

It has been an informative couple of months with meetings. Andrew & Sarah Malyon hosted a meeting organised by AHDB and The Livestock Partnership, where Dr Nick Bell spoke regarding whether it is worth investing in cow welfare. We looked at The Malyons new sand cubicle shed that is now housing cows that are yielding 6l more than their cows in the other sheds. We discussed what is making this difference; cubicle comfort, feed space, loafing area, lights and how long it takes back to pay this investment. Lying time is crucial for maximising milk production and studies have shown that we can make cubicles an appealing place to lie, some cubicle sheds having longer lying times than cows out at grass. Studies have shown that cows spend longer lying in a deep sand bed than they do in a straw yard. Other factors that can influence lying times are

milking times (3 hours a day max), group changes, feed space, bed cushioning, cubicle training. We have other meetings coming up this month so please keep an eye out for the adverts.

If you are interested in attending a full artificial insemination course, or have a refresher, please let the office know.

Claire



Lambing care checklist (Sarah)

Every lamb counts – no matter your size of the flock! Remember 49% of lamb losses occur within 48hrs of life! Here is a revision of the most important aspects of early lamb care, and what we should be concentrating on in the first few hours of a lambs life.

- If an assisted lambing, always check the ewes teats at the time. Otherwise check when you dip navels/check lambs – can you draw **milk from both teats**?
- Consider **pain relief and antibiotics for the EWE** if assisted lambing was difficult/lengthy
- 4 – 12 hrs old **Dip Navel** – ideally strong iodine or thoroughly sprayed with antibiotic spray. Some prefer a 50:50 iodine and surgical spirit mix to dry navels more quickly.
- <12hrs old - Does lamb look full? Hold up to assess tummy fill between back legs – if not, give **150 -200ml** depending on lamb size of colostrum via stomach tube/bottle. **A lamb should get 10% of its bodyweight in colostrum in first 12 hours.** e.g. 4kg lamb requires 400ml colostrum.
- **Hypothermia** - At all times when checking fields/pens we should be looking for lambs that are hunched up, non-

responsive, unable to stand or have no suck reflex. Normal temperature of a lamb is **38.5-40°C**. If **37-38.5°C - Mild-Moderate hypothermia** = Dry, Tube with warm colostrum, Warm to 39°C and return to ewe in a draft free pen. **<37°C Severe hypothermia** = lamb likely to be non-responsive – Dry, Give Intraperitoneal glucose (into abdomen) if able to/lamb over 5hrs old. Using 40% glucose solution dilute to 20% with boiled water and administer warm. (20ml glucose & 20ml of water). Please call for our advice if unsure how to administer. Warm to 37°C, Tube with warmed colostrum, continue to warm to 39°C, return to ewe in a draft free pen.

- 24 hours old: Is the **navel drying up?** – if not, re-apply iodine/antibiotic spray.

- **Castrate & dock tails** – Only when lambs are strong and healthy



Sheep made by Sarah!

Sheep meeting (Maarten)

Last week we had a successful meeting in Petworth's Leconfield Hall with 24 keen sheep farmers present. We feel that our sheep clients are getting a poor deal from us. While we take a very much proactive approach on dairy farms focussed on disease prevention the service that we deliver to our sheep clients is centred on firefighting. Looking at the poultry and pig sector, where the individual animal also has a low monetary value, the focus is on prevention. There are some great gains to be made by focussing on efficiencies. Take for example the difference between scanning percentage and the number of lambs that make it to market which is nationally 15%. This dwarfs the gains to be made by lifting your scanning percentage by a few percentage points. However reliable data is necessary to make a proactive approach possible. The dairy sector has accepted paying for data recording with 90% of our dairy clients signed up for monthly milk recording and the poultry and pig sector has to adhere to recording protocols. Stocktake Lite is an easy and effective way of recording for the beef and sheep sector. And it is free as well!

Having listened to the feedback from those that attended the meeting we will now contact our sheep clients with a proposal for the Sheep Health Club. Keep an eye on your email inbox!

