

I don't want to state the obvious but August has been a roller coaster ride of a month. We had cows struggling in the heat with digestive upsets and pneumonia to cows being brought inside due to the really wet conditions. One thing is for sure livestock farming keeps us all on our toes! We are talking about pneumonia in this month's newsletter which if cattle are going to be coming in early is going to be very topical. Pneumonia is an ever present problem in housed cattle. We want you to think, can we do anything different? That can be decreasing stock numbers, increasing ventilation or vaccinating. Every farm is different so that is why we need to tailor our advice to your farm.

Jim McKinstry

MAINTAINING HEALTHY LUNGS THIS WINTER

As we approach Autumn, we need to start thinking about calf pneumonia. Pneumonia is multifactorial, meaning in addition to infectious viruses and bacteria, husbandry and management factors play an essential role in outbreaks.

Colostrum & adequate nutrition

Plenty of good quality colostrum (10% bodyweight), quickly (within 6hrs) is essential. Followed by feeding milk or milk replacer at the correct concentration and enough of it – as an absolute minimum, 3l twice a day. The colder the outside temperature, the more energy a calf utilises to keep warm, so the less available for growth – hence feeding more in colder temperatures.

Ventilation (without drafts)

We all know about the 'stack effect' (fresh air comes in through the side and stale air rises and exits at the top of the building) and the need to avoid still air, but do you know **why?** Inadequate ventilation leads to a build up of ammonia, dust, humidity and microorganisms in the air, which irritate and damage the lining of the respiratory tract, allowing the normal resident bugs of the nose and mouth to invade the lungs and cause infection.

Bedding

Wet bedding (and other surfaces) increases humidity and favours the survival of bacteria and viruses, and increases the amount of heat lost by a calf when lying down. Deep straw bedding is a great insulator and provides a high 'nesting score' – you shouldn't be able to see a calf's hock.



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Continued ... Mixing

Mixing calves of different ages increases the stress on younger calves and exposes them to bugs shed by the older calves before their immune systems are developed. Where calves of mixed age groups have to be housed in the same airspace, house the younger ones upwind of the older ones.

If buying in, mixing calves from different farms should also be avoided, to avoid introducing bugs that other calves may be naïve to.

Overcrowding

Overcrowding cannot be compensated for by increased ventilation. The space requirements for air are a minimum of six cubic metres of air space for small calves and ten cubic metres for larger calves.

Vaccination

Vaccinations are a useful aid in the control of pneumonia, however should not be seen as an alternative to good management. In order to see the best results from the vaccine, we need to get the vaccination programme completed ahead of the main risk period, to allow the calf to mount a fast immune response at the time of the challenge, so now is the time to start thinking about this.

90% of UK farms have one or more of the respiratory viruses, so when buying in animals from multiple sources, pneumonia is a constant risk, and vaccination is advised.

In the event of an outbreak we can take tracheal (windpipe) samples, blood samples or lung samples (post mortem only!) to diagnose the causal agents and then allow us to choose a suitable vaccine. Please don't ignore early cases as the cost of one dead calf could pay for all your vaccine!



Becky Inman

MEDICINE MATTERS

I rarely have any good news to share with you on this matter. We have lost a product that has been on the market for a long time. **FOSTON** injection has been discontinued. This was not a big seller but for a down cow with phosphorus deficiency it was vital. We have another phosphorus injection called **VIGOPHOS** which is very similar to Foston and this is what we will be using instead.



Antibiotic milking cow tubes remain in short supply so please have patience with us if we are unable to get your usual tube. We are finding it useful talking to farmers about mastitis in their herds when we are recommending different tubes. It is good to have a chat and review mastitis as a lot of times we can give some advice to prevent some cases of mastitis from happening.

There may be some hiccups in **some injectable antibiotics** over the next couple of months so you may get an alternative to what you ask for. We will explain if there are any differences but we do try to get a like for like product especially when it comes to milk and meat with hold times. As ever if you are unsure about anything, please give us a ring.

