

Dates for your diary

Its our centenary year!!

We have an exciting year ahead, full of events to celebrate 100 years of Shepton Vets.

We hope to run a local farm walk to kick off our centenary celebrations in the spring with our beef farmers, we would love to see you there. And we are planning a trip to one of the winter fairs at the end of the year.

Please keep an eye on our social media pages and newsletters for more details.

Alex

Huskvac

Huskvac is a live, lungworm vaccine we can use in autumn born suckler calves given before their first grazing season or spring born calves before their second grazing season. It is used to help animals build up immunity to lungworm and reduces our reliance on wormers. Animals require 2 doses of this oral vaccine 4 weeks apart, to be completed 2 weeks before turn out.

Our Vet Techs can come out and help you administer the vaccine, we only charge a £5 visit fee for this service, please contact the office to find out more.

Anna

Have you herd about our new “Meds Line”?

Have you *herd* that we now have a “Meds line”? This means that you don't have to wait for the farm office to be open, you can order any time of any day that suits you!

What do you need to know?

- Medicine orders will be ready between **09:30-17:30 Mon to Fri** and **09:00-12:30 Sat**
- All orders by text must allow **30 mins before collection.**
- All orders received **after 17:30 Mon-Fri will be ready by 09:30 the following day.**
- Any orders received **after 12:30 on a Saturday and on a Sunday will be ready by 09:30 on the following Monday**

When placing your medicine order:

- Contact number for Text or Whatsapp Medicine ordering: **07592 307394** Please include;

Account Surname, Farm Name, Collection time if same day, then medicines and quantity followed by End

Example: *Smith, Shepton Vets Farm, 11am, Metacam x 2, Ubroseal Herd Pack x 1. End*

Please note this contact number is for text and WhatsApp messaging medicine orders only.

Vin

Shepton Veterinary Group Ltd
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Email: farm.animal@sheptonvets.com

www.sheptonvets.com

Office opening hours

Monday – Friday: 8am—5.30pm

Saturday: 8.30am—12.30pm

Emergency Service

We provide a 24 hour emergency service.



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

Training Courses

March

Mastering Meds—Thursday 3rd March

April

DIY AI — Wednesday 27th April — Friday 29th April

May

Cow First Aid — Wednesday 18th May

July

Calving Course — Wednesday 6th July

DIY AI — Wednesday 27th July — Friday 29th July

August

Mastering Meds — Thursday 4th August

October

Herdsperson Course — Wednesday 19th October -Thursday 20th October.

February 2022
Edition

Shepton Talking Beef



Trace element profiling in your beef herd.

Last year we saw a larger number of problems that were attributable to trace element deficiencies in herds. Ranging from outbreaks of still births, to calf health and mortality problems, and poor fertility. We saw this in both beef and dairy herds. Especially in our beef herds of the South West, where they are more likely to have a heavily grass based diet it is not unusual so see underlying trace element deficiencies contributing to herd health issues or in fact being the primary cause for disease outbreak. We have seen this across the practice range, not limited to the levels, or the high Mendips.

Trace elements are essential for normal health and function of animals, of note in the UK include cobalt, copper, selenium, and iodine. They perform a variety of vital roles including in energy metabolism and immune response. But getting the balance of these minerals is important as if animals are deficient this can result in ill-thrift, or reproductive failure, but if they are provided in excess can cause poisoning.

Trace element availability in both grass and forage is altered by lots of factors including soil type, other soil antagonists, pH, geology, drainage, plant type and weather, and it is thought that maybe the mild wetter winters have caused an increase in these cases with mineral leaching from soils.

We usually blood sample a group of 6-12 animals that have been on a steady diet for a period. For example, at the end of the grazing season or in the dry period where cattle are being fed only silage/hay or grass. For a lot of our spring calving herds now is a prime time to sample a bunch of dry cows. In a grass based beef suckler system we would recommend annual sampling to monitor. We run a profile of trace element tests looking at Copper, GSHPX (an indicator of selenium status) and a pooled iodine sample from the group. Cobalt is difficult to reliably measure in cattle.

This blood sampling 'asks the cows' the how their diet is providing the essential nutrient requirements. It is worth noting in *none* of the problem cases last year was general diet an issue, body condition score was good on one farm some coat changes can be observed for example spectacled colour changes around the eyes but these cattle wouldn't look to have inadequate diet in any way. Two of the beef herds where trace element deficiencies were contributing to calf losses, had good finishing grades and ages, indicating deficiency may not have been a problem in previous years.

