

Case Study: Teaser Bulls

This month I was asked to go and vasectomise a bull, for a client. This is the first one the client had done and they had a few questions

What are the advantages?: It is one method to help spot more bulling cows increasing submission rate. It would not be suitable for all systems but on the right farm can work well.

Would you use a chin raddle to mark cows?: The farmers that I have worked with that use a teaser bull have found they can be tricky to get the raddle on and keep on. Most of them have just used tail paint on the cows.

What is the best age to do them?: Normally around 15 months but they can be done younger or older if facilities are appropriate.

How much will it cost?: This will depend on handling facilities and how many you have to do; one bull would be up to approximately £150 including visit and drugs

What ratios do I need?: As a general rule of thumb 1 teaser bull per 100 open cows would be the maximum.

How is the surgery done?: It is normally done standing, I have done 15-20 bulls and not had a problem doing it this way. We normally castrate one testicle and vasectomise one testicle so a teaser bull is very obvious and cannot get mixed up.

How long do they last?: I have seen farmers that have kept them for several years however older

bulls generally have more problems with their feet.

What is their temperament like?: They have all the same hormones that a normal bull would have so you have to be sensible with the bulls that you use. Younger bulls are generally quieter so it can be worth changing them regularly.



Image : 25 days after surgery.



Rob Powell



July 2019 Edition

Farm Newsletter



Directors Focus

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Charlie and Anna become Associate Directors this month.

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July represents a new chapter in the story of Shepton Vets. We welcome Charlie and Anna who become Associate Directors and commit their future to helping drive forward the farm business. Sadly Peter Morley has now left us and we hope he's applied the factor 30 and is settling into retirement to the fullest.

Each of the directors takes a sabbatical on an annual rotation. It's my turn to take time out of the business to refresh and re-focus. I will be taking 6 weeks

off from the end of the month and am travelling to Northern India to trek in the Himalayas for 3 weeks, before returning to the UK to undertake a number of home-grown adventures with my son, Rupert. Don't worry though, I will be returning on 9th September!

Through "BVD Stamp it Out" we have now trained over 70 of you – a huge success. Thank you for your ongoing engagement and commitment to eradicating this costly disease. We continue to

offer support on TB eradication through the TB Advisory Service. Following a visit or phone call to discuss any issues; we are now able to loan out motion sensor cameras (at no cost) to identify any wildlife issues you may be having on farm. Speak to Rob, Alex or Ralph about reducing the risks of TB on your farm and the loan of the cameras.

Oliver Tilling

Shepton Veterinary Group Ltd

Allyn Saxon Drive
Shepton Mallet
Somerset
BA4 5QH

Tel: 01749 341 761

Email: farm.animal@sheptonvets.com

www.sheptonvets.com

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.



Office News

At the end of June, we said a fond farewell to Peter Morley, after more than 33 years service.

We held Peter's retirement party at Wells Golf club (as many of you know Peter needs a bit of work to improve his handicap), with past and present staff and friends. It was a lovely evening, with a beautifully designed cow vet cake and cupcakes.



This month we welcome two new vets to the team, Nicole and Ellie. Nicole graduated in 2014 and spent her time working in the South West before spending a calving season in New Zealand.

Ellie graduated in 2018 and has just completed an years internship. She will already be a familiar face to some of you as she has been on many student placements with us.

Events & Training Calendar

DIY AI Course—Cornwall
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.

Want to see what's happening on your farm?

With our new Victure HC 200 Night vision motion Camera you may just be able to find out!

As part of the TBAS service that we run here at Shepton Vets, we are now able to offer the loan of one of our High Image motion sensor cameras.

The TB Advisory service provides FREE, bespoke advice to cattle keepers in the High Risk and Edge Areas of England through:

- On-farm Advice Visits
- Telephone Advice Service
- One-to-one advice 'drop-in' clinics



Our trained team can assist with your farms trading risks, infrastructure risks and Bio-security as well as being an integral part is assessing wildlife risks.

The Victure Camera's are FREE to loan, easy to install and come with a 32g Memory card ready for your use. The motion sensor is triggered by wildlife movement and will automatically start recording day or night meaning we can easily identify where the problem may be coming from.

If you are interested in a TBAS visit or would like to discuss TB issues with one of our team and perhaps trial a camera please contact Zoe in the Farm Office.

Block Calving Discussion Group

At the beginning of July we held our annual Block Calving meeting at Rodmore Farm.

The Cradock family kindly hosted our evening, with introductions about the farm, talks and discussion, followed by a BBQ.



Vet Rob discussed the changes the farm made to their own calving system and their successes so far. Peter Wastenege runs 8 block calving units in Devon/Cornwall and discussed how they have maximized margins in their own block calving systems.

If you would like to join our block calving discussion group, please contact Rob or Spike at the practice.

Farmer Focus:

The Hares brothers are farming in Horrington near Wells with their mother Judith and their wives, Anna and Caroline.

The two brothers have their own responsibilities within the business. Jacob is mainly responsible for the dairy and the suckler herd. Josh is mainly responsible for the laying unit, the veal calves and the milk hut.

The dairy is currently 244 cows with milk being sold through Arla. The herd is split into highs and lows with the highs receiving TMR through the summer and the lows grazing and receiving concentrate. They are focussed on producing profitable milk with solids to suit a manufacturing contract. 305 day yields are 8781kg at 3.36% protein and 4.23% fat. Fertility is good with a 391 calving interval. Average SCC is good at 114. They installed a new Fulwood herringbone in 2017 which they have been very pleased with.

The milk hut has been running since October 2016 and has been very busy. It is now also selling butter, cheese, eggs and cream. Customers pay £1 for a re-usable glass milk bottle and £1 per litre, serving themselves at the vending machine. Milk sales vary but are over 100 litres a day. Customers are keen to shop locally and several are trying to reduce their plastic usage.

The Veal system has been running since 2014. They were previously keeping bull calves until 20 months and selling them at an Orange market or normal market depending on Tb status. The extra numbers put pressure on winter housing and increased labour requirements. When they went through the costings they decided that a veal unit would be more profitable and managed to get on a contract. Bull calves are kept entire for veal and fed on a blend and chopped straw. They send around 10 bulls a month when they are approximately 8 months old. The minimum weight is 120kg with a bonus if they are between 125 and 140kg.

In Nov 2017 they further diversified into a 16,000 free range laying unit and have been lucky to get a Burford Brown premium egg contract. This was a new enterprise for Josh which he has enjoyed. Anna's family have had a free range laying unit in the Chew Valley for several years which helped.



Rob Powell

Team Shepton: Paddy Gordon

Since Easter my time away from work has been spent on my long awaited building project. After 4 years of planning and legal battles the diggers are finally in. Following levelling the site and ensuring access, I have been inspecting progress daily, scrutinising CAD drawings, and meeting with suppliers to try and get materials just right. Sometimes this means simply agreeing with my wife's choices of kitchen and bathroom fittings.... We now have the footings in place and thermal blocks are being laid so the building is starting to take shape. We are looking to put in a heat pump and solar panels, as in future oil can only become more expensive, and a number of you have been helpful in sharing your own experience with these systems. There are probably 12 months to go and we will then have converted 'Paddy field' into 'Paddy palace' and hopefully avoided 'Paddy pigsty'. Any suggestions for more original names appreciated; or at a more practical level if you have any building materials for sale, particularly blue lias steps, then please get in touch.

