

Welcome to 2016 from all of us at the practice!
We hope that Father Christmas brought you all what you wanted in your stocking. It doesn't look like the thermal socks I got are going to be needed for a while as the unseasonably warm



weather looks set to continue. Many of the findings we are getting from the autumn calving herds is that fertility appears to be very good this year. It would always be good to know exactly why things work

out well so we can copy it year after year, so it is worth thinking about what has been good this year. Excellent back-end grazing conditions has allowed cows to maintain condition and some very good silage has been made too. On one farm, the availability of maize from the previous year for freshly calved cows also seems to have had a beneficial effect on yields and maintenance of cow condition. On another, all the heifer replacements were taken from a batch that held to a synchronised first service so all calved in the first week of calving. Almost 60% of these are now back in calf in the first 3 weeks, demonstrating how important it is to get good results with bulling heifers. Let's hope the good results continue throughout 2016. Happy New Year to you all.

Ben

Tuberculosis continued (Maarten)

There are still plenty of people in our practice that believe that the main (or only) way their cattle could get TB is through badgers. Fortunately there is no evidence to suggest that wildlife in our patch is infected. For those of you that want to reduce badger-cattle contact on your farm there are some great short films on this matter on the following website: www.tbhub.co.uk/biosecurity/video-guides

Last month I looked at how **Risk based Trading** and **Post Movement Testing** can help to reduce the chance of bringing TB infected cattle onto your farm.

Although it is always best to maintain a closed herd, not only for TB but also for BVD and many other infectious diseases, if you are buying in cattle from a herd of higher TB risk status, they should always be isolated. The period of **isolation** should be at least 60 days so that a post-movement test can be carried out before introducing them into the herd.

Buildings used for isolation facilities should ideally be physically separate e.g. a free standing building (i.e. solid walls, no shared airspace, water supply or drainage with other animal accommodation) from any buildings used for other livestock. Effluent and manure should not come into contact with other livestock.

Fields used to isolate bought in animals should be physically separate from any fields or buildings used for other livestock on the premises. Aim for a minimum distance of 3 metres between the perimeter of an isolation field and any other livestock.

TB can also be spread indirectly via clothing, footwear, equipment and vehicles (particular those shared with other farms, e.g. contractors) Effective **cleansing and disinfection** on your farm is very important for both bovine TB and other infectious animal diseases.

Contact with infected cattle in **neighbouring herds** is another potential source of infection. Infection from neighbouring herds can occur via direct contact (e.g. nose to nose) or indirect contact (e.g. via contaminated equipment or aerosol spread during manure or slurry spreading).

You can reduce the risk of infection from neighbouring herds in the following ways:

Check local TB breakdown data online (www.ibtb.co.uk)

- Put in place effective barriers between neighbouring herds.
- Avoid sharing equipment or vehicles with other farms.

Avoid sharing cattle grazing with other herds.

This information is derived from the following website: www.tbhub.co.uk. Please contact one of us if you would like discuss further how to avoid introducing TB, or any other infectious disease, into your herd.



TBhub
The home of UK TB information

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Barren ewe check

With sheep scanning underway there are on offer ewe blood tests for flocks with a barren rate greater than 2%.

Blood testing helps establish whether the common parasitic disease, toxoplasmosis, is the likely cause of barren ewe issues. You can contact the practice to take advantage of subsidised blood tests for toxoplasmosis, which are available until 31st March 2016 courtesy of EXPERTIS™ Barren EweCheck – the diagnostic scheme supported by MSD Animal Health.

Rotavirus (Amy)

Calf scour can be a major cause of mortality and lost profit in beef suckler herds. The financial losses come from calf deaths but also the growth check that results afterwards. Rotavirus is the most common cause of diarrhoea in young suckler calves. Rotavirus is carried by the cows so is always present on farm and cases in calves often are related to a stressor such as the weather or just a build-up of virus in the environment over the calving season.

Given it is a virus, antibiotics don't work overly well other than to help with secondary infection, and oral or i.v. electrolytes are the main therapy. This can be time consuming and not always overly successful. Therefore with this disease prevention is far better than cure. Most scour pathogens come from cow faeces so if you are calving inside it is important to ensure you use plenty of fresh bedding or even consider calving outside as spread tends to be slower. Colostrum is crucially important and you should make sure newborn calves suck well. They will usually need at least 20 minutes on their mum to get enough colostrum at that first drink so if this is not happening you may want to intervene to make sure the calf receives enough.



Rotavec Corona vaccine protects calves against Rotavirus, Corona virus and E.coli K99. Cows are vaccinated and the calves receive the vaccine by drinking their mothers' colostrum. Cows given a single intramuscular shot 3 weeks ahead of calving will be covered for 9 weeks into the calving period so is perfect for all tight calving herds. If you don't have a tight calving herd, blanket vaccination will still help by reducing build up in the environment or if you have expected calving dates you can inject cows 3-12 weeks before calving instead. However we would encourage all suckler herds to tighten their calving patterns regardless to maximise growth and reduce disease.

A calf scour outbreak was estimated by SAC to cost over £44/calf excluding labour. Cost aside there is no fun in managing an outbreak of scouring young calves so for those of you calving in February get your vaccine ordered now!

Heifer Synchronisation (Claire)

It is the time of year where results of our seasonal breeder conception rates for their heifers are in. Results have ranged from 80 % conception rate to... not quite 80%(!), with around 55% being the average. Many of our producers use a synchronisation programme to serve their heifers. Synchronisation aids oestrus detection and improves submission rates, improving reproductive efficiency on a unit. The major factor limiting reproductive performance on dairy farms is failure of detecting cows in heat in a timely and accurate manner. Synchronisation protocols are always evolving and vary depending on which data is sourced. The drugs used include prostaglandins, progesterones and GnRH. Whichever protocol is used there are a few salient points to maximise its success:

- Ensure the heifers selected are suitable—animals need to be well grown enough to have gone through puberty and be on a good plane of nutrition prior to, and during service. Conception rates are maximised if heifers have had two or three cycles prior to service
- Attention to detail—especially with regards to timings in the synchronisation protocols. Although timings and drugs vary among the protocols it is very important that the correct drug is given at the correct time for your protocol. If something is missed/drugs are switched, it could drastically affect conception rates.

Please let us know of any successes/failures you have had with your heifer synchronisation protocols and what pitfalls we can avoid in future.

