

Fly control

Fly season is well and truly upon us and properly controlling them helps prevent conditions like August bag/ Summer mastitis and Infectious Bovine Keratoconjunctivitis (aka. New Forest or Pink Eye). Both can be spread between cattle by flies and are much better prevented than trying to clear up afterwards. Alongside mechanical controls such as fly-tapes in the parlour, we can use topical products applied to the animal themselves to repel flies and reduce the irritation experienced by the animals. The primary product used in cattle both suckler and dairy is one containing deltamethrin, such as Spotinor. This carries a 17day meat withdrawal and zero milk withdrawal. Give the office a ring if you would like to discuss fly control in your herd.



Milksure Courses

We continue to offer Milksure training for those of you who have not undertaken the course, or those who need to conduct a refresher. If you fall into either of these 2 groups, let us know so we can arrange the training. We also continue to offer medicine courses for dairy, beef or sheep as required, so if you are interested, please ask any of the vets or give the office a ring.

MilkSure✓

Sheep Abortion Vaccines

Yes – it really is time to start thinking about abortion vaccines before the tups go out this autumn. We - and every other farm vet practice - experience a real rush on the abortion vaccines in late summer, especially September. This has in previous lead to supply issues with the Toxoplasma vaccine in particular as it is a complex

vaccine to produce and is manufactured to order. We would encourage anyone who is able to, to order their vaccine early and ideally give it sooner rather than later. Both vaccines can be given up to 4 months prior to mating, but not within 4 weeks of the tups going out. Give Katie a ring at Holly Tree to order your vaccines.



**DON'T LET YOURSELF
BE VULNERABLE....
VACCINATE AGAINST
ENZOOTIC ABORTION**



CHECS TB Entry Level Membership

Aiming to keep a herd free of deadly diseases is important for both welfare and economic reasons and CHECS is an excellent tool to help farmers to achieve this.

CHECS is a certification body that guarantees that the health schemes used by cattle farmers to control infectious diseases comply with the same standards.

There are two CHECS licensed cattle health schemes focused on protecting herds from TB. The most exhaustive one is the TB Herd Accreditation, that was launched in 2016. The requirements for this accreditation can be challenging for some farmers and may not suit all businesses.

That is why CHECS and the British Cattle Veterinary Association (BVCA) are launching the TB Entry Level Membership in order to make the scheme more flexible and accessible to everyone. This scheme will allow farmers to adopt basic biosecurity measures and engage with their vets in creating a herd plan adapted to the reality of their farms.

If you want to get involved and would like more information about the different schemes just visit the CHECS website: <https://checs.co.uk>

Benchmarking Intra-mammary Antibiotic Tube Usage

Some of you will remember that we used to benchmark mastitis tube usage across our dairy clients, and this is something we are looking at introducing again. Over the next couple of months, Yasmine will be collating practice data on antibiotic milking tube use (tubes used to treat mastitis) on our dairy farms, using sales records of milking tubes.

By next month, we will have a graph to show you, benchmarking all our dairy clients so you can see whether you use more or less tubes/100 cows than anyone else. All the farm names will be removed, so we'll mark on which one is yours, but you won't know who anyone else is!

By reviewing this data each month and sharing the findings with our dairy farmers, we hope to be able to establish what patterns of mastitis occurrence there are on individual farms, and give you the opportunity to see how what happens on your farm compares to others. Going forward, (Covid allowing), we'd love to use this starting point to run an on-farm meeting, when we can answer your mastitis questions and perhaps some of those who are using the least tubes might be willing to share the secrets of their success!



Getting a grip on your lambing block

Lambing time is no doubt a busy time of year, but it doesn't need to go on for months. A good target is to aim for over 90% of ewes to be in lamb in the first cycle, meaning the same figure should lamb in the first 17 days (give or take a few days for those that cross their legs and hold on!).

One of the most common causes of poor conception rates is inadequate ram fertility. A thorough pre-breeding MOT can help detect issues with rams. These checks should be conducted 10 weeks prior to turning out, allowing plenty of time to replace or treat, depending on the issue.

AHDB

BETTER RETURNS

Ram MOT

Assess your rams

Toes

Check locomotion, legs and feet

Teeth

Check for under or overshot jaw, gaps and molar abscesses

Testicles

Measure and check firmness (like a flexed bicep) with no lumps or bumps

Tone

Aim for body condition between 3.5–4.0 (spine well covered)

Treat

Check vaccinations are up-to-date (clostridia, pasteurella), parasites, lameness, shearing?

Consult your vet for a thorough examination



Semen testing offers a further opportunity to assess ram fertility, though can be difficult to interpret if testing too far ahead of the breeding season. We can offer on-farm semen testing, with our small portable probe and microscope. Speak to Matt or Hollie about testing your tups this summer/autumn before they get to work – particularly if this year's lambing seems to have dragged on a bit!



Moving on to the ewes – there are a few things we can do to advance the breeding season and ensure that ewes are cycling when the tups go out. The 'Ram Effect' can advance the breeding season by up to 2 weeks if used properly, but also tightens the lambing block by inducing ewes which may have been stragglers with normal management. The biggest factor for success in using the ram effect is separation of the ewes from any males (lambs or adults) for a minimum of 6 weeks before the intended mating date. This is separation by sight, sound and smell – which pretty much translates to being at least a mile apart – it's worth thinking even about your neighbours' tups!

The ewes are then exposed to a 'Teaser' or put within sight/sound/smell of an entire male (not in the same field or that defeats the object!) 2 weeks prior to your mating date, inducing a silent heat. Teasers are removed 14 days after introduction and replaced with entire tups. Ewes mostly cycle at around 18 and 26 days after the teaser was introduced (4 and 12 days after putting the 'real' tups out) leading to two peaks in lambing around a week apart. Any ewes not conceiving will enter normal oestrus timing, coming into season again 17 days later.

When using Teasers, it is important not to over work them, as they need to go around the ewes to get maximum benefit. We would recommend using 1 teaser per 100 ewes. It is also important to note that tightening the lambing block like this needs increased ram power. When using a teaser, we would advise a minimum of 1 tup per 20 ewes.

If you would like more information on using teasers, give any of the vets a ring. We advise getting them vasectomised a minimum of 6 weeks before use, with 10 weeks being safest.



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