

Shepton Vets Youngstock Service – What have we learnt?

The Youngstock service has been running for over 4 years now and new clients continue to join. The regular monitoring of calf growth rates, colostrum management and disease and deaths in calves aged 0-100 days has been very successful, and a learning curve for all involved. We've also had benchmarking meetings within the group and had a number of external speakers present on a variety of different subjects. Regular Vet and Tech input plus a forum to learn from each other, as well as external experts, has led to some big gains for calves' and clients alike.

No two systems are the same so challenges encountered and overcome do differ from farm to farm.

As a simple vet I like to group the main areas we have addressed using alliteration: The 5 C's:

1. Colostrum: Effective management here leads to long-term benefits. Only by measuring calf total proteins by regular blood sampling can we determine how consistent and successful this is
2. Cleanliness: Of all aspects of the calf environment, feeding program and people
3. Calories: We feed calves for growth and to have a fully functioning immune system. Assessment of feeding systems has led to some very surprising findings and minor interventions have led to big gains
4. Comfort: This means a comfortable bed, but also freedom from stresses and disease
5. Consistency; Cows and calves like a boring life – they like the same thing in the same way every single day and ideally delivered by the same person.

One of the best things about working with calves is they'll let you know very quickly if changes made are effective or not. So it has been very satisfying to see the system of rearing respond readily when the right management changes take place.

New services always take a while to gain momentum, and the Youngstock service is no exception, but the early adopters are now seeing the benefits of the efforts made.

If you're interested in joining them, contact Oliver or Jess at the practice.



Oliver Tilling



September 2019 Edition

Farm Newsletter

Farm Team of the Year Nominations

Top row: left—right
Y Farms
Graham Weeks
Team Foot

Bottom: left—right
Peter Masters
Chris Dunn



Directors Focus

“ We look forward to seeing you at the Dairy Show ”

We look forward to welcoming you at the Dairy show on 2nd October. We will be in the same location as last year, alongside the Show Ring. Please join us for some refreshments, a chat and an update.

We will once again be celebrating success among practice clients, recognising some of the high performance levels in dairy health that come from dedication and technical expertise. After the success of the Reakes family at Temple House Farm last year, we need your vote to identify this years' winner. Come and find out what this years finalists are doing really well.

Red Tractor and milk buyer requirements on disease control and medicines use are becoming more onerous. We are looking at how we can support you in meeting these demands in a straightforward way. Our technician services are in great demand as farms see the benefits of calf vaccination and the ease of using a disbudding service. Please come and see us to find out more.

We constantly update our skills training to make sure they are practical and relevant. Mastering Medicines and MilkSure courses have been popular and we have launched a Herdsperson

Certificate covering all the key areas to keep up to date with best practice.

We are proud to be sponsoring the future of dairy farming in the Stockmanship and Calf classes at the Dairy Show again, as well as providing veterinary support to the Show. We will also be supporting the dairy industry at the Wells Food Festival, where we will be talking to the public about the real facts about dairy cows and farming.

Please join us for some chat and refreshments and to share your news on 2nd October.

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Monday – Friday: 8am—5.30pm

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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.



Vote for our Farm Team of the Year Award at the Dairy Show

Each year we look to celebrate your hard work and successes with our 'Farm Team of the Year Awards' at the Dairy Show.

We identify farms that have worked as a team to make significant improvements in performance for health, fertility and production.

Farms are nominated by our vet team, and we invite you all to help us celebrate their success by voting for the farm that you think is most deserving of our Shepton Vets Cup.

Come along to our stand at the Dairy Show and vote for the farm you feel that deserves to win from our shortlist.

This year our categories shortlist of farms will have achieved outstanding performance in one 4 key areas;

Fertility

Mastitis

Milk Production

Lameness

So make sure you stop by for your chance to vote for this year's winner.

The Nominations for Farm Team of the Year are:

Fertility: Dunn at Higher Farm

An average pregnancy rate of 27% has been achieved by paying particular attention to bulling cows with the use of Estrojects and regular observation as soon as cows are 42 days calved. This has also improved submission rates to 66%. Having healthy cows on a consistent diet means conception rates achieved are 51%.

Fertility: The Team at Y Farms

Pregnancy rate is currently 29% with considerable amounts of sexed semen being used. It has been consistently around 30 for the last 12 months.

