



## Shepton Vets Newsletter

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### Expanding to eight farm vets

We aim to provide you with the best possible service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We want to be the first port of call in the event of any problems, but also to work with you in preventing problems occurring in the first place. Our **expansion to eight farm vets** gives you the best possible care and attention.

We offer a pro-active approach and in this Dairy Show newsletter have outlined some of our activities and advice for this winter including:

- **Practical cost-effective advice** on topical problems
- Our **initiatives on disease control**, including **SWHLI** initiative.
- Our Autumn **Practice Meeting on the Healthy Feet Project** with Nick Bell
- Programme for our four **Winter Discussion Meetings**
- **FarmSkills Training** following a year in which we have delivered eight practical training sessions to over 60 farmers.



### FERTILITY Peter Morley

#### Improving herd submission rates

It is widely recognised that it is getting harder and harder to get cows back in calf. To try and ensure your herd bucks this trend it is important to concentrate your efforts where the greatest return will be seen. One area where the SVG



sees a great return is by improving **SUBMISSION RATES**. (The submission rate is the proportion of eligible cows which are served in any period) Take 100 cows:

- ⇒ Conception rate is 40% and submission rate is 40% then the number of pregnant cows will be **16**
- ⇒ Conception rate is 40% and submission rate is 85% then the number of pregnant cows will be **34**

#### How to improve Submission rates

- Don't let the voluntary wait period get too long. Moving from 100 days to 50 days allows 2 extra services
- Watching the cows for three periods of 20 minutes daily is time well spent.
- Make sure cows are easily identifiable (clear freeze brands) and lighting is good.
- Improve spotting of bullers with aids eg Estrotects. These are great both for first service and returns.
- Record all bullings and check heat observation is accurate. If not sure, come to **FarmSkills** training.
- Use a vasectomized bull with chin ball marker for help spotting difficult/ quiet bullers
- Ensure loafing or bulling area is available which must have good grooving to allow confident bulling behaviour.
- Other options are available, including activity meters and synchronised heats.

**Talk to us about what will work best for you, as different solutions fit each farm. Remember a small increase in submission rates will lead to a significant increase in pregnant cows.**



## FEEDING Paddy Gordon Energy Status and Ketosis



Occasionally we are called out to cows that are staggering around as if drunk, apparently blind, and licking at metal bars or slobbering. This is nervous ketosis, when the brain has so little glucose it can no longer function. Affected cows respond rapidly to glucose in the vein and supportive treatment.

While nervous ketosis is uncommon, there are many times when we see conditions where ketosis, or a shortage of energy, is the underlying cause, such as fat cows and fatty liver, retained cleansings, LDAs, cystic cows and low fertility.

Given the scarcity of silage, expense of purchased feeds, and variable feed quality, we suspect that ketosis will be a problem this winter. Fortunately we can monitor herds for ketosis by blood testing fresh calved cows. Our cow-side equipment gives immediate results. Taking this proactive approach can head off problems at an early stage. This summer one herd started buffer feeding when high ketone levels were identified. Milk yield has improved and we suspect that this will have avoided future fertility problems.

**With forage stocks low and quality variable this winter then checking for ketosis makes good sense.**



## MASTITIS Peter Edmondson Fresh sawdust can cause high levels of mastitis



While washing his boots off Peter noticed a high number of clinical cases on the farm calendar. The herd was running at more than twice the

target rate. Peter visited the farm one afternoon the following week. One of the key findings was that 'fresh' sawdust was used for bedding. 'Fresh' sawdust contains about 30% moisture, ferments (it feels warm) and this results in a build up of Klebsiella bacteria which causes clinical mastitis.

The farm started using kiln dried sawdust and made a number of other modifications to mastitis management. The result was a significant reduction in clinical cases, less disruption to milking and improved performance.

**Practice farms have a lower mastitis rate than typical across the UK. Peter's practical**



## SURGERY Steve Prickett A stitch in time



Colic in a first lactation cow caused concern! Given the cow's rapid deterioration, and an area of pinging on the right side, the decision was made to perform an exploratory operation to diagnose and attempt to fix the problem. Inside the cow multiple loops of gas filled intestine were

found. These had been trapped through an internal tear in the membrane in which they normally sit. Once freed, the colour of the guts rapidly changed from an unhealthy purple to a much more normal pink. This was a reassuring sign! The cow's wound was closed, and follow-up antibiotics and painkillers were administered.

Fortunately the cow went on to make a full recovery and return to full milk production. She is back in calf now, and due to calve down again before the end of the year. **We deal with a wide range of conditions each year, and a combined 100 years experience means that we can give the best possible care and advice.**



## INFECTIOUS DISEASE Lottie Meire

### Johne's Disease Control



Johne's disease is a chronic wasting disease of cattle. Infection occurs within the first few months of life but clinical signs do not develop for several years. Tackling infection involves identifying infected animals, most easily done by testing milk samples. Infected cows can then be managed so that they do not spread infection to young stock, and then are culled ideally before they start to have health problems. (Infected cows are more prone to lameness, mastitis and infertility.) Unfortunately a single test is not sufficient to detect all infected cattle, as many infected cattle will throw up false negative results. This can make interpreting test results confusing, and decisions to cull animals cannot be made unless you are confident of the results.

