

As I write this we might have just had the UK's record hottest day. Thankfully the heatwave appears to be a short-lived one with more sensible temperatures on the way. The impact of the hot weather can be significant, with animals showing signs of being affected despite precautions. I reckon there will be one or two lost pregnancies in cattle, reduced feed intakes and milk yields, and lower growth rates in growing stock. It sounds simple but making sure grazing cattle have access to shade and plenty of water are crucial. For housed animals, hopefully fans are available to help cool animals down. These should be run 24/7. At times like these it can be difficult to avoid some overheating in the day so it is vital that you

make the most of the cooling period at night to allow animals to recover. Dairy cattle have been shown to be able to cope quite well with periods of overheating so long as they get a chance to cool down within a 24 hour period. It's really when heat stress becomes prolonged that we see major problems.

On a separate note, for those that haven't heard, Megan is leaving us in September to try out life in New Zealand for a bit. She has done a great job over the last 3 years and I'm sure you'll all wish her well for this exciting adventure for her and Howard. **(Ben)**



Image from Google

Watch out for headflies from mid-July (Megan)

Look out for the annual emergence of head flies (*Hydrotaea irritans*) from around mid-July, as these are a major source of annoyance for pastured cattle. These flies hang around until late September, mating and depositing eggs in pasture soil and leaf litter, until colder weather kills them off. Headflies, with their characteristic yellow abdomen and orange wing base are nuisance flies. They cause considerable irritation as they feed on proteins from secretions such as saliva, tears, sweat and milk. Headflies hang around in woodland and travel to and from the cattle several times a day.

Cattle affected by headflies move to the shade, are restless and may stamp and swish their tails leading to less time grazing and decreased performance. Research has also linked headflies with the transmission of summer mastitis in dairy cows and heifers as they feed on secretions from the teats.

Treatment and control

The level of treatment will depend on the fly challenge in a season and history of fly problems on the farm.

Usually via synthetic pyrethroid chemicals, but avoiding grazing wet, low-lying fields near woods from July to September may reduce headfly numbers. Stock should be checked at least once a day.

Treatment options

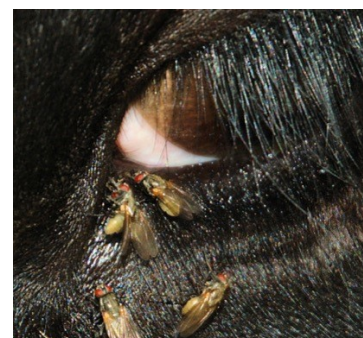
- Insecticide-impregnated ear tags which give five months cover and should really have been applied at turn-out.
- Pour-on treatments, which need re-applying every three weeks, depending on the fly challenge and if there has been heavy rainfall.
- Sprays applied via a knapsack, which have a repellent action and need re-applications.
- Where insecticides are not used, applying **teat sealant** to pregnant heifers and dry cows can help stop the spread of summer mastitis bacteria by flies.
- Garlic licks, fly trapping and the use of fly predators, may offer some form of fly control, but there is little evidence to support this in grazing animals.

The **cost** of each treatment varies on who is selling it and on the longevity of its effect, but ranges from £3 per ear tag to 50p/dose for a pour-on – which may need doing several times in a season.

"Farmers will need to gauge how much performance is being lost and how much the treatment is, not forgetting the cost of handling the animals and the labour required to do that. Pedigree dairy animals in high risk fields might be given two ear tags inserted at turnout, whereas beef youngstock in low risk fields might receive one pour-on application.

There is more information in the Control of Worms Sustainably (COWS) manual, which can be found at www.cattleparasites.org.uk

Thanks to Dr John McGarry



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Injured at work? (Megan)

With more than 60% of farm vets having been injured at work and 1 of 5 of these injuries counting as serious; adequate facilities and everyone working together when handling animals is VERY important. Please look at your set up and think about how best you can improve it for the safety of everyone involved, animals included. Unfortunately I am one of the vets making up the 60% statistic and I can tell you– it wasn't fun! We have plenty of ideas amongst us about how we can help improve facilities for cow flow as we see all sorts when out and about on farm. Just ask!



Sarah's hand

Update on BVD Stamp It Out (Megan)

- June 2018 Defra announced the project with the target of ascertaining the status of 50% of breeding cows in England
- Project due to finish mid 2021 with all on farm delivery complete by December 2020

As of May 2019:

- 4187 farmers enrolled which is 52% of the target
- 107 cows is the average number of cows per holding
- Beef to dairy split: 59% dairy, 41% beef
(some dairy have beef as well. Beef figure represents pure beef units)
- Of the 4187 enrolled 83% have agreed to join BVDFree
- 36% of the PI hunt budget has been allocated

There is clear demand from vets and farmers for this project but we need all farms to engage in BVD control if we are to eradicate the disease from the national herd by 2022. This almost certainly will come from legislation for mandatory testing and transparency about your herd status.

- Action plans created by vets for the farm is helping keep disease out once eradicated
- Keeping the disease out of a naïve herd will include strict biosecurity plans, potentially CHECS accreditation and sometimes vaccination.

Well done to those of you actively engaging in BVD eradication. Thanks to you we are on the right path to eradicate the disease by 2022 which is the target of BVDFree but we are still some way off. It looks as though legislation will be required to achieve this fully although not on the government agenda at this stage.



Photosensitisation (Laura)



Photosensitisation in a steer

We've been seeing a number of photosensitisation cases recently and thought it would be worth reviewing causes and management. Photosensitisation occurs when the skin (especially white, unpigmented areas exposed to sunlight) becomes more susceptible to UV light because of the presence of **photodynamic agents**. It is NOT simply the same as sunburn in which skin changes happen without the presence of these photodynamic agents. Photosensitisation can be classified as either primary or secondary:

- **PRIMARY:** when the photodynamic agent is **ingested**. e.g. hypericin in St John's wort.
- **SECONDARY:** when the photodynamic agent porphyrin builds up in the blood and consequently the skin (where it reacts with UV light) as a result of **impaired liver function**. The liver is the organ responsible for filtering the blood of harmful toxins so any damage to it (e.g. from ragwort poisoning, liver abscesses and fluke) can potentially result in this condition.

A blood test for liver enzymes will differentiate between primary and secondary causes and also helps with prognosis: if there is liver damage the prognosis is worse and may also be indicative of a wider herd health issue.

There is no specific treatment so management is palliative. Most importantly the affected animals should be kept in cool shaded housing and only allowed to graze at night, fly control, sunblocking ointments on affected areas, anti-inflammatories for pain relief as necessary and antibiotics (ONLY if secondary infection present).