

Case Study: Downer Cows

This is Grumbledore and her calf. I attended her as a down cow one day before calving, with a suspicion of milk fever – for which she was treated. She calved the next day without difficulty but was still not up and so I visited again. A blood sample was taken and more calcium administered; having checked the calcium, magnesium and phosphorous levels using the in-house lab at the practice these were all found to be at an adequate level and with no injuries present I began to suspect this cow had developed a secondary neuropathy/myopathy (also known as 'downer cow syndrome' or dead legs).

The best advice for downer cows (assuming there are no other problems) is to keep them on very deep bedding and lift them every four hours or at least 5 times per day, for 15-30 minutes per lift; this is rarely done however, due to time constraints, labour and so on.

In this case, bedding up and lifting was carried out religiously with padded straps on pallet forks, and after a few days she was taking some weight. After nearly a week of excellent care she was able to stand up on her own and walk around with ease, as can be seen in the picture!

This is a nice success story but with some important messages: down cows need to be properly checked as to why they are down, and if it is appropriate to attempt to get the down-cow standing again, it must be done with full commitment and the right equipment – otherwise it is unlikely to work and presents a potential welfare concern for the time

that animal is still on-farm, which is obviously a major concern within the industry currently.

Charlie Neale



Grumbledore & her calf



Example of padded lifting strap



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Farm Newsletter



Cows viewed through the early morning mist.

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Office opening hours

Monday – Friday: 8am—5.30pm

Saturday: 8.30am—12pm

Emergency Service

We provide a 24 hour emergency service.

If you need assistance out of our normal working hours, please telephone

01749 341 761

If you would like to receive your farm account and this newsletter by email please advise the farm office.



Directors Focus

“ The Five Non-Negotiables for Managing the Modern Dairy Cow ”

AHDB Dairy have just finished a national Lecture tour with Dairy Farmers Lloyd and Daphne Holterman of Rosy Lane Holsteins, who run a 1000 cow dairy in Wisconsin. The penultimate meeting was held at the Bath and West. The tour has been greatly received and certainly encouraged us to think about management on the dairy farms, or for that matter other farming enterprises in this area.

Rosy Lane Holsteins recipe for success, the so called 5 non-negotiables were; Great People; Measure, Measure, Measure; Finance and Record

Keeping; Genetic Excellence; and finally Bio-security and Disease Control. The take home points to share with those of you that were unable to attend was the respect for people within the business. Individuals not necessarily from a farming background, often Mexican with Spanish as their first language were selected for their skills sets and encouraged with training to excel. This was taken to the extreme by such individuals becoming partners in the business. The pay scale was dependent on how easy the employee made the owners life -

the calf rearer was the highest paid member of the team in this case. What also was an interesting concept is co-working, in that all staff had exposure to the other tasks on the farm. This engendered respect for each other roles and greater teamwork. Lloyd finished by informing us of the hidden sixth non-negotiable; "The price of inaction is far greater than the cost of making a mistake". I am certain that we will continue talking about this influential lecture tour for many months to come. Thank you to AHDB Dairy.

Michael Head

Community Focus

Farm Animal Consulting Rooms

We are pleased to announce that after refurbishment, we now have a farm animal consulting room in our stable block.

This facility is available for the examination and treatment of smaller farm animals, and to enable us to carry out procedures such as:

- Disbudding
- Castration
- Fluid treatment
- Caesarians for Ewe's /Doe's

Please contact the farm office as normal, to make an appointment to bring your animal/s in to see the vet.



The TB Advisory Service

Shepton Vets are pleased to be able to provide advice on behalf of the TB Advisory Service (TBAS). We can either offer a farm visit or telephone advice service at no charge to yourselves.

The advice we will offer will be tailored to your farm and business. Please speak to Alex, Ralph or Rob.

Defra are likely to increase the use of the gamma interferon blood test in herds which have persistent breakdowns, where there is an explosive breakdown, or where it is thought that the skin test is not identifying infected animals in a herd.

Seven clear skin tested cows failed as Visible Lesion reactors at a recent blood test. It's possible that these cows had become desensitised at the TB injection site; an occurrence which has been previously recorded.

If your herd has had several tests in recent months it would be sensible, if possible, to ask the vet to test on the opposite side of the neck.

DON'T INVITE BADGERS INTO YOUR LIVESTOCK BUILDINGS AND FEED STORES

GRAZING:

Separate cattle from setts and latrines by using a single strand electric fence then top the 'at risk' area so it doesn't later attract more wildlife.

DON'T feed concentrates on the ground or in troughs at ground level. Use troughs 1.1m high or at least raised troughs for young calves.

DON'T use licks at ground level. MOUNT on top of a rubble filled plastic barrel.

DON'T let your cattle drink from watercourses. Consider, if possible, lowering the level of water in a trough so a badger can't drink from it if it stands on its hindlegs. Consider emptying water troughs if cattle aren't grazing nearby.

