

The weather in May can only get better! Wet ground conditions have hampered turn out of cattle that normally would have been out by now. So what have we been up to in April? Spring calving suckler herds have kept us busy with calvings and prolapses, Claire has ran another successful AI course and I believe she is already taking names for the next one, Ben has ran first aid foot trimming courses on two of our dairy farms and Amy and I have been busy testing more bulls. Unfortunately we also had to deal with the aftermath of two dog attacks on sheep. Over recent years this has become an increasing problem.

With the cold April, lambs will be more at risk for Nematodirus than usual as more susceptible lambs will be grazing when the Nematodirus eggs hatch as soon as we get several days with temperatures exceeding 10°C. Only young lambs

are affected by nematodiosis as lambs become age-immune from three months of age. The main symptom is profuse watery scour. Affected lambs are dull and depressed and if left untreated will die from dehydration. Symptoms should be differentiated from coccidiosis which is most often seen in lambs aged four to eight weeks old. Affected animals are often seen straining and blood will be mixed in the dung. Nematodirus is best controlled by grazing susceptible lambs on pasture not grazed by lambs the previous year. Where this is not possible, lambs can be treated with a white drench (benzimidazole). Exact timing for this can be found on [www.scops.org.uk/alerts.php](http://www.scops.org.uk/alerts.php). The use of worm egg counting to time Nematodirus treatments is too risky as immature larvae cause the disease. **Maarten**

### Johnes disease – Part 3: Controlling spread of infection in dairy and beef herds (Ben)

The first stage to control is to understand the infection status of your herd and have a realistic discussion about aims for control with us.

Diagnosis of herd infection by laboratory testing can be done in a variety of ways:

- Routine screening of all cull cows via milk or blood tests
- Screening of pooled faeces, e.g. samples of dung from collecting yard, passageways etc.
- Screening of groups of cows on a regular basis via blood or milk
- Screening all cows via blood or milk followed up by faecal testing



*Image from Nadis*

Make the most of annual testing for TB by getting us to screen for this disease with a blood test.

If you plan to do this then make sure we take the blood samples on day 1 of a test as TB testing will affect the results of testing for Johnes.

Based on the results of screening, the second stage is adopt the key principles for disease control.

- Biosecurity—Ideally operate a strict closed herd. If not practical, minimise the risk of infected animals entering the herd (including bulls); Ideally, only purchase animals from herds with known MAP-free status; Screen individuals entering the herd, but bear in mind many younger infected animals cannot be detected; Do not import potentially infected slurry or equipment onto the farm; If animals are reared away from the farm, consider the risks of exposure to infection at the rearing unit (do they have other stock, do they buy in stock from elsewhere, etc.)
- Identify infected animals and minimise their threat by either culling or isolating them from contact with younger animals by: Clearly and permanently identify infected animals; Separate pre-calving and calving areas for infected animals; Never use milk or colostrum never fed to calves; Do not breed replacement animals from infected dams
- Hygiene – Exposure of young animals to infected faeces is the MAIN RISK. Sometimes the more comedic vets amongst us refer to Johnes as ‘SHIT IN MOUTH DISEASE’
  - Dry cow and calving yard hygiene to ensure clean udders – this will also benefit mastitis and cell counts in dairy cows
  - Ideally individual calving pens to prevent cross-suckling
  - Remove dairy calves as soon as possible after calving and feed clean colostrum from non-infected dams
  - Ensure high degree of cleanliness when collecting colostrum for calves
  - Ideally do not feed pooled colostrum or milk to calves. If you are going to, then make sure it’s free from faecal contamination and pasteurise anything that does go to calves
  - Ensure hygiene of drinking water by preventing faecal contamination, using mains drinking water and fencing off areas of stagnant water
  - Try to spread slurry only onto arable land and not grazing ground for young animals.

If you can do all of that then you are luckier than most! It is all about minimising risk and being in it for the long-term. You won’t clear Johnes from a herd quickly but if you don’t start the process then you will never clear it. Other countries are hitting it hard and even in the current climate we should be doing our best too.

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### Total Dairy Seminar (Sally)

I have been going to this annual conference for a number of years (it used to be called The Large Herds Conference) and it has always produced, in my opinion, some very interesting lectures and workshops as well as providing practical and technical advice to dairy producers and their advisors, regardless of herd size. The conference aims to bring together experts in all areas of dairy production from around the world to share their knowledge. The format for the 2 days will include lectures and practical discussion-based workshops. A number of clients have come along in the past and all have enjoyed it. If you think you would like to come to the conference for either or both of the days please contact me at the practice. The website <http://totaldairy.com> has all the information regarding speakers which include Temple Grandin, Nick Bell and many more. TotalDairy Seminar 2016 will take place on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016 at the Tortworth Court Four Pillars Hotel in Gloucestershire.

### Mycoplasma bovis pneumonia and arthritis in calves (Raj)

Mycoplasma bovis associated pneumonia and arthritis is an important, often underdiagnosed disease in the UK and Europe. It has been shown to contribute to around 25% of all bovine respiratory disease (BRD) related costs in calves. When you consider that the cost of BRD in calves is estimated to cost the UK cattle industry 80 million GBP annually, this proportion becomes very significant. In effected animals BRD is thought to cost an average of 42 GBP per dairy calf and 82 GBP per beef suckler calf. These costs are conservative estimates also, as they only include the value lost at the time of and immediately after treatment. They do not factor in long term effects of the illness.

Mycoplasma bovis associated disease usually presents as pneumonia, ear infections, arthritis or a combination of the above. More rarely it can present as tendonitis and meningitis. The main age that calves are effected is around 4 weeks, but they can show signs as early as 4 days. The disease can also present as either sudden onset or it can be more of a chronic lingering problem. Chronic disease is much more common, as the calves are often found to be unresponsive to treatment. Typical signs include; increased respiratory rate, increased temperature, decreased appetite, nasal discharge and coughing.

Diagnosis of Mycoplasma bovis as being the cause of the disease can be very difficult. As the presenting signs are not very specific, culture of the bacteria at the lab is required for a definitive diagnosis. This is known to be hard also, as the organism has been shown to be challenging to detect in terms of sampling it reliably from the live/dead animal and in terms of growing it in the lab. It is reasonable to be suspicious of a Mycoplasma infection in calves with pneumonia/arthritis that do not respond to treatment.

Treatment of Mycoplasma associated BRD is notoriously demanding. Currently in the UK, only Draxxin has a label claim for working against Mycoplasma. Even with the label claim of action against Mycoplasma, the response to treatment can be poor. A demoralising consequence of this are calves that do poorly for a long period of time and struggle to make desired weight gains.

Due to Mycoplasma being a struggle to diagnose and treat, the best option for its management is prevention. The methods of preventing Mycoplasma spread/introduction onto farm are similar to many other diseases. These include; strict biosecurity with people/objects coming on farm, having a suitable stocking rate, rigid disinfection/cleaning of feeding and clothing equipment, good ventilation and temperature/humidity control and adequate colostrum intake at birth. An important tool in managing the disease once you have it, is creating a sick pen, away from the airspace of the healthy animals. These sick animals can be treated separately and fed last, maintaining a strict biosecurity barrier between them and the other calves.

Overall Mycoplasma Bovis is an important organism that is likely responsible for more respiratory disease in calves than we think. It is a difficult disease to diagnose and treat, and can have long term detrimental effects in calves. By using effective management practices we can hope to decrease the introduction of the disease on farm and decrease the spread of the disease once it is present. For more information on the management of this disease, please contact us with any questions.



Image from Beef magazine



Image from Bioweb