

Red Tractor Standards Update

From 1st November, new standards are in place for the red tractor farm assurance scheme. A number of these are things that we already undertake with many of you, however you need to be aware of the requirements and ensure you are up to date prior to any inspection. See below for the changes being introduced.

Dairy

- Tethered housing is no longer permitted.
- A written breeding plan and policy must be in place to work towards the ending of routine euthanasia of calves by 2023.
- Review husbandry practices to reduce pain either by reducing the need for things like castration/dehorning, or by administering pain relief.
- Electrified backing gates will no longer be permitted on assured farms

Beef and Lamb

- No tethered housing
- Using pain relief for procedures such as dehorning and castrating.
- Include a BVD control plan within your health plan
- One person on the farm must have undertaken medicine training (with certificate issued after October 2016)
- Antibiotic collations must be produced (we do these already as standard), documenting your annual usage and to aid discussion about their use
- Health plans must be reviewed, signed, and dated by us annually. We are also required to have been on farm at least once per year.

Many of the beef standards are not new to us, as they have been in place for dairy for a couple of years. We can help advise about any required changes to management and update your health plans, so you continue to meet the requirements. The lamb standards are relatively straight forward – mainly introducing the requirement for an annual vet review of the health plan and antibiotic usage.

Medicines training has been required by the dairy sector for a few years now, and some of you have already undertaken courses for your beef and sheep businesses after it became a recommendation. This is now a full standard so someone on the farm will need to attend a certified course. We are aiming to provide a couple of dates soon for beef and lamb clients, with the first planned for 1st December. The course will cost £55 + VAT. Give us a ring at either office to let us know if you would be interested in attending one of our courses.

Lunchtime online talk

'How to get the most from your worm egg counts'

1pm - 2pm Monday 15th November

Yasmine will be presenting a short lunchtime talk via Zoom, all about worm egg counting and how to maximise the information you get from your muck samples in all species.

Cost of attending will be £35 plus VAT and is open to both farmers and smallholders. You will also receive a 10% discount on your first worm egg count sample submitted during November and December.

To register for the talk and receive a link to access, email: yasminecooper@wmvets.co.uk or call the Holly Tree office on: 01477 571000.

Plan now for a successful lambing!

Whilst it might seem mad to mention lambing in November, now is the time to plan to make sure lambing is as successful as possible. Planning your winter feeding and what you will feed in the run up to lambing is possibly one of the most beneficial things you can do. Ewe body condition is vital to ensure good lamb birthweights and that the ewe produces plenty of good quality colostrum. As we've mentioned before, colostrum is vital for success at lambing as it reduces and prevents diseases like watery mouth disease and joint ill. It also has a huge effect on lamb performance right through the summer. As we are now being scrutinised more closely for our antibiotic use, we need to move away from the old-fashioned reliance on antibiotics and make more use of the preventative approaches we have available to us.

Formulating a diet for ewes through winter isn't just important for those of you housing ewes but is equally important for those kept outside. The first step for any diet is to know what you have – getting your forage tested whether its hay, haylage or silage will let us know what the ewes will be provided with from the forage. Once we know this, we can use it to calculate how much extra energy or protein they might require as they approach lambing. Given the high cost of concentrates, calculating your needs is better than just buying what you usually get – we all know how different cuts of hay or silage can be within a season, never mind year-on-year! Hopefully there should be some good crops around this year, which might mean a reduction in concentrates needed – but we won't know if we don't test it.

If you would like to have a chat about ewe nutrition, give Matt a ring on 07816 440306 or leave a message with the office. You can also email him on mattraîne@wmvets.co.uk

National Johnes Management Plans

Your annual Johnes control plan is due for renewal, with signed declarations due to be provided to milk buyers by the 31st December 2021. Whether this means you need to arrange some testing, or just review your results, it is an important step and is also a requirement for farm assurance as of October 2019.

For those who have not undertaken a Johnes plan before, it involves a questionnaire about farm practices to assess the risks of introduction and transmission of Johnes disease. Using this and some testing of the herd, we can determine an estimated prevalence of Johnes disease in the herd and then some recommendations for how to reduce the current level and prevent its spread. Give your vet a ring to discuss your Johnes plan or leave a message with the office.