Mastitis: Weeks at Manor Farm

Graham is nominated for this award for his forward thinking approach to mastitis control. This farm has implemented the new Mastitis vaccine Ubac to reduce cases of Strep. uberis mastitis; resulting in a four fold reduction in milking cow tube use, and a 40% reduction in mastitis cases.

Milk Production: Foot at Hawkins Farm

Average yield has gone from 9,600 litres per cow to an impressive 11,000 litres, equating to 37 litres per cow per day at the present time. It is the combination of the investment in staff, cow comfort, nutrition and herd health that has brought forth this impressive change.

Lameness: Masters at Sharpshaw Farm

The team at Sharpshaw Farm have made great improvements to lameness over the last 12 months. Positive changes have included extra cubicle spaces, purchase of a new roll-over crush to allow quality in-house foot trimming and improved lameness detection by staff. These changes have allowed them to almost halve the herd lameness! These steps have had a fantastic impact on welfare and in-turn productivity on the farm.

Vet Technician Service

Our Vet Techs Jess and Tom are here to help with support services on farm, to save you time and money.

- Stress-free disbudding
- Vaccinations
- Udder Singeing
- Mobility scoring
- BVD tagging
- Body condition
- Youngstock Service

For more details on the Vet Tech Support Service or to book an appointment please call the farm office team.

Abomasitis:

Abomasitis is a sporadic disease predominantly affecting dairy calves less than 3 weeks old. Calf mortality is greater than 60% with death occurring between 6 hours and 2 days. We continue to see increasing numbers of cases locally and this is becoming recognised at a national level too.

The inflammation and organ distention associated with abomasitis leaves the calf with clinical signs associated with pain and discomfort. These include: recumbency and abdominal bloat, dehydration, grinding teeth, salivation, colic and death.

Abomasitis requires the right environment in the calf abomasum. The irritation is caused by toxins produced by Clostridium spp. and Sarcina-like bacteria. They require an environment rich in fermentable carbohydrate and a calf with a poor immune status in order to multiply:

- Entry of bacteria into the calf digestive system via a contaminated fomite such as soil, faeces or straw bedding
- Presence of easily fermentable carbohydrates in the abomasum allows Clostridium species and Sarcina-like bacteria to replicate, producing gas and toxins
- Bacterial toxins irritate the abomasal mucosa causing inflammation
- Sustained irritation results in tissue necrosis, haemorrhage and decreased abomasal function

Note: At this stage, the calf can die of sepsis, haemorrhage or dehydration if the abomasitis is severe enough

- Reduced abomasal emptying and eructation allows build-up of bacterial fermentation products particularly gaseous carbon dioxide causing abomasal bloat
- If left untreated the cycle of tissue inflammation and/or bloat, bacterial gas and toxin production will continue until the calf dies.

5 main underlying risk factors enable disease:

1. High osmolality in the abomasum

The energy content of milk replacers is significantly higher than that of the equivalent volume of maternal milk, resulting in a high abomasal

osmolality. If this energy content exceeds the metabolic requirement of the calf, large amounts of easily fermentable carbohydrates remain in the abomasum - ideal for the rapid growth of bacteria

2. High volume feeds

Large volumes can overwhelm the abomasal ability to digest contents and prolong its emptying time

3. Insufficient colostrum

Reducing the ability to fight invading pathogens

4. Rapid diet change

From milk to milk replacer

5. Contaminated fomites

Contamination of feeding tubes, buckets, bedding and other materials increases the likelihood of ingestion of bacteria

Prevention of abomasitis therefore centres on management of the risk factors.

Lower the osmolality in the abomasum - meeting the energy requirements of the calf and not providing excess fermentable carbohydrates in feeds. Provide continuous access to clean, fresh water so calves can dilute abomasal contents, reduce osmolality, whilst maintaining good hydration status

Increase frequency of feeding and decrease volumes Colostrum, colostrum, colostrum!

Slow transitions – when substituting calves from milk to milk replacer

Hygiene and environmental contamination – Clean feed, feeding equipment, calf environment and people

If presented with a sick calf showing the clinical signs of abomasitis prognosis should be guarded.

Call the vet ASAP.

Oliver Tilling



(Marked distension of the abomasum at post-mortem)

Events & Training Courses

Dairy Herdperson Certificate

7th & 8th October

Wells Food Festival

13th October

MilkSure

11th December

Mastering Medicines

20th January 2020

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