

Newsletter June 2023



Welcome

Well it was a long time coming but spring finally sprung in May and by the last week of the month, I heard not the first cuckoo but a farmer wishing for rain!



Summer is upon us and as calving suckler cows comes to a finish, we're already thinking about how we can get them back in calf again. Don't worry sheep farmers we'll soon be talking about tupping time as well. We make no excuses for it as it's often too late by the time we're called in to sort out a problem. Please contact us sooner rather than later to discuss breeding issues. It's time well spent and if you apply for a grant (see below) the government will pay for it!

Mark Stott

A Round up from our Pathway Meetings

Last month, we hosted 2 keenly attended meetings on how we hope this new Government initiative will work to benefit our farm clients, their businesses and Farmgate Vets. A summary of the scheme was included in our April newsletter explaining that money is available to cover veterinary visits and advice with the aim of improving health and welfare and therefore production and profit on beef, sheep and dairy farms. Testing for BVD in cattle and anthelmintic resistance in sheep forms the mandatory element of the scheme but the remainder of the money can be spent in areas chosen by the farmer and vet.

Much discussion focussed on what these areas could be to see maximum benefit on farm. Too often, health planning isn't given the time it deserves, covering too many topics at once. General consensus was that an in-depth focus on one or two areas would be of most benefit. Suggestions included a review of vaccine protocols, fluke and worm treatments or colostrum management across the species. In sheep, lameness management and mortality investigations through post-mortems were discussed. In beef cattle, bull fertility testing or pelvic measuring in heifers were options. On the dairy farm, mastitis and/or cell count issues could be investigated by reviewing milking and dry-off routine. **continued..**



Included this month

- **Round up from the Pathway Meetings**
Sarah Harker
- **3 Things to focus on— Sucklers**
Finbarr O'Sullivan-Greene
- **Dairy Cows & Comfort—**
Charlotte Chapman
- **News and Diary Dates**



Both manufacturers of Cevac and Toxovax are predicting supply issues later in the year for the peak season. If you can, to avoid the bun fight, please vaccinate before the end of July!



Continued ... Where several farmers were interested in the same topic, some small group meetings or staff training sessions could be a useful addition to individual farm visits. Farmers were assured that the **online application process is easy, paperwork is minimal** and efforts can be very much tailored to suit the farm. We hope to run a further evening meeting for those that still wish to hear about the scheme so please contact the office if you would like to attend. We can do the farm visits as soon as you have applied but please let us know if you need help with this process.



Sarah Harker

3 Things to Focus on before your Suckler Breeding Season

Regardless of whether the market is up or down, inefficiencies in productivity destroy profits. In sucklers, fertility issues are one of the key causes of this inefficiency.

The bull is half the herd

- Making sure the bull is ready before the breeding season is crucial. As sperm takes 60-80 days to be produced a bull needs to be on top form 10 weeks before the breeding season.
- If a bull has a temperature for whatever reason, he is likely to be infertile for at least 80 days
- A bull MOT will largely focus on feet and testicles. At a minimum, inspecting feet, trimming ONLY IF NECESSARY and palpating the testicles should be seen as routine. Ideally bulls should have a pre breeding fertility test. This is crucial for unproven bulls but a good safety net on an annual basis. If bull testing, it is worth noting that 20-25% of UK bulls are sub-fertile. This is not to say that they won't get cows in calf, but it does mean that they extend the breeding season through poor conception rates. If bull testing, it is crucial to have a plan of what to do if a bull fails. Can you get another bull in time? Or do you take the pressure off the remaining bulls using AI. They key is not to leave the bull test too late.
- Although good handling is required AI will allow access to bulls with higher genetic potential than the average stock bull and is worth considering when chasing a profitable suckler herd. AI will also take pressure off remaining bulls if you have a bull fail a fertility test.

