

By the end of this month we shall have almost two extra hours of daylight and may have consumed a large number of pancakes. Look out for snowdrops and Siskins -Spring is filtering through. Last month we enjoyed the Beef and Sheep Nutrition meetings both with fantastic turnout and lots of discussion. Many thanks to Richard and Lucy Payton for hosting the Sheep meeting and to Angus Stovold and the team at Rosemead Aberdeen Angus for their hospitality at the Beef meeting.

Beef and Dairy clients can join the BVD Free register to have test results uploaded to the national BVDFree database *without charge* until the end of March. This offer is available

for all results uploaded by the following labs: APHA, Biobest, CIS and NML. The aim is to grow the number of searchable BVD statuses on the existing 65,000 strong database and could help to sell your animals at a premium during the Spring Sales. On January 18th Defra announced an Avian Influenza protection zone in England. If you keep birds ensure you register them, report sickness and sign up for disease alerts. *Megan*



Gordie Jones Evening from AHDB Dairy (Ben)

This month saw AHDB sponsor a visit from Gordie Jones to the UK. Gordie is a well-known speaker of dairy health and production from Wisconsin. Gordie started off as a practising Vet before moving into agri-industry as a farm advisor, then nutritionist. Gordie then became the adviser for a large farming company, Fair Oaks, which now manages around 65,000 dairy cows on multiple farms as well as other livestock enterprises. More recently Gordie has set up his own dairy farm in Wisconsin at Central Sands Dairy and he was explaining some of his key principles for managing his dairy.

The extra bite: Gordie only feeds 2 rations on his farm. 1 dry cow ration and 1 milking cow ration. The highest yielders are not fed a separate ration. They are expected to satisfy their milk yield whilst maintaining health and fertility through increased intake alone so there can be no constraints on dry matter intake. Whilst only feeding once a day Gordie believes that frequent pushing up, providing fresh feed on return from the parlour, feeding for refusals to a level of 5% and keeping stocking densities correct for the highest need groups are the keys to maximising dry matter intake. He makes the point that the feeder on his farm gets up first and makes sure there is food ready for the first cows out of the parlour after morning milking.

Cow Comfort: A cow has to do 3 things: Stand to eat. Stand to milk. Lie down to rest. Enough rest is key for high milk production and health. Gordie is a total fan of deep sand beds and has strict recommendations on cubicle design to ensure that cows lie correctly. One of the comments that will stick with me was how he referred to the 'Sawdust Fairies', as he danced in front of the audience - the light sprinkling of sawdust on a firm mattress bed.

What is that achieving in terms of comfort? Just look at your cow's hocks. Any bare skin and or swelling means that there is compromised comfort.

Youngstock management: Gordie has 4 rules for youngstock management. Break 1 rule and you might be ok. Break 2 and you are in trouble.

Colostrum – Large quantities of good quality colostrum fresh from the latest calver

Ventilation – Ensure calf has fresh air to breathe

Clean and Dry – Enough bedding and no access to the bugs that previous calves have shed into the environment

Single-housing – To stop the transmission of disease between individuals

All in all a very entertaining evening and well done to AHDB for getting him over to talk to us.



Medicine use at Lambing (Maarten)

The vast majority of antibiotics used in sheep happens during the lambing months of February to April. However lambing shouldn't be an excuse to use antibiotics. Take for example the treatment for Watery Mouth. If one divides the doses sold of oral antibiotic by the estimated number of life lambs born it shows that probably more than 50% of lambs born in the UK receive oral antibiotics at birth. This does not happen in either the pig sector nor the dairy sector. Is this really necessary? With the pressure to reduce antibiotic use in the livestock sector this is an easy area to make improvements. E.coli bacteria, the cause of watery mouth, can multiply when there is an imbalance between immunity, derived from colostrum, and infection pressure.

Singles and twin lambs born from ewes in adequate body condition should receive sufficient colostrum. It is only triplet lambs and those born out of thin ewes that might receive insufficient or poor quality colostrum. These lambs should be supplemented with colostrum from other (single) ewes at a rate of 200ml/kg within the first 24 hours. Alternatively you could give them cow colostrum. Frozen colostrum should not be thawed in the microwave but "au bain marie" to protect the fragile antibodies. Artificial colostrum is mainly a source of energy rather than providing antibodies, in particular those that are made of egg based proteins and should not be relied on.

Also the infection pressure can be manipulated by strict hygiene. A drawn out lambing period can result in a build up of bugs in the pens. However if the pens are regularly cleaned and limed at how much of a risk are lambs born within the first cycle?

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We are running a full artificial insemination course 23, 24 & 27 April. This is a practical course covering tank to cow. It includes five on-farm sessions, looking at post mortem specimens and a test at the end!

If you are interested please contact Claire at the office (Claire@livestockvets.co.uk).

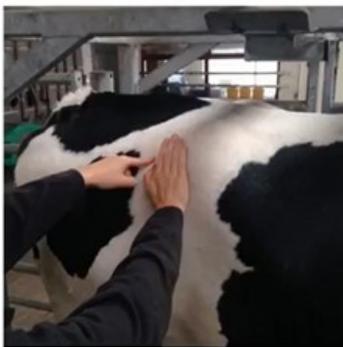
Injection Techniques (Claire)

A group of vets from Nottingham university have been looking at the risk of injecting cows in the gluteal region (rump), especially freshly calved dairy cows that may be of a low body condition score.

When performing a study to see where people would inject a cow, 70% inject within 5 cm of the sciatic nerve; the large nerve that supplies the hind limb, hence risking damaging it and causing paralysis.

They also discovered that the nerve was a lot wider than previously thought, approximately 4 cm wide, making it difficult to avoid. The depth of the nerve is variable depending on the condition of the cow, but at the shallowest point being only 2.5cm below the skin surface.

The recommendations based on these findings are to inject where possible into the neck musculature of the animals and where this is not possible a more lateral position (see diagram).



To avoid the sciatic nerve injections should be given a hands width behind the tuber coxae (hook bone)

Picture to left depicts right side of cow

Tail



Left side of cow

Head



Intramuscular injection site options in cows

Alternative intramuscular injection sites include the neck muscles and the muscles in the back legs (semimembranosus and semitendinosus).

The injection triangle on the neck is broadest near the shoulder and tapers towards the ear. It is between the spine, the line of the shoulder and the groove where the jugular sits.



The semimembranosus/semitendinosus should only be used for volumes less than 10ml. Some research has shown that absorption of fertility drugs can be better from this site. This site can get inflamed with repeated injections.

Images from google

New Red Tractor standards (Maarten)

Since October there have been a number of new requirements. Assessors will be looking for evidence of a health plan and data review carried out every 12 months – so at each audit, the assessor will need to see two compliant health plans and data reviews. A new requirement is a collation of antibiotics used, with a 12 month review. Within this there is a recommendation that those antibiotics designated Critically Important are only used as a last resort under veterinary guidance.

Also there is a recommendation coming in that at least one staff member is trained on the use and administration of medicines. This is one of the reasons why we are hoping to roll out a medicine course for our clients next month.

Please contact one of the vets to organise a health plan review for your farm.

Image from google