Unnecessary supplementation is at best a needless expenditure of time, money and labour, and at worst can lead to an excess of minerals resulting in poisoning with copper poisoning being the most common one being over supplemented. It is also important to rule out lack of energy in the diet or parasitic disease, which are both more common causes of ill thrift, before assuming trace element deficiencies are the problem.

Traditionally supplementation on many farms has been lick buckets or dietary additives however individual uptake is unreliable and in our area especially, we don't want to be putting lick buckets out that may encourage wildlife (badgers or deer) to share the molassed carrier. We would recommend bolusing. The boluses we recommend last 6 months and depending on your area it may be possible to bolus only once a year pre calving or in fact it may be required twice a year to ensure good return to fertility also. We do find that even with bolusing in some areas farms may even require additional top up with for example pour on iodine.

If you have not checked your trace element status for some time give us a call and we can arrange to blood sample at the soonest suitable time.

Alex



Cow and heifer performance are key to the successful performance of the suckler herd.

Within the UK beef industry there has been a lot of improvements seen in terminal traits such as growth weight and carcass traits, however, there has been less focus and therefore progress on maternal traits including fertility and age at first calving. In many countries the age at first calving has been around 2 years for many years but this is still less common in the UK. Heifer management costs equate to around 10% of the total cost of production. Calving heifers at two rather than three has been shown to be an effective way of reducing these costs through reduced management cost, but also increased number of calves the heifer produces in her lifetime.

When you ask many producers why they don't calve at two often the main reasons quoted are:

- Additional feed cost.
- Increased risk of calving.
- Challenges of rebreeding after first calving.

The key areas which appear to underpin the success of reducing age at first calving are genetics, nutrition, and effective selection. As a vet team we are well placed to help support your herd to set and reach targets through health planning and on farm measuring and monitoring.

Heifer pre breeding examinations are a great place to start as they allow us to get on farm and see your animals; do some recording, have conversations, and make decisions about selection as well as assessing heifer nutrition and genetics at the same time.



What is a pre breeding examination/PBE?

An examination of the breeding tract to see if the animal is cycling normally, pregnant (more common that you think!) or a freemartin. It allows for heifer weight and body condition to be recorded and assess the heifer's temperament. These are essential to understand if an animal should be bred and is ready to be bred.

At the same time as the PBE we can carry out pelvic measuring to assist with selection further. The pelvic area grows at a constant rate – from 9 to 24 months of age. Native breeds grow at around 8cm² per month and continentals at around 10cm² per month for this period. Animals with a small pelvic area and any abnormally shaped pelvises will be identified and should be removed from the breeding pool. The primary cause of dystocia is fetal oversize, but the second is pelvic area. Tools like this give us more information about the likelihood of success of a heifer in the system and therefore leaving less to chance. Using pelvic measuring in combination with EBV's will help to reduce the risk of two of the biggest worries to those thinking about reducing age at first calving; increased risk of calving and rebreeding challenges.

If you would like to find out more about this service and more please get in touch.

Get prepared

Red Tractor rules changed in 2021 meaning that your Herd Health Plan becomes a more involved exercise this year. This is a great opportunity to gather data and discuss whats going on your farm and review productivity and results. We love to crunch the numbers and see if there are areas we can help. It helps us get a broader picture on farm rather than just looking at the sick animal or calving cow in front of us at the visit. Whilst this is useful, it is most best to have the data available well before the visit to save us number crunching with you and instead we can use the time on your HHP visit to have more meaningful discussions and help you looking forward on your enterprise.

The some of the data required by RT and preferred by us for meaningful discussion are the Key Performance Indicators listed below.

- Number of bulls
- Number cows to bull
- Date Bulls in and out
- Number Barren confirmed empty at PD
- Number aborted
- Total number Calved
- Number Calved in first 3 weeks
- Number Calvings requiring assistance
- Number Calves Born Dead or died upto 24hrs old
- Number Calves dead 24hrs-4 weeks
- Number calves dead 4 weeks- weaning

Bovigen Scour vaccine

Dont forget to get your Bovigen Scour vaccine into your suckler cows before calving time. Given to the cow or heifer 3-12 weeks before calving she can then pass on immune protection through her colostrum to the calf against Rotavirus, Coronavirus and E. Coli. Thereby reducing the severity and number affected by calf scours. Obviously, the efficacy of a vaccine like this depends upon the calf then getting a sufficient amount of colostrum from the dam, in an environment where the teats and general environment is clean also. This is especially important as there is no vaccine cover for Cryptosporidium so you have to rely on calving environment cleanliness here.

Bovigen Scour is given as one dose 3ml IM 3-12 weeks pre calving. We have 5 dose and 30 dose bottles available. For more information regarding Bovigen Scour give us a call or order your doses with Vin.



Alex