

This January a couple of topics of conversation have come up and these have been echoed in plenty of farm-related social media posts, and that is Veganuary and most latterly the 'ProjectCalf' initiative, which encourages members of the public to gather evidence of poor calf-welfare standards on a published list of dairy farms. As I sit here and think about it I can't really think of another example of a group of people who have such a strongly held evangelical belief that their lifestyle choice must be adhered to by all mankind, and use such militant tactics to try to convince people that their cause is so morally correct. The viewpoint of the militant vegan is so diametrically opposed to those of us in the livestock farming industry that we cannot really even have a discussion with them about it, but we do need to be able to defend our position to our customers who are shocked and concerned by the rare examples of poor welfare standards that are unfairly upheld as the norm for our industry. A growing number of the population of the UK is now largely naïve to how their food arrives on their plates and so are susceptible to being influenced by

some of these images and claims. Hopefully the work being done by NFU and AHDB is helping get the good name of British livestock farming out there, but there is also work that needs to be done on a farm level to help mitigate your risk. Aside from ensuring that the facilities and protocols are designed for maximising health, you should also consider a clearly displayed animal welfare statement that outlines your commitment to animals welfare and how any concerns can be reported. An old boss of mine used to say, "If it wouldn't look good splashed over the front page of 'The Sun', then reconsider your approach". *Ben*



*The South Downs shrouded with frost*

#### February is #ColostrumIsGold Month (Sarah)

The Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture (RUMA) Alliance campaign is back again this year, highlighting that responsible use of antibiotics starts with newborn calves and lambs receiving the right amount of colostrum within a couple of hours of birth.

RUMA chairman Gwyn Jones says that as a farmer, he recognises the pressures at lambing and calving, and just how easy it can be to take shortcuts with the all-important first feed. "But it was a wake-up call when I found out calves receiving insufficient colostrum at birth are more than twice as likely to develop respiratory disease, and can have mortality rates as high as 13%," he says. He also adds that "All these factors have an enormous impact on the levels of antibodies in the bloodstream 24 hours later, and on the subsequent health of the animal and its need for antibiotic treatment during its whole life.

Specialist sheep vet Dr Fiona Lovatt says lambs receiving insufficient colostrum at birth is behind one of the sheep industry's biggest antibiotic use 'hotspots', in what is otherwise a low-use sector. "And it's largely avoidable," she says. "The reality is that we simply don't see Watery Mouth in lambs that have taken sufficient colostrum on board in that golden 24-hour window immediately after birth. Dr Lovatt says a 5kg lamb at birth needs 1 litre of colostrum in its first 24 hours of life to give it essential levels of natural immunity, but importantly, the first feed should be within two hours of birth. She also says the sheep sector should not be relying on use of preventative antibiotics –because of image but also the very real problem of antibiotic resistance. "We know from government data that 50% of neonatal lamb E coli are already resistant to spectinomycin (Spectam), the most commonly used dose. We need to protect these antibiotics, or we will lose them."

So don't be surprised if again this year, we ask you a few questions about your lambing or calving when you are sourcing certain antibiotics from us. It is all part of us all continuing to play our parts in continuing to reduce and refine our use of antibiotic's in all farming sectors; so far we are making progress to be proud of!

## #ColostrumIsGold

#### Bulls (Maarten)

Is your stock bull ready for the spring? Bulls only represent between 2% and 5% of your breeding stock, but are responsible for 50% of the herd's fertility.

Whatever the cause of sub or infertility, left undetected it could have disastrous effect on not only herd fertility but also profitability.

It is always worth carrying out regular pre breeding soundness examinations. This proactive, rather than reactive, approach will mean that fewer herds will feel the impact of infertile or sub fertile bulls. Having said that the figure still stands at one in seven bulls being 'unfit for purpose'.

Many of the bulls condemned had been found to be fertile in previous years. This proves the point that sub-fertility and sterility often happens in later years. It is essential that these bulls are identified before losses have occurred. Good fertility in one season does not guarantee good fertility for the following season.

