ISSUE 79 Autumn 2022

Livestock NEWS

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farm paragon VETERINARY GROUP

XL Vets Farm

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

Welcome!

Dan Lawson: Dan graduated from the University of Bristol in July 2022 before joining the farm department soon after. He developed his interest in farm animals from growing up on his family smallholding near Ripon. Dan enjoys all aspects of farm practice especially herd and flock health, and looks forward to getting to work with all farm clients. Outside of work Dan enjoys playing hockey, fell walking and is a keen DIYer.

Diane Watson: Diane graduated from the University of Liverpool this summer and joined the farm team at the beginning of September. She is a farmers daughter from the outskirts of York, where her family have a broiler chicken unit. Diane is looking forward to exploring the area and meeting all of our farmers! Outside of work, she has a keen interest in shooting, fell walking and playing hockey and netball.

Heather Sowman: Heather started working at Tarn Farm Vets in June 2021 having moved up to Cumbria from Suffolk. She spent the summer living and working on a local dairy goat farm which she says introduced her to the farming life. Along with developing the Vet Tech role with Tarn and more recently joining the Paragon team, she also milks on a local dairy farm...a total change from her previous career as a midwife.

Taking a break!

Annie is heading off on her travels from mid November but fear not she will be back in the spring time to get stuck in for the busy lambing and calving season.

Emily is going on maternity leave with her baby due December. We wish her and Will well with their impending arrival! Heather will be taking on some of Emily's work during her time away.

Goodbye Rhys!

We are very sad to say that Rhys is leaving us mid-October. He is returning to the motherland in the Brecon Beacons, working between his home farm and a local practice. We will miss him and wish him the very best in his next adventure! Pob lwc Rhys!

What is the Healthy Feet Programme?

By Charlie Bradshaw

The Healthy Feet Programme is an initiative to help you reduce the number of lame cows on your farm. It works in a logical easy to follow way to help you identify problems, make an action plan and develop skills for long-term lameness control.

The programme is delivered by a trained 'mobility mentor' usually a vet with a special interest and knowledge in lameness.

There are four key success factors that the plan is based around:

- Low infection pressure,
- Good hoof shape, horn quality and digital cushion,
- Early detection and prompt effective treatment of lame cows
- Low forces on the feet (cow comfort and flow)

A mobility score is the first step of the Health Feet Programme as it gives us a starting point to work with and allows future benchmarking of your herd.

It also allows us to identify trends and patterns which lets you target areas for control and importantly helps identify those cows with early signs of lameness meaning they are more likely to cure.

We then use an on-farm risk assessment tool to work out the most productive changes to reduce lameness on your farm.

After this the whole farm team is involved in creating an agreed action plan for the future. The programme is very farmer focussed and led – your ideas are heard and listened to as we acknowledge you know your farm best. Mobility mentors are there to guide and advise rather than to tell.

There are two options; the Healthy Feet Programme or the Healthy Feet Programme Lite. Mobility mentors can be found on the AHDB website, contact one of your local mentors for more information.

AHDB HEALTHY FEET PROGRAMME

Ram Fertility Testing round up

By Shona Mouncey

We've seen a lot of tups over the summer, with our vasectomy and tup testing days at Newbiggin proving very popular! In June we had two teaser days, in total Rhys and Shona operated on 19 tups! These teasers should be a great help in shortening the lambing period which can help to focus labour and resources as well as reduce disease risk to young lambs. Additionally, two fertility testing days were held in August. A total of 32 rams were fertility tested which included both a physical exam and a semen evaluation. 25 passed with 5 failing and 2 deferred for retest, which is in line with the average 20% fail rate.

Reasons for failing included small scrotal circumference, problems with the epididymis (where sperm matures and is stored) and poor semen quality including deformed sperm. Identifying these problem tups in plenty of time ahead of the breeding season means proactive action can be taken and alternative tups can be sourced. Waiting until ewes return in the middle of the season can be costly and extend the lambing period as well as put too much pressure on the remaining tups.

Thanks to everyone who supported the days and helped to make them such a success!

Twins in Dairy cows

By Annie Kerr

Twins in dairy cows can result in significant losses to a dairy herd, as they significantly increase the risk of assisted calvings, retained foetal membranes, uterine infections, metabolic disease (e.g. Left Displaced Abomasums- LDA), culling and also extend the calving to conception period.

The potential problems with twins begin very early on with fusing of the placental blood vessels (resulting in freemartins). As the pregnancy develops, total foetal mass becomes the critical issue as a cow with twins is attempting to support 60% more foetal mass. When foetuses, placenta, and fluids are considered, cows carrying twins lose more condition before and after calving compared to cows carrying a single-pregnancy.

As a result of their poor dry matter intakes (relative to their single carrying cohorts) through

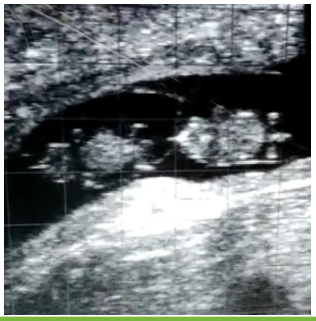
pregnancy, cows carrying twins have significantly lower insulin concentrations through the dry period. This results in fat mobilization and higher NEFA (nonesterified fatty acids) and ketone (betahydroxybutyrate, BHB) concentrations during the last month of pregnancy - both of which significantly increase the risk of type II ketosis and subsequent metabolic disease.

The problems continue around calving with cows carrying twins typically calving 10-14 days earlier than their single carrying cohorts, which can pose problems in dry cow selection therapy. Roughly 18% of twins require assistance at calving and following assistance, survival rates in twins were only 73% compared to the 95% in assisted single deliveries. When all of the above is taken into account the net cost of a typical set of twins is believed to be approximately £130.

