattle handling it rewards for better returns.

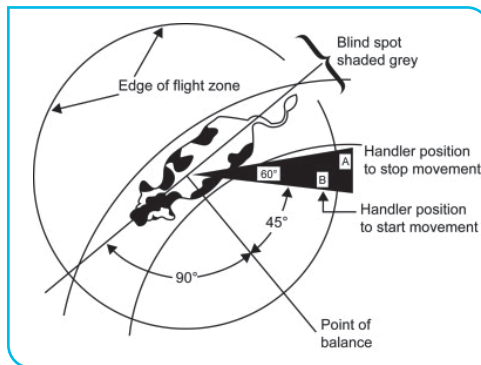


Flight and Pressure Zones

Adopting a quiet and calm environment, avoiding large gestures and minimising unnecessary physical contact, are all ways to shift a potentially stressful environment into a calm and familiar one. As herd animals, cattle work best in groups, but the size of the group relative to the space is important.

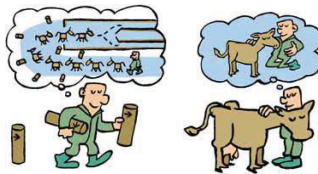
One of the main components to cattle movement is pressure.

As prey and herd animals, cattle respond to pressure and movement towards them leading to the flight zone theory. Cattle have a flight zone (their personal space), which is surrounded by a pressure zone. This is the area they are aware of. To put this into perspective, tame animals will have a very narrow flight zone; cattle not often handled will have a much larger flight zone. When working with these techniques correctly, cattle will turn and face you once you have approached the pressure zone. When the flight zone is then entered by the handler, the cattle will turn away. Once cattle movement is achieved in the desired direction, the pressure can then be released. By rewarding this movement, the handler can be removed from the flight zone, therefore this will slow their movement and keep them calm.



Strategies for improved handling

- Bright colours removed from pens
- Solid level flooring with plenty of grip
- Shadowy and dark areas removed
- Circular and curved layouts
- Solid sides on a race
- Adequate training to handlers



Interesting cow facts

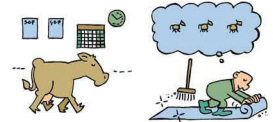
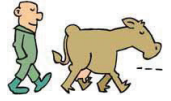
- Cows have a larger flight zone when approaching novel new things compared with familiar things.
- As cow's eyes are on the side of their head, they can see 300 degrees around themselves, but can't see directly behind.
- Cows prefer moving up hill.
- Cows prefer to keep a predator/stockperson on their left. The left eye links to the

right-hand side of the brain which is associated with fear and flight.

- Cows have a very good sense of smell, take account of the prevailing wind when planning facilities.
- Cows hearing is more acute than humans and have a wider range than humans.

What do cows dislike?

- Slippery surfaces
- Uncertainty
- Stepping down: they would rather step up than down.
- Backing up - they can't see behind them.
- Blind corners - they prefer to see where they are going.
- Humans shouting - they prefer silence.
- Restricted space - this results in more "waiting cows" who are neither eating, drinking, or lying down.



Consistency and Calmness

A few key components to cattle handling are consistency and repetition, these are very important to cattle. It is proven that they do best when following a routine. Consistency is an area that we can control, for example having the same people work with the cattle, following the same routine when rounding them up and using the same holding area. Creating a positive experience for cattle whilst being handled will dramatically reduce stress in this area. Cattle experience their world through sight and sound, by adopting a quieter and calmer manner whilst handling and making sure to avoid any unnecessary contact or loud noises, you will continue to minimise a potentially stressful situation.

Psychological and Behavioural Changes

The overall impact on cattle because of increased stress levels due to poor handling can result in:

- Reduced eating bouts
- Increased lameness due to poor cow flow
- Reduced resting time
- Increased cortisol and decreased immune function
- Decreased oxytocin and poor milk let down or slow milking

If low stress handling techniques are utilised, cattle should be more compliant when being handled. The stress of crowding cattle in tight spaces can contribute to disease and injury, but by using low stress handling methods and efficient cattle movement, we can reduce the stress that they experience during these times of being handled. The common misconception is that slowing things down to incorporate low-stress handling techniques seems inefficient. However if you were to consider the time and cost associated with chasing over-excited cattle, having to repeat steps, catching misplaced stock, and addressing injuries it is in fact more worthwhile to start slow and stress free in order to benefit in the long run. Good stockmanship will be rewarded with happier cows, in some cases more milk, a much more pleasurable workplace and fewer sick cows.

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