

Trip to Holland (Maarten)

After years of pressure by some clients I decided this year to organise a trip to Holland. The fun started at Gatwick when our gate was closing, as only 4 of us were there despite the rest being present somewhere in the departure hall oblivious of the fact that a poor Easyjet lady was announcing frantically that passengers to Amsterdam were delaying the flight. Luckily everyone was still allowed on the flight but we weren't popular with our fellow passengers as we had caused a half hour delay. My stress levels, being at record level, didn't improve much when I struggled to locate our coach at



Moon men surrounded by MRI cattle

Schiphol airport. At this time regretting organising the trip I managed to get the whole group on board and off we went.

On the first farm, 220 cows were milked and fed by robots and housed in a specially designed barn resembling a converted glass-house. The animals were kept in one big open yard. The bedding used to be compost, but due to health risks this is no longer allowed by the biggest milk cooperative Friesland Campina. A minimum amount of straw (6kg/cow/d) is used in the winter and nothing in summer. An aerator is used daily to maintain proper composting of the bedding. Although I didn't agree with several of the owner's ideas, it did get the discussion going. Next we went to a farm where 2 families are share farming with the view of one son to take it over. The standards on this farm were phenomenal. As with most farms that we passed in the coach, a new barn had been put up while the old one (early 80's built) is now used for young stock. Calves were either reared in hutches or individual boxes raised off the ground to

allow for faecal material to "drop away" from the animals. On many farms calves are fed lucerne instead of hay which seemed to work very well for rumen development. Also calf coats were very popular so there might be a market out there for Debbie! The last stop on the first day was an independent AI station (KI Samen). As on all farms we were welcomed with coffee and cakes. Due to strict biosecurity we weren't allowed in the barns where the stud bulls were kept (several hundred!) but a selection of bulls were shown to us behind a fence. After a presentation of the company we went to the adjoining dairy farm where currently 350 animals are milked through a rotary parlour. 600 head of young stock were kept ready to increase numbers as soon as the quota's stop next year. This readiness of increasing production, which seemed to be present on all the farms, raised concerns with some of the members of our group. At that time, due to a stressful start of the day, I was looking forward to a nice refreshing beer to steady the nerves. As the weather was kind to us we had a nice meal outside on a market square. One member of our group had asked earlier that day about the palatability of a certain strait feed which turned out to be saw dust used for bedding. He received his (liquid) punishment and had to buy everyone shots of the local spirit, jenever. This resulted in the start of various drinking games which lasted late into the night.

The next morning I struggled to get everyone on the coach, but eventually we set off again. The first farm was run by a regional board member of Friesland Campina who gave us insight in how the Dutch see the market develop after 2015. Not only the Chinese themselves but also Fonterra (NZ) have built milk processing plants in Holland with the view to export to China. All good and well as long as the Chinese buy it. In my view they seem to put all their eggs in one basket. Worldwide the Dutch seem to have built up a very good reputation. A friend of mine who is the vet on that farm spoke about the disease control programmes that have resulted in zoonoses such as TB, Lepto, Salmonella and Johnes' disease (although not really a true zoonosis) are well controlled and not present in the milk. Also restrictions on antibiotic usage has resulted in Dutch milk production being perceived internationally as causing minimal risk to contributing to antibiotic resistance, that could spread to humans. Dutch farmers are very confident in their future and are not afraid to take on massive loans (also they must have very nice bank managers). That day we also visited another robot milking farm which used "green bedding" (dried manure) in the cubicles and a chap that had created a highly efficient farm that could be run just by himself. He admitted that no one could work to his high standards.

I believe that everyone has picked up a few things that could be applied on their farm over here. Personally I liked that as part of farm assurance specifications all farms had a few pairs of wellies and overalls of various sizes for vets, AI technicians and other visitors to reduce the risk of spreading infectious diseases from farm to farm.



Raised calf boxes

NOTICE BOARD



the
liVeStoCk partnership Ltd
Market Square, Petworth
West Sussex, GU28 0AH

Tel: 0845 3138434

info@livestockvets.co.uk

DairyCo Breeding Meeting (Claire)

Andrew Dodd from DairyCo has kindly agreed to come and have a chat with a group of our clients regarding Herd genetic reports, PLIs and what it all means for bull selection. The meeting will be held on Tuesday July 22nd at Bensgreen Farm, Froxfield, Hampshire and is a first come, first serve basis, so please let me know if you would like to attend (claire@livestockvets.co.uk or 07702331076). If we can get commitment from people early enough we might be able to do a benchmarking exercise. Looking forward to it!