Uterine infections

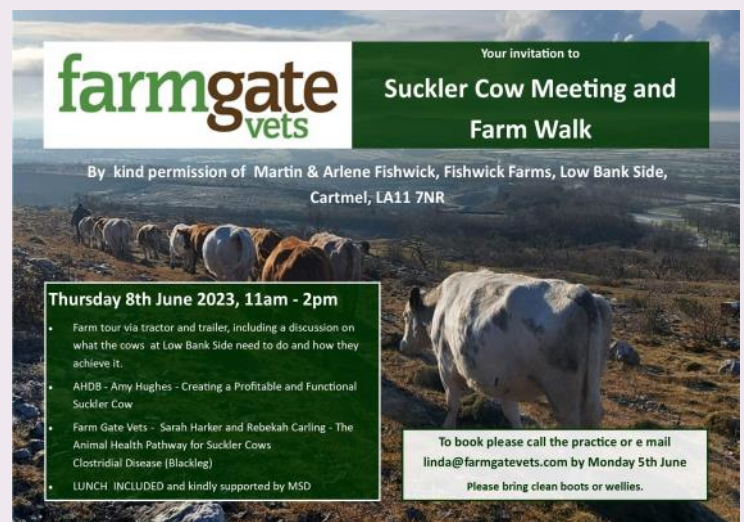
- AHDB figures suggest that if a cow calves unassisted, 96% of them get back in calf the following year. If assistance is required, the subsequent breeding success rate falls to 25-34%. This is largely due to uterine infection.
- To this end at the end of the calving period it is prudent to scan all cows that had a bad calving, caesarean, or retained foetal membranes to check for uterine infection. The sweet spot for this is 3 weeks post calving.

Cycling problems

- A cow with excessive nutritional demand post calving may be delayed in returning to normal ovarian activity. This can be for lots of reasons e.g. lameness, mastitis or sub optimal forage however the sooner it is observed the better the chance of getting a cow back in calf.
- A good option is to observe cows daily for the 6 weeks before putting the bull in. Present any cow not observed in oestrus for an ultrasound scan. It is essential that this scan happens before the bull is set loose as we are limited by what fertility drugs we can use once the bull is in. For more information check out the AHDB document "Optimising suckler herd fertility for Better returns" which can be found here

<https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/optimising-suckler-herd-fertility-for-better-returns-2>

Or even better, please come along to our Suckler Cow meeting this month, details to the right.



Your invitation to
**Suckler Cow Meeting and
Farm Walk**

By kind permission of Martin & Arlene Fishwick, Fishwick Farms, Low Bank Side,
Cartmel, LA11 7NR

Thursday 8th June 2023, 11am - 2pm

- Farm tour via tractor and trailer, including a discussion on what the cows at Low Bank Side need to do and how they achieve it.
- AHDB - Amy Hughes - Creating a Profitable and Functional Suckler Cow
- Farm Gate Vets - Sarah Harker and Rebekah Carling - The Animal Health Pathway for Suckler Cows Clostridial Disease (Blackleg)
- LUNCH INCLUDED and kindly supported by MSD

To book please call the practice or e mail
linda@farmgatevets.com by Monday 5th June
Please bring clean boots or wellies.

Finbarr O'Sullivan-Greene

Dairy Cows and Cow Comfort

On average cows should be lying down for 14 hours a day any less and their performance is compromised. For dairy cows, reduced lying times can be caused by

- Inappropriate cubicle dimensions
- Bedding substrate
- Overstocking and accessibility.

Overstocking exacerbates mastitis and lameness because of increased slurry production and increased standing times. Production losses of 0.73kg of milk/cow/day can be seen for every 10% increase in stocking rates over 80% occupancy. Inadequate cubicles can cause mastitis, lameness, and physical trauma.

Evaluate your cubicle dimensions. Do they accommodate the largest cows within the herd? Is there ample forward lunge space? Close fronted cubicles are problematic with hock lesions, discomfort and cubicle soiling happening because of 'side-lunging'. Closed fronted cubicles are often off putting for cows causing an 'unknown' overstocking issue. 'Dog-sitting' where cows get up with their front feet first is a classic sign of an inadequate lunge space. Cows 'perching' i.e., standing with just their front-feet in the cubicle is another sign of poor cubicle design and/or an uncomfortable bed.

Requirements and Recommendations	
Cubi- cles	Suitable for the largest cow in the herd At least one cubicle per cow (Red Tractor) 5% more cubicles than cows (FAWC) 15-20% more cubicles for vulnerable cows (fresh/ sick) Review cubicle dimensions If a cow does not like a cubicle she will 'perch' on the end of it.
Loafing	An area of at least 3m² per cow must be available not including passageways near the feed-face. Requirements of at least 120% of the cubicle lying area are recommended by Red Tractor
Cush- ioning	Bedding material is always required (absorbs liquid preventing mastitis and friction sores) Hock swellings and sores are a sign that bedding is abrasive. Lesions can be assessed with the AHDB score chart. 'Perching' is a sign of discomfort
Dead- zones	Dead-zones allow for dominant cows to act aggressively preventing subordinates from feeding/lying down. This can cause an 'unknown' overstocking issue. Check there are 'escape routes' in all areas of your housing.