Jim Mckinstry

ITS ONLY TAKEN 24 YEARS.....

After 24 years as a vet, I experienced a career first last month. I was called to post-mortem a ewe that had ailed for a few days and then died. The liver was free of any fluke, but a diagnosis of pneumonia was obvious.

The farmer's next sentence began with "while you're here...", as it often does. "While you're here, can I ask you about some calves? Should I be worming them?" It was mid-June, a dry season, they had been vaccinated with Huskvac before turnout and were doing well with no coughing or scouring. My answer was no, but ask me again in another month.



The farmer's next sentence was a bit more unusual. "I like it when you come" he said, "you save me money". Without the post-mortem or the quick chat, he might have fluked all his ewes, and wormed all his calves. Both treatments would have been time-consuming, costly and unnecessary.

I hope it isn't another 24 years before a farmer again admits that paying for veterinary advice can save money!

Sarah Harker

UMBILICAL HERNIAS: THE RISK FACTORS

While on farm we often get asked to look at swellings associated with the calf's navel. They can be a simple navel ill, or in some cases umbilical hernias, which can be associated with abscesses.

We will often get asked why this happens. We can see them in batches in a herd, after years of not having any. The reasons for getting umbilical hernias are still a little unclear, with not a great deal of studies looking at them.

General Rules:

NAVEL ILL in early life is one of the biggest risks.

There is a **genetic component** from the sire (and potentially the dam). However, there is no single gene responsible for it, so it is unclear how significant the impact is.

Twins are more likely to get them.

Recent studies have shown **bull calves** are slightly more predisposed, though it was thought to be the other way round some years ago.

Big calves that have had some pressure put on them during calving are at a higher risk.

If you are seeing a lot of umbilical hernias, it is probably wise to keep up good navel hygiene (dipping), make sure calves get a decent feed of colostrum and are kept in clean, deep beds. Looking at the bull would be the next priority as this does seem to have an impact on a farm to farm basis.

Bethany Thornton



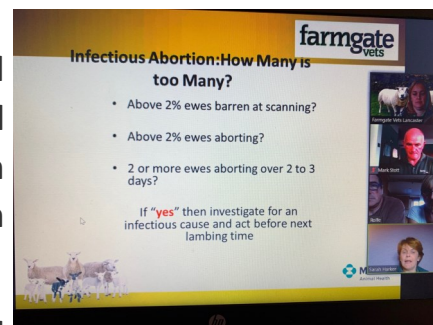
WARMEST WELCOME TO DAVID

Last month vet David Weir joined us to work mainly out of our Lancaster practice. Originally from Glasgow and before becoming a vet he worked for the department of agriculture in Ayrshire. After time spent in New Zealand milking cows and working in construction, he studied Veterinary Medicine in Košice, Slovakia. Most recently David has been working in mixed practice in East Yorkshire so brings to us a wealth of experience. His main interests are fertility and all things at lambing time so he's definitely moved to the right part of the world now! To make him feel even more at home in North Lancashire/ Cumbria his hobbies outside work are running, hiking and snowboarding - hopefully not too much snow for you this winter though David!



WE HAVE BEEN DRAGGED INTO THE AGE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY!

In this strange world we are living in and in the absence of our usual face to face meetings, workshops and training sessions, we've had to re think our communications with clients. As a result we have run a couple of successful web meetings on Pre Topping Preparation and Cattle Lameness. Thank you to those who joined us!



Although we have missed the social aspect and a bite to eat, these meetings have been a great way to keep in touch and chat about some decent topics. **Please look out for our next online meeting which will be held on Tuesday 29th September, 7.30pm where Jim and Beth will be talking on Tackling Calf Pneumonia this winter.**

A REMINDER ABOUT OUR SHEEP CLUB

Members benefit from unlimited FEC's, unlimited post mortem examinations (not inc lab fees), 20% off tup vasectomies and Ram MOT tests, a place on our lambing course, 2 vet visits including a flock health plan. Please find out more.



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