The typical UK incidence of twins is believed to be roughly 2-5% in cows compared to 1% in heifers, however there is a large variation between herds with incidences of 14-15% in some herds. The average heritability of twinning among Holstein sires has increased over time. Individual bulls have a Predicted Transmitting Ability (PTA) which can range from 1.6% to 8% with a higher incidence of twinning being reported for certain cow families.

As part of the normal oestrus cycle the cow's ovaries go through waves of follicular development (typically three in maiden heifers and two in adult cows), however one of the follicles is selected to become 'dominant' secreting oestrogen and suppressing the development of other follicles (this follicle then goes on to ovulate) – it is this increasing oestrogen level which is in part responsible for the expression of oestrus. However, during periods of heat stress follicular quality is reduced, compromising oestrogen production (which helps explain the reduction in oestrus expression described above) and as the heat wains, multiple (poor quality) follicles are allowed to develop and ovulate – increasing the incidence of twins. This is further exacerbated by the increase in dry matter intakes which occurs as the heat recedes resulting in an ovarian 'flush'.

Twins are detectable at pregnancy diagnosis using ultrasound around 40 days (however they can be picked up less reliably from 30 days) which can allow you to consider the following management strategies:



- Monitor body condition scoring more closely.
- Dry off 10-14 days early.
- The use of Kexxtone boluses (although Monensin has been demonstrated to increase the likelihood of twins).
- Monitor cows calving twins more closely around calving if those carrying twins are well identified.

Castrating Calves

By Anne Abbs

Many farmers castrate their own calves but as vets we find that, when we come to do the Herd Health plan, many are unaware of the legal requirements and best practice. Only trained, competent people should perform castration; this reduces the risk of the procedure failing and, when the calf grows into a stirk, of him still being able to serve heifers, but also reduces the risk of mistakes which can be fatal.

Rubber rings

Rings can only be applied in the **first 7 days** of life. It is important to check that both the testicles are fully descended and can be pulled to the bottom of the scrotum. Putting the ring on when you aren't sure you have both testicles risks one or both being above the ring. Although this will push the remaining testicle against the body wall where it will be warmer and likely to have reduced fertility, the stirk may not be sterile and can still have bull characteristics. The ring needs to be placed just above the testicles – if it is too high there is a risk of including the urethra (urine tube) in the ring. The risk is reduced if calves are done standing rather than turned over.

Burdizzo

Burdizzo or bloodless castration can be used **up to 2 months** of age. The risks of infection are reduced compared to other methods but it is the procedure that is most likely to fail. Burdizzos need to be kept clean and in good condition to work effectively. It is important to ensure that the operator is familiar with the anatomy of the area and can confidently identify the cord supplying blood to the testicles. This needs to be pushed sideways towards the skin edge as far as possible before the Burdizzo is clamped to ensure that there is sufficient skin left between the crush areas to prevent the entire scrotum from dying and falling off. Again there is a risk of accidently clamping the urethra if the procedure is performed incorrectly. Local anaesthetic injected into the scrotum will reduce the pain for the calf but may make identifying structures more difficult.

It is not possible to determine at the time of the procedure if it has been successful, so calves should be checked to ensure the testicles shrivel up. It is possible to surgically remove testicles if they fail to shrivel but this is more difficult and risky than a normal surgical castration because tissues within the scrotum have often become stuck together.

Surgical castration

This needs to be performed by a vet using an anaesthetic and is the only option after 2 months of age. It is the most certain method as both testicles are removed, but the most likely to result in infection as there is an open wound. It is vital that the calves are kept clean both before and after the operation to reduce infection risk. Adequate restraint e.g. in a crush with the width reduced by a pallet, makes the job safer and reduces the risk of bleeding because the calf moved at the wrong moment!

NO FORM OF CASTRATION IS PAIN FREE – ongoing pain relief will make the calf more comfortable and more likely to eat and drink normally so reducing any check on growth.

Changes to BVD requirements for cattle exports

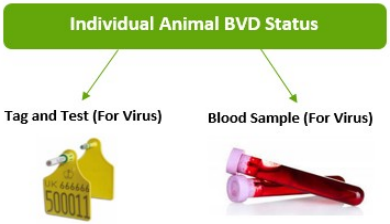
By Anne Abbs

A number of EU states are considered to be BVD free, currently Austria, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and some regions of Germany. In addition to these The Republic of Ireland and some of the other German regions have approved eradication schemes. This means that there are some requirements that have to be fulfilled to allow live cattle exports to these countries/regions –

- The cattle for export must NOT be BVD vaccinated
- They must be tested negative to BVD antigen
- They must have been quarantined for 21 days on the holding OR be BVD antibody positive.

If the cattle are pregnant then they have to fulfil 1 and 2 as above but also to have been tested for antibodies before they were inseminated OR to be in quarantine with a BVD antibody negative test after a minimum of 21 days (so the total quarantine would be 30+ days until the results are received).

There is a transitional arrangement with The Republic of Ireland allowing BVD vaccinated animals to be exported until the end of the year. In this case the certifier will need to know the date of each animals last vaccination and will need to confirm that they were vaccinated prior to service if the vaccine is still in date.



As with all exports, planning is key to success as time needs to be allowed for samples to be taken, results received and any necessary quarantine period undertaken.

Agri Expo 2022

Again this year we will be attending Borderway Agri Expo along with other XLVet practices. Come along for some refreshments and see the team!

28th October 2022

Mastering Medicines Course

Date: 19th October 2022, 1.45pm - 4pm

Venue: Tarn Farm Vets, Shap

Cost: £50 +VAT

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