



November 2011

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# Shepton Vets Newsletter

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## MILK FEVER & STAGGERS

We have seen a high incidence of both milk fever (low blood calcium) and staggers (low blood magnesium) over the last few weeks. Often this is where transition cows are out at pasture with large quantities of lush grass.

The cost per clinical case of milk fever is around £250, due to both the direct effects at the time as well as the follow on effects throughout the rest of her lactation. Incidence can vary largely and is often seasonal, but if you are seeing more than 1 in 20 calvings, you need to look at your transition cow management.

Calcium is the 'trigger' for muscle contraction, so milk fever produces weak, down cows and potentially death as the heart muscles stop working. Cows affected before calving may show delayed calving and not calve without assistance as the uterine muscles are also affected, they may also suffer from retained membranes. Cows suffering from milk fever also have reduced gut motion, so tend to have reduced feed intakes, ketosis and are more susceptible to LDAs. Older cows and high yielding cows are particularly prone to milk fever.

All cows calving have a slightly low blood calcium and for every clinical case there are around 3-6 sub clinical cases. If you are seeing high levels of clinical milk fever, it indicates a deep seated imbalance with management of the dry cow, and more specifically the transition cow. High levels of milk fever will predispose your cows to many other diseases, so investing in prevention measures during high risk periods of the year will be very cost effective.

If you are experiencing higher than normal levels of milk fever, talk to us about how to manage your transition cow diets more effectively, we can also offer advice on short term prevention measures such as drinking water additives or oral calcium preparations.

## DAIRY SHOW COMPETITION

We were pleased to see so many of our clients at the dairy show this month. We ran a competition to test your knowledge of common medicine doses and withdrawal periods. Congratulations to the winner, **Paul Jackson of Cards Farm**, who received a hamper packed full of lovely local food.

Here is a quick reminder of the doses you should be using:

- |                             |  |                          |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| ◆ <b>Pen &amp; Strep</b>    | 1ml per 25kg into muscle daily for 3-5 days;   | <b>30ml for 750kg</b>    |
| ◆ <b>Flunixin</b>           | 2ml per 45kg into vein daily for up to 5 days; | <b>33ml for 750kg</b>    |
| ◆ <b>Readycef / Excenel</b> | 1ml per 50kg under skin for 3-5 days;          | <b>15ml for 750kg</b>    |
| ◆ <b>Alamycin</b>           | 1.5-4ml per 100kg into muscle for 3- 5 days    | <b>11-30ml for 750kg</b> |
| ◆ <b>IBR</b>                | 2ml into nose or muscle                        |                          |

## MEDICINES COURSE

Peter Edmondson is running two medicines courses at the practice on 23rd November and 7th December. It will run from 11 to 2.30 and costs £50, including lunch.

The aim of the course is to help you to ensure that treatments are only given when necessary, that the correct antibiotics are chosen and to reduce the number of unnecessary treatments.

The course will cover:

- ◆ What are antibiotics and what do they do?
- ◆ What are the current concerns about antibiotic use and what will change in the future.
- ◆ The importance of taking temperatures before any treatment
- ◆ When to treat and when NOT to treat with antibiotics
- ◆ What antibiotics to use for metritis, foul in the foot, calf pneumonia, mastitis etc
- ◆ Treatment regimes ~ how much, how often and how long. Syringes and needle care.
- ◆ What to do if you are unsure about what's wrong with an animal
- ◆ Pain relief ~ what is it? Does it work? What product should I be using?
- ◆ Administration of an intramammary tube and Orbeseal
- ◆ Use of selective dry cow therapy ~ is this an option for your herd?
- ◆ Storage of medicines. Disposal of sharps and used medicine bottles.
- ◆ Managing your medicine cabinet.
- ◆ Milk withdrawal periods and off label treatment

Please contact Cathy to book your place on these courses. Places are limited, so book early!

## WINTER DISCUSSION GROUP

Oliver Tilling is talking about calf pneumonia at the first of this years' Dairy Discussion Group meetings. It is being held at the Pilton Working Mens Club on 8th November, starting at 7.30pm and sandwiches will be provided. The meeting will discuss how to identify problems and practical on farm solutions.



Pneumonia is influenced by many factors on farm, including colostrum and disease challenge. The environment through humidity, draughts, temperature and air quality also affects disease levels.

The costs of pneumonia arise from cost of treatments, reduced weight gain, labour costs and calf deaths. A single case of pneumonia can carry an average cost of £43.26 per sick dairy calf, and an average cost of £29.58 for the rest of the group.

## THE HIGHEST FREE STANDING MOUNTAIN IN THE WORLD 'MOUNT KILIMANJARO'

Michael (Spike) has just returned from Mount Kilimanjaro and he is hosting an evening talk about his trip on **Thursday 10th November**. The evening will be held at Croscombe Village Hall starting at 7.30pm in aid of East African Appeal and The Cancer Treatment and Research Trust.



Please contact Michael or Cathy to let them know if you wish to attend.