## NOTICE BOARD

**THE LIVESTOCK PARTNERSHIP**  
SUCCESS THROUGH HEALTH

the liVEStOck partnership  
Ltd

Market Square, Petworth  
West Sussex, GU28 0AH

Tel: 01798 343538

info@livestockvets.co.uk

### Embryo transfer (Claire)

With the breeding season coming to the end for our Autumn calvers have you got a number of animals that have had 3+ services and are still not in calf? Do you need to tighten your calving pattern or reduce your number of carry over cows? Please chat to Ben to see if implanting some embryos can improve your productivity. Embryos are put in by a vet 7 days after AI (after a natural heat or more commonly synchronisation) with an average conception rate of 50%.



Image from google

### TB Advisory Service meeting – Preparing for an outbreak (Claire)

At the end of November we ran a very successful meeting with the TB Advisory Service in Hampshire, focussing on avoiding a 'head in the sand' approach and what we can do to prepare if our units did get shut down by TB – plan for the worst, hope for the best.

Hampshire has a prevalence of 3.7% of TB. This is on the increase from 2.5% last year. It surprised many just how long the bacteria that causes TB (*Mycobacterium bovis*) can survive in the environment; 3 months in soil, 6 months in slurry stores, 60 days in water! This is a reminder to look at the biosecurity of vehicles that come onto our farms and to empty water troughs in fields not being used by livestock. We can learn a lot about biosecurity from the pig and poultry industry.

If we have to buy animals onto our farms we need to be as well informed as possible. If it can be avoided we should not do movements from high risk to low risk or edge areas.

The IbTB website shows all herd breakdowns in the country to help you make informed decisions <https://www.ibtb.co.uk/>. If we do have to buy in we should pre and post movement test and blood test for valuable animals. It is better to be shut down now, than in 5 years time when TB has got into your herd.

Things that came up for preparing for the worst included finding slaughter houses that will privately slaughter your reactor animals and you still get compensation, meaning you may get better prices and you can get the animals off the farm quicker. Could you set up an isolation unit (prior to a breakdown)? Find or set up an AFU? We are in short supply in this area. Are there any orange markets in your area (open markets for TB animals)? Do a cash flow forecast for a breakdown.

There is loads of information on the TB hub website (google Badger proof fencing for best access) including lists of markets. It is always best to look in advance.

Thank you to Sarah Tomlinson from the TB Advisory board and Andrew Malyon, Goat-house farm for speaking, and to Jamie Butler for hosting.



### Does pour on mean slap-dash? What about the little guys? (Megan)



Image from google

The compounds in convenient spot/pour-ons can be lethal to aquatic life, birds and dung degrading bugs, to name a few. Not only are they lethal at very low doses but they stick around in the environment for a long time. It is very likely these products will be subject to further legislation and reclassification in the future. Meanwhile, we can opt for sub-cutaneous routes to reduce overall doses, sacrificial paddocks well away from water courses and keeping dogs out of rivers if they've recently been treated.

### Ketosis and Twin-Lamb disease (Maarten)

Many of our dairy farms use a blood ketone meter to detect ketotic cows. Ketosis occurs when an animal mobilises more fat than her liver can cope with. Either the cow calves in too fat and/or she has a suppressed appetite. Especially just after her calving when her dry matter intake is still not at maximum capacity the cow will mobilise energy stored in her fat reserves to make up for the energy deficit. This is being processed in the liver. When the liver is overloaded it is not able to fully utilise the fat and will produce ketones which will have an adverse effect on the cow's appetite and milk yield. Propylene glycol can help to produce glucose quickly to reduce the need of fat mobilisation. However, propylene glycol can be toxic if more than 300ml/day is given. The combination of glycerol and propylene glycol (Glycerol Plus) gives the cow twice as much energy and is less toxic. One litre of this product, typically dissolved in 20L water, as a one-off is usually sufficient to resolve the signs of clinical ketosis.

Glycerol Plus can also be used in sheep suffering from Twin Lamb disease. The combination of glycerol and propylene glycol has shown to be more effective than other energy substrates for sheep.

As ketosis causes dehydration of the body via two different pathways pumping the cow with fluids will speed up her recovery.