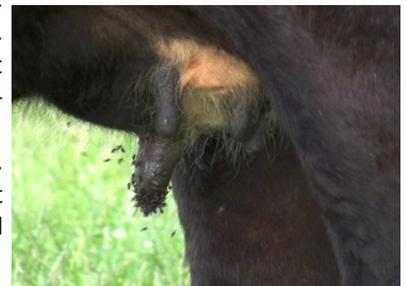
Fly Control (Sally)

In the last few weeks the number of flies we have seen around the farms has been increasing and so a few words on the problems caused by these nasty beasts seems very topical – and a reminder of the importance of good fly control on all your stock.

Summer Mastitis

Many cows are now being dried off and pregnant heifers are out grazing. These two factors mean the risk of Summer Mastitis is high and the main culprit spreading this infection from cow to cow is the sheep head fly. Clinical signs are a hot, hard, swollen udder & teat, with a thick, clotted cream secretion. Cows can have a temperature, be quiet, possibly lame (due painful udder) and may abort or even die if not treated. Treatment is a course of antibiotics combined with pain relieving anti-inflammatories.

The quarter is often lost but stripping in the first few days can help, along with isolation. Prevention and control has to be centred around fly control, applying their fly repellent directly to the udder can help along with field control, open fields on higher ground, and dry cow management, teat sealants and housing dry cows close to calving.



Infectious Bovine Keratoconjunctivitis (IBK) / New Forest Eye

New Forest Eye in cattle is a highly contagious disease of cattle caused by the bacteria *Moraxella Bovis* spread by head and nuisance flies. Control is good fly control and affected animals should be isolated to avoid the rapid spread of the infection to all animals in the group. Clinical signs are a mild conjunctivitis (“pink eye”), tear staining of the face, pus matting the eyelashes and face, it is very painful, and as the infection progresses a white spot develops on the cornea which can lead to a corneal ulcer if not treated. In severe cases ulceration may progress to corneal perforation. Treatment must be prompt a course of topical antibiotic eye ointment. Antibiotic injection into the conjunctiva by your vet can be carried out and frequently resolves the problem very quickly. Systemic treatments can be used but at a greater cost.

Blowfly strike

Caused by the larvae of Blue, Black and Green Bottles attracted to areas of faecal contamination or areas of infected tissue i.e. shearing injuries or feet infected with foot rot. Clinical Signs include presence of maggots, agitation, dullness, stamping of feet, a very distinctive smell, quickly progressing to death. Treatment is remove every maggot, clean the area thoroughly, give antibiotics if required and prevent any further strikes with pour on/dip insecticides. Control involves shearing, crutching/dagging, worming etc to prevent scour, prevention of other infections such as foot rot, use of insecticides e.g. Vetrazin.

Transition Management (Sarah)

Transition management is a key element for the cow in terms of metabolic disease, time to peak milk production and fertility. So, how does everyone monitor the success of their transition management? Often, it is too late to address the problem when you suddenly realise that you’ve seen a bit too much of your vet of late; whether it be correcting LDA’s, treating metritis, retained fetal membranes, or ketosis. Remember too, that for every animal showing clinical symptoms, there are often many more that are sub-clinically affected, with reduced DMI and sub-optimal performance.

Unravelling metabolic issues can be tricky, as they are often multi-factorial problems relating to cow, feed and environment. We do, however, have on farm tools that can be used to monitor the likelihood of metabolic issues post-calving by assessing levels of NEFA (fatty acids) or BHBA (ketone bodies). Without overcomplicating matters, NEFA levels represent the magnitude of fat mobilisation, BHBA represents how completely this fat can be converted into energy. We would like to see low herd levels of NEFA in late transition and low levels of BHBA in the post-calving period, based on the following evidence:

- High NEFA in the 2 to 4 weeks before calving – associated with increased risk of LDA, increased risk of retained placenta, increased risk of culling before 60 DIM, reduced milk yield
- Subclinically high BHBA in early lactation – associated with hugely increased risk of LDA, decreased probability of pregnancy at first AI, decreased milk production, increased duration and severity of mastitis