Twin Pregnancies (Ben)

Whenever one of goes on a training course we try to make sure that the Vet Team get together to catch up on whatever new information is being spoken about. This month it was Megan's turn to share with some of her findings from her recent trip to Cheshire where she further honed her ultrasound scanning skills on the advanced ultrasound course.

Our topics for discussion included:

Ageing CLs (those things that we keep on banging on about at routine visits that indicate that cows have ovulated and are, to some extent or other, cycling) so that we can more accurately identify stage of the oestrus cycle, timing of bulling and likelihood of response to a prostaglandin injection.

Identifying and managing uterine infection. Evidence suggests that the best approach is to use intra-uterine antibiotics (Metricure) and, in some cases where the cervix is closed also use a prostaglandin injection

What really got the clinical juices flowing was our discussion about twin pregnancies. Now many of you will have noticed that we try very hard (and have been for a few years now) to identify any twin pregnancies at the time of PD. Most twins in cows are the result of a double ovulation. Two eggs are released which both get fertilised and this results in a pair of non-identical twins. Identical twins CAN occur but are unusual (less than 5% of twin pregnancies). Identifying twins does take a bit of extra time as we have to scan both ovaries to check number of CLs present and then scan the horns very thoroughly if there are two foetuses present. So is this extra time worth it? We think it is. A cow carrying twins will calve early so needs to be dried off according to an earlier predicted calving date. A cow with twins is more likely to need assistance at calving so it is handy to know. She may benefit from a Kexxtone bolus as she is much more likely to suffer from ketosis. In addition to this we identified a further reason during our discussion. With a twin pregnancy not all the foetuses survive. Quite often I will scan a cow with 2 CLs (she has released 2 eggs) but there is only one calf. Did the other egg get fertilised? If so where is it now? It could have died and this is important if the dead foetus was a male and the remaining foetus was a female there is a strong chance that the heifer calf will be a freemartin even though she doesn't appear to be a 'twin' at calving time. Perhaps some of those unexplained infertile heifers were originally twinned to a bull calf that never even survived to PD. In future perhaps we should just make a note of those that might have been twinned at a very early stage of pregnancy so you might be able to check for a freemartin before spending all that money rearing her.



Single foetus in uterine horn. Photo from EI medical.com

Bull Biosecurity (Megan)

Be aware of what you're buying:

Know the history of the farm from which you purchase your bull (diseases, where they source their animals, movement of animals and shared machinery on and off that farm)

Know the bull vaccination history

Why a Bull can be a risk:

If you are a closed herd but buy in a bull- you're not a closed herd

The close proximity at mating makes disease transmission likely

Infectious disease:

Do you know your status for the big 4 diseases plus Salmonella, DD and Campylobacter? Campylobacter is often forgotten about but introduction can be disastrous. However, it is not possible/viable to test for all known diseases. We can help you pick the ones to focus on for your farm.

It is possible to treat a bull with antibiotics against Leptospirosis even if he has been vaccinated before he comes into contact with animals on farm but this is not 100% effective 100% of the time.

Buy from Accredited disease free herds e.g. the CHCS TB scheme is a great initiative

TB: In England in 2015 36% of breakdowns in edge areas and 70% in low risk areas were from purchased cattle

Quarantine for 30 days minimum. This allows you to look at animals during this time for signs of developing disease; and to check for the presence of DD and Campylobacter. For Leptospirosis the quarantine period should ideally be for 8-10 weeks.

Ensure the vehicle used to transport the purchased bull is clean as this minimises cross contamination.

Infection can be both ways don't forget. Do you know your own farms health status?

Stress:

Don't hire bulls/ share transport with animals of unknown health status. Stress will increase the excretion of disease and may induce immunosuppression making disease transfer of higher risk

Markets are risky places to buy bulls with respect to health status- again this is due to stress

Don't get caught out: If a deal on a bull seems too good to be true then it probably is.