

Lambing Staff



We have details of an experienced shepherd and also a number of students who are available for lambing work this spring. If you are short of staff or would like some extra help, please get in touch with the office and speak to Julia or Matt. We also have links with most of the Vet Schools so may be able to arrange vet students for you if required.

What can I do to help prevent my cattle encountering the risk of TB infection - from other cattle, wildlife and the environment?

Come to our evening meeting on Thursday 27th February at the Swettenham Club (CW12 2LA) to find out the latest information on this topic.

Last month's newsletter mentioned the TB Advisory Service which offers free visits to farms in the Edge Area to provide advice regarding preventing TB. James Russell, a TBAS advisory vet from Derbyshire, has agreed to come over to give us a talk and meet anyone who might be interested in having a visit. The service has proved valuable both to farmers who have had TB breakdowns and those who have not. All are very welcome to attend the meeting.

The evening will commence at 7.00pm. Please phone Holly Tree on 01477 571000 to book a place – refreshments will be provided!

Promotion on Pre-lambing Blood Testing

We have a limited number of kits for pre-lambing nutritional profiles which have been sponsored by Norbrook. There will still be a charge to take the samples, but all lab fees are covered by Norbrook. These are best carried out 3-4 weeks pre-lambing to assess protein and energy intake in the run up. These kits will be offered on a first come-first served basis. If you are interested, please ring Matt at the office (01477 571000) or on 07816 440306.



Product Updates

There are a number of issues with both intramammary and Injectable antibiotics at the moment due to various stock/production issues. If you ring to order any of the affected products, we may substitute with the closest match or a similar product. If you have any questions about the product you have been given, or want to discuss which products to use, feel free to speak with any of the vets.

Whichever product you receive we would ask that you **pay close attention to the withdrawal periods**, as some of the products are different. We hope the affected products will be back in stock soon, however there is currently no expected date for their return.

Bulk Milk Testing for TB

You may have read about new blood tests that are available to improve the accuracy of detecting TB infected animals. The Enferplex antibody blood test, developed by SureFarm which is affiliated to Synergy Farm Vets, has recently been validated for use in screening cows and finding problem cows which do not show up in the skin and gamma tests. SureFarm are looking at milk testing as well and need our help to validate their test as a screening method for bulk milk samples. We may thus request that we can take a bulk milk sample from your tank during the TB test - we would send it to them if you have reactors. We will ask you to sign a form giving us permission to send the sample and the milk results are confidential to the researchers - they do not go to APHA.



Payment Details Reminder

If you are paying by bank transfer, please ensure you use the new bank details found at the bottom of the Invoice, rather than the old ones you may have saved in your account. If you have any issues, please give the office a ring.

Environmental Mastitis

Why should we control environmental mastitis?

- The hidden costs may not always be seen immediately on the balance sheet besides the vet visits and drugs: discarded milk, unplanned culls, shorter milking life and extra labour all contribute to the cost.
- On average, a 5% reduction in total lactation yield follows a case of mastitis and lost milk production will account for around 50% of the total cost of clinical mastitis.

The Five Ws of Environmental Mastitis...

Who is affected in the herd?

Fresh cows in the milking herd or cows which are ill or under stress?

What causes environmental mastitis?

The most common causal bacteria are *Streptococcus uberis* and coliforms such as *E. coli*.

When are cows infected?

Infection commonly occurs during the dry period. Infection can lie dormant in these cows until they calve and disease will be seen when milking begins. However, new infections can also arise in lactation.

Where is infection coming from?

The environment! Particularly faeces found in bedding, on the udder, soil, water; wet and dirty environments are the highest risk for infection. Organic bedding such as straw is perfect for bacterial growth.

Why does the disease occur?

Faecal contamination of teats will introduce infection. The risk for the cow is even higher if the cow is living in a dirty environment, or if the cows are under stress. Existing diseases like lameness or insufficient cubicle space can contribute to stress and thus negatively impact the immune system's ability to fight off infection.

Clinical signs

- Changes to the milk - altered consistency, clots, flakes, colour change
- Changes to the udder - heat, pain, swelling
- Systemic signs - cow is 'off colour', depressed, inappetent, rises in temperature. In more serious cases, cows can become recumbent and toxic.
- Sometimes signs may be very mild and changes will only be seen in the milk.

Treatment

This will depend on the clinical signs seen in each case. Changes only to the milk may mean only intramammary antibiotics are used, whereas changes to the udder and the cow's demeanor may require injectable antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and oral fluids to halt infection. Veterinary advice should be sought if it is thought further changes are seen beyond just the milk. Regular monitoring (such as stripping before milking) will help spot mastitis cases early and may help reduce treatment costs and milking losses.



Clean cubicles and cows



Inserting teat sealant

Control and prevention

- Internal teat sealant and targeted antibiotic therapy
- Internal teat sealant (e.g. Orbeseal) used at drying off is a simple but effective method of prevention, and can be used in all cows at dry off. Using the sealant guarantees a physical barrier from the environment, as sometimes the teat can remain open from days to weeks after drying off. If the teat remains open, it is a perfect gateway for infection.
- Intramammary antibiotic usage at drying off should be reserved for cows at medium/high risk. Consult one of the vets regarding selecting a threshold cell count appropriate for your farm. Clinical mastitis records during the lactation will need to be considered as well.
- Sealant should be applied as a sterile procedure, as you would for an intramammary antibiotic. Inserting sealant into a dirty teat only means you are sealing in contamination rather than preventing it.
- A good milking hygiene routine and regular milking machine maintenance.
- This helps keep teats in good condition and aids monitoring to spot mastitis cases early, besides aiding cleanliness.
- Environmental management:
 - Aiming for an environment which is dry, clean and comfortable.
 - Changes of straw bedding should be daily, besides regular scraping and good drainage of slurry.
 - Inorganic bedding such as sand is ideal as bacteria grow very poorly in this substrate.
 - Housing comfort is important.
 - The correct stocking density should be considered. There should be at least 5% more cubicles than cows (e.g. a 100 cow group should have access to 105 cubicles) in cubicle buildings. Straw yards should allow a lying area of at least 7.5m² per cow.
 - Cows lying down in dirty passageways are at high risk of contaminating teats, besides spending long hours standing can be stressful, which is detrimental for disease immunity - especially young heifers who have not adapted to cubicles or are bullied.

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