



December 2014, another year gone can you believe it. Anyway overall not a bad year weather wise, very wet now but let's hope this turns into a nice cold winter! Shame the milk and meat prices are doing what they are doing. I guess our main topic this year has been the TB tender with Bill working very hard with our colleagues at XL vets to win the bid. Hopefully we will hear soon whether we have been successful (suggested date is 22-12-2014), and will obviously let you know as soon as we can.

REMINDER

Sustainable and Legal Control of Parasites

Tuesday 9th December
@ Sutton Hall Farm, Sharps Farm
11.00-14.00



BULL BREEDING SOUNDNESS EXAMINATIONS

We are now offering bull breeding soundness examinations including semen testing. Bulls should be tested 6 weeks before being used for mating, to assess fertility status. A fertile bull should be able to get 90% of 50 healthy cycling females in calf within 9 weeks. Subfertile, infertile or sterile bulls will not manage this. For those of you who have block calving dairy herds, ensuring the sweeper bull is not "firing blanks" before he goes in would be prudent. If hiring a bull we are happy to travel to test him before movement. Beef producers, we will remind you in spring! Please call and speak to Nick for further information.

SCABIVAX

We have been informed by MSD animal health that there is a low stock of Scabivax Forte (the vaccine you are using for orf) and they will therefore be importing Scabivax. Price-wise they are the same but there are some differences in the application (ie; Scabivax requires 2 scratches, not one). There will be leaflets available soon to explain these differences. So order as normal and if any questions please speak to us!

TREATING PNEUMONIA

If you think that you have an outbreak of calf pneumonia, consult your vet as soon as possible. Sick animals should be isolated as soon as identified. They can shed huge numbers of infectious organisms and are a key source of infection for healthy stock.

Fast and effective treatment is critical for minimising any potential lung damage, as well as reducing the clinical signs and helping to make the sick animal feel better, improve appetite and thus improve the chances of overcoming the disease.

Once the disease has been confirmed it needs to be treated quickly, with a product that works first time. Repeat treatments can be costly in the long term and repeated handling can cause additional stress to the animal.

A fast-acting antibiotic which targets the lining of the lungs will ensure that the treatment reaches the area where it is most effective and the bacteria are most concentrated (the Pulmonary Epithelial Lining Fluid). Long lasting treatments, which continue to work for at least 10 days, allow the lungs to fully repair themselves and reduce the risk of re-infection to the rest of the herd.

Zactran is both fast acting AND long acting (14 days) and available from the surgery at a special price this winter of £ 96.00 for 100ml which is more than 30% less than on-line prices.



INTERESTING FACT

Did you know that....

Cattle get excited when they solve problems. When faced with a challenge of finding out how to open a door to reach food, their heartbeat went up, their brainwaves showed excitement and some even jumped into the air!

ARE HIGH OR LOW REPLACEMENT RATES THE IDEAL FOR YOUR HERD?

(from: DHHPS newsletter, Q2 2014)

There is always a lot of debate about the issue of culling dairy cows. The European viewpoint is that low culling rates are good news: it means that cows live longer, have greater productive lifetimes, produce more milk per cow per day of life, and are a positive indicator of cow welfare.

However the American viewpoint is more hard line: low culling rates are a sign of herds "standing still". Higher replacement rates mean that genetic progress and herd improvement is faster. If the cost of culling a cow is similar to the cost of a replacement (which they currently are in 2014 in the US) and there are lots of heifers available, then surely it makes economic sense to swap an older cow with a fresh calved heifer? Why is this of interest to UK dairy producers? The DairyCo website currently quotes the total rearing cost for an average heifer to calve down at 2 years 4 months old at around £1,090. This varies from £950 - £1,150 per heifer reared depending on the Age at First Calving. Given the current prices for good cull cows, the gap in the Herd Replacement Cost (cost of rearing replacements less the value of culls sold) is getting smaller but still significant.

Knowledge is key to understanding and managing replacement rates in dairy herds. In the US, the main driver for herd replacement policy is the number of heifer replacements available to enter the herd. However in the UK, maintaining or even expanding herd size is often the main driver. So working out a plan of where the herd size should be is the first question to ask. The next question is why cows are leaving the herd. The table below gives the DHHPS average figures for reasons that cows were culled in 2013:

	REASON	% of HERD
Involuntary or forced culls	Infertility	5.6%
	Mastitis	2.7%
	lameness	1.8%
Voluntary or selected culls	Yield	1.0%
	Age	3.7%
	Other	6.5%

This gives an average culling rate in DHHPS recorded herds of 21.3%. However it is not the headline figure which is of interest, but the breakdown of voluntary and involuntary culls. The other issue is the number of involuntary culls that leave the farm with no cull cow revenue (ie. Fallen Stock). A study by Orpin and Esslemont in 2010 found that 5.3% of dairy cows were culled due to sickness, death, recumbency or casualty, with 2.5% due to deaths alone. Comparable figures from the USA show a 10% death rate. Another way of looking at this is the number of cows culled in the first 30 or 60 days of lactation, and the aim is to keep this figure below 2%. Values higher than this would suggest issues with transition cow management and diseases in early lactation such as milk fevers and LDAs. NMR figures would suggest that the UK average culling rate in the first 100 DIM is closer to 5%.....

The introduction of revised standards for the Red Tractor Dairy Assurance Scheme has given the chance to review the issue of culling rates and take a more pro-active approach to manage culling.

An effective and practical system to record culls and the reason for culling is vital.



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