Two years ago one of our dairy herds started testing for Johne's disease with NML, but were concerned about positive cows going negative and vice versa. Fortunately we were able to analyse their results and met with them to discuss this information. Many of the infected cows identified were not producing very well and included several repeat breeders. We agreed to continue working together to identify all the infected cattle, and introduced appropriate changes to the calf management so that infection is not spread amongst them.

Knowing which animals are infected with Johne's disease means that he has been able to avoid expensive treatments for cows that are never going to recover productivity. His latest test results have flagged up a few more infected animals, but far fewer than we started off with two years ago, so progress is definitely being made. Becoming completely free of Johne's disease will take a few more years, but the farm is already seeing big benefits in milk yield and fertility from bringing this worrying disease under control.

We have worked with a number of farms on both **BVD and Johne's Disease control and eradication. Speak to us about how we can help achieve disease control on your farm.**



## CALF MANAGEMENT Nathan Back

### Good colostrum saves lives



Good calf management and care is essential for the successful rearing of replacement heifers. Calves are born with no immunity to infection because protective antibodies (IG) are not able to pass directly from the dam to the calf across the placenta during pregnancy. During the several months for the calf's own immune system to become functional it is reliant on the IG that it has absorbed from its mother via colostrum. Calves that lack these IG are more likely to suffer from scours, pneumonia and septicaemia. We have blood tested 70 calves from 22 herds in the practice and have found 50% of calves have not received adequate colostrum – either in terms of quality and quantity or even both.

The following four points must be considered to ensure adequate transfer of IG to the newborn calf:

- Colostrum Quality. The initial feed should be from the first milking as this will have the highest concentration of IG. Quality is easily measured with a colostrometer, which is easy to use, and can be obtained from us.
- Timing of first feed. Ideally colostrum should be fed within 6 hours of birth – after this time only 60% of the IG will be absorbed compared to immediately after birth—and must be within 24 hours of birth.
- Colostrum quantity. Calves should receive 2-3 L at the first feed followed by another 2-3 L in the next 8 hours. Larger calves should receive 3 L while smaller calves can receive 2 L. If a second feed is not possible then feed 10% of bodyweight i.e. a 40 kg Holstein heifer calf will receive 4 L.
- Efficiency of antibody absorption. Calves that have been stressed or calves born into a dirty environment will absorb less IG and so good hygiene is essential.

**FarmSkills training offered by the practice gives practical skills to all staff on the farm to improve business and livestock performance. Ask us about our range of FarmSkills courses.**



## Practice Meeting Healthy Feet Project with Nick Bell



Bath and West Showground Thursday 21 October 7-30pm

Nick Bell, University of Bristol, has come up with many practical solutions for solving the diverse range of lameness problems on farm; from digital dermatitis to sole ulcers and cow tracks to cubicles, following several years of on-farm research. He will present the outcomes of his research across the UK through the Healthy Feet Project initiative.

With the average case of sole ulcer costing £300, and cows dropping 500 litres of milk, find out how we can help you reduce the level of lameness on farm through the **subsidised SWHLI scheme**. A process of locomotion scoring, training, on-farm evaluation and focus groups will help to deliver improved skills and knowledge, leading to reduced lameness on your farm.

Meeting open to all.



Food and Drink provided.

## Winter Discussion Group Meetings Pilton Working Mens' Club Second Tuesday each month, 7-30pm

We have run these Winter Discussion meetings for several years, considering topical problems and new developments in animal health. Please contact the practice if you wish to be on the mailing list for this winter's programme. Meetings start at 7-30pm with sandwiches provided.

- 9 November**      **Starling control.**      **Tom Tolputt, Nutritionist, and Paddy Gordon**  
Starlings are a widespread issue each winter, with concerns about impact on feed quality and cow health. What deterrent measures are used across farms, and which are effective? The meeting will consider how to reduce the potential for feed upset and lost milk.
- 14 December**      **Ketosis**      **Paddy Gordon**  
Ketosis is a widespread problem in dairy cows, routinely tested for in the States. In the UK we see many diseases caused by ketosis, such as LDAs and cystic cows, but are not always tackling the underlying cause. All you ever wanted to know about ketosis, and more!
- 8 February**      **Fertility**      **Michael Head**  
Michael has been studying cow fertility at Liverpool University in his spare time. Find out latest thinking and the outcomes of original research, possibly involving your farms, at this meeting.
- 8 March**      **Mastitis and Cell Counts**      **Peter Edmondson**  
New diagnostic tests are available to identify mastitis bugs. What are the results telling us? New approaches, and practical measures, from Peter.