DairyCo guidelines for cubicle dimensions are based on cow weights and cubicle types and can be found on the AHDB website.

Want to check your cubicles are up to scratch? Use the Standard Index (SI) Test and frequently assess your cows 2 hours before evening milking. If you're consistently getting a value greater than 20% a housing assessment would be worthwhile.

Standard Index (SI) Test:

$$(\text{Cows perching in cubicles} \div \text{Total number of cows in cubicles}) \times 100$$

Sometimes all it takes is an extra pair of eyes to look at your cow accommodation and make some simple cost-effective solutions to improve cow comfort, welfare and productivity.

Item Grants

Staying on topic, please remember the Animal Health & Welfare Item Grants applications are open until June 15th, grants are available for a whole list of things but these do include -

£26 per space for cow mattresses **£43 per space for flexible cubicle dividers**

The full list for cattle can be found on this link— <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-equipment-and-technology-fund-fetf-2023/annex-4-fetf-2023-animal-health-and-welfare-eligible-items#cattle>

If you are planning on shed improvements this summer, don't delay and apply on or before June 15th!

Charlotte Chapman

Couple of Reminders

Farm Health Plan Reviews

If you are booking a Health Plan review, for those who now have the Health Plan Folders—please can you **return them to the practice at least 5 days before your health plan visit**. This means updated paperwork can be added and the vet can review your existing plan.



Cool Bags

Please can you return to the practice any vaccine cool bags that you have lying around? We need to ensure vaccines are not being cooked and destroyed on their journeys, especially now the weather is warming up and we seem to be running low on bags. Many Thanks!



Congratulations Catriona

The whole practice and many of our clients would like to wish Catriona and Mark a huge congratulations on their wedding last month. We wish you both all the happiness in the world!



Sadly (for us) we also are saying cheerio to the newly weds as our lovely Ayrshire lass is returning to her roots and moving back to Scotland. Catriona has been a great asset to our Lancaster team, has become a super farm vet and we will miss her greatly. Good luck and all the best with your next adventures.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES -We have a vacancy for a full time **SMALL ANIMAL VET** and a **VETERINARY NURSE** to work from our Sedbergh Branch. Please contact our practice manager Carol Curwen on 01524 60006 for details.

Dates For Your Diary



Thursday 8th June 2023 - Suckler Cow Meeting and Farm Tour by kind permission of our hosts Martin and Arlene Fishwick at Low Bank Side, Cartmel, CA10 2Q7.

11am—2pm . Meeting includes a Farm Tour via Tractor & Tractor, talks from Amy Hughes from AHDB—Creating a Profitable Suckler Cow and Sarah & Rebekah—The Animal Health & Welfare Pathway for Sucklers and Clostridial Disease in Cattle. **To book please phone the practice or e mail linda@farmgatevets.com by Monday 5th June 23.**

Lunch included and kindly supported by MSD Animal Health



Tuesday 27th June 2023, Summer Farm Visit to Rawfoot Farm, Bampton, Penrith, CA10 2Q7. Sheep Club Members (or clients interested in joining sheep club) please join us for this trip. We are meeting on farm at 10am, having a talk from our host Richard Carruthers on the changes they have made to their upland beef and sheep farm as an AHDB strategic farm followed by a farm walk. Lifts available from J36 if needed.

Please contact linda@farmgatevets.com or phone the practice to book in by Friday 23rd June.



Lancaster Office

Tel: 01524 60006

Open 8:30am-5pm

Monday-Friday

9am—12noon Saturdays

CLOSED Sundays

J36 Kendal Office

Tel: 015395 67899

Open 8:30am-5pm

Monday-Friday

9am—12noon Saturdays

CLOSED Sundays

Sedbergh Office

Tel: 015396 20335

Open 8:30--5pm

Monday-Friday

CLOSED Saturdays

CLOSED Sundays

farmgate
vets

www.farmgatevets.com



Find us on
Facebook



PLUS 24 hour emergency service 7 days a week