Emergency On Farm Slaughter Certificates

Please be aware that for emergency on farm slaughter for human consumption there is a legal requirement for the vet issuing the certificate to be present on farm at the same time as the slaughterman. We therefore recommend that you contact the slaughterhouse first to find out what time they are able to attend before contacting ourselves. Remember that to be considered eligible the animal must have suffered an acute injury that means it is unfit for transport. The animal must be clean and cannot be sick or suffering from a chronic condition such as lameness. If you are unsure of whether an animal is a candidate for a certificate then please contact us first to discuss it with a member of our team.

Colostrum management in calves

Everything from disease prevention to growth rates to future productivity relies on calves getting the best possible start in life and this relies heavily on good colostrum management. The main focus areas to achieve this are the 5 Qs - quality, quantity, quickly, quantify and sQueaky clean.

Quantity and quickly

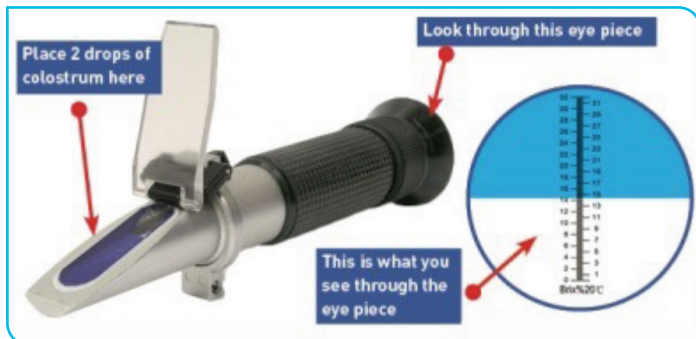
Calves are only able to absorb antibodies from colostrum into their blood stream for the first 24 hours of life. However, the most critical period is the first 6 hours and ideally within the first two hours. Calves require 10% of bodyweight within this time period which usually equates to approximately 4-5 litres. The same volume should be given again within 12 hours of birth.

Quality

Many methods exist to check quality of colostrum on farm – these are quick, reliable and simple to use. In an ideal world every cow/heifer should have her colostrum quality checked before giving it to the calf as this allows for changes to be made immediately. However, as a minimum any stored colostrum should be checked for quality as there is little point supplementing a calf with poor quality colostrum. It is important to remember that even the best colostrum supplements are only 50% as good as the farm's own colostrum! Colostrometers and Brix refractometers are the two main methods of checking quality on farm – both are pictured below. Colostrometers use a colour based system to identify the quality and refractometers use a percentage based system with over 22% being considered good quality.



Colostrometer

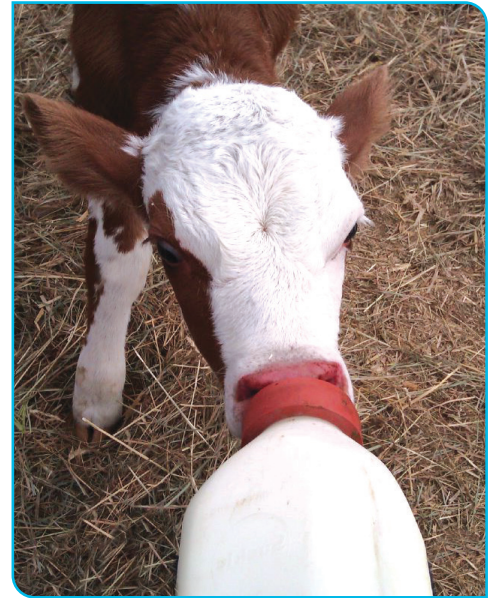


Refractometer

Quantify

The most accurate method of quantifying how much colostrum calves are receiving is by giving it to them directly.

Bottle feeding allows a more natural method of administering colostrum but stomach tubing is also appropriate if trained and comfortable doing so. Calves left to suckle directly are 2.4 times more likely to have insufficient antibodies (failure of passive transfer). However, if this must be done due to safety concerns a general rule of thumb is 20 minutes continuous sucking allows approximately 2 litres of colostrum to be consumed.



sQueaky clean

Cleanliness is important in all aspects of the calving process but especially so in colostrum collection/suckling. The cow's udder must be as clean as possible prior to calving and the calving pen should be equally as clean. Collection should be performed wearing clean gloves and in a clean environment. Another important factor to consider in the cleanliness category is disease risk. Any Johne's positive or sick cows will risk passing on disease to newborn calves via colostrum and/or surroundings.

Monitoring

A simple blood test which can be run in-house is able to determine whether calves have received sufficient good quality colostrum. This is important to regularly monitor as it could indicate when changes to colostrum management are required and may help to pinpoint the origin of any disease issues. Ask any of the vets for further information on monitoring or further advice on management practices.

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