IN HOT DRY WEATHER:

Badgers will be attracted to water troughs if natural sources have dried up. Badgers' usual food supply – earthworms – will become scarce which means that hungry individuals might be attracted to your buildings and feed stores. If you floor feed, try 4 strands of electric wire at 10, 15, 20 and 30cms above the ground at the perimeter of the risk area to deter badgers. Spillages should also be cleared.

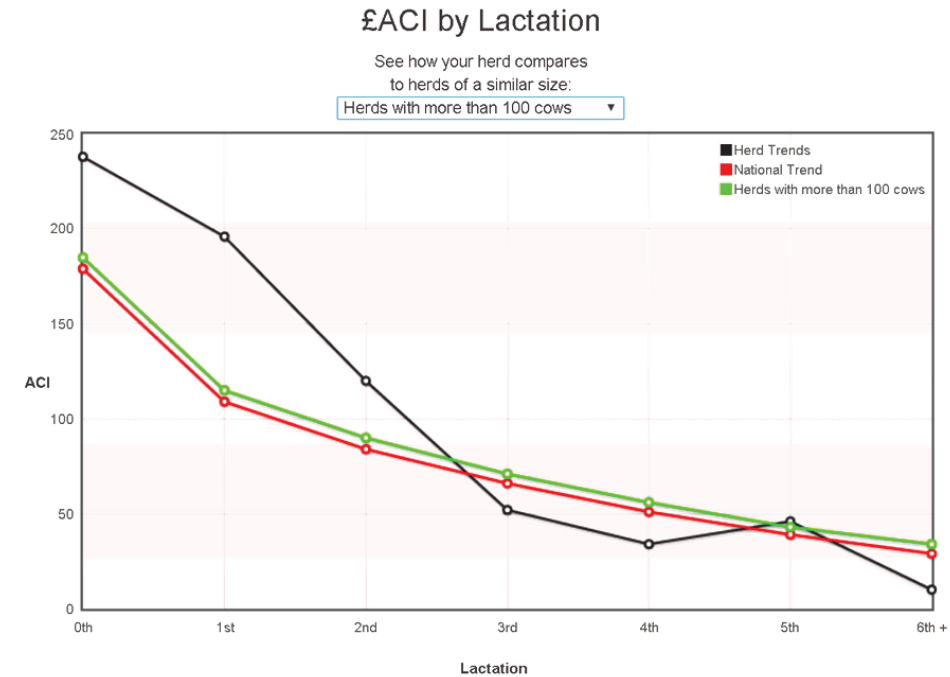
SLURRY:

Store for at least 2 months during the summer and at least 4 months during winter before spreading on grazing land.

Farmer Focus: Genetics

Shortly after I joined the practice in 2015, AHDB started producing independent Herd Genetic Reports and we had a farm meeting alongside AHDB on this topic that some of you may have attended.

Following this meeting I became involved with the genetics on a number of our clients farms which now have animals from their new breeding plans in their second lactation! Below is a graph of the genetic progress of one of these farms. By no means was it a badly bred herd, as can be seen by the graph of animals now in 3rd, 4th, 5th or 6+lactations, but having clearly defined their breeding goals, improved dam selection and selected the most appropriate sires on the market (not just from one AI company!), the current crop of youngstock is well within the top 1% of all youngstock within the UK. These heifers will be far more profitable than the 'average' animal, and the individual traits that have been focussed on will mean that they 'fit' the farm that they are on far better than an animal that could be purchased elsewhere.



(Not sure about the hair-do, but these are some well bred heifers!)

If you are interested in getting a Herd Genetic Report for your farm or just want a chat about genetics (with someone that isn't trying to sell you semen!), feel free to give the practice a call, AND to talk to me.

Charlie Neale

Events & Training Calendar

Fresh Cow Care

Lunch & Learn
15th May

MilkSure

5th June

BVD Stamp it Out

14th June

DIY AI Course—Somerset

22nd –25th July

Hoof Trimming & Lameness

2nd September

DIY AI Course—Somerset

16th –19th September

Email: training@sheptonvets.com for more information or to book a space.

Team Shepton: Oliver Tilling

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I've been a Director at the practice for nearly 3 years now and it has provided many ups and downs, but I don't regret my decision to invest my future in such an exciting project as Shepton Vets for a second.

When not involved at work I try to run three times a week – I say it's to keep fit, but really it's to counter my generally poor diet! However, the greatest amount of my free time is spent with my son Rupert who is now 4. He has become a fantastic excuse to revert to behaving like a young boy myself. Trips to the park, explorations in the garden, Lego, Brio trains, toy cars and tractors all fill my time. Best of all is dressing up and playing pirates – although I've lost count of how many times I've been forced to walk the plank!

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