



FARM NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2023

NEARLY SPRING...

Daylight hours are steadily increasing, spring is (hopefully!) not too far away and we have lots going on at Shepton Vets this month. We have our third Shepton Top 10 meeting of the season, where Rosie will lead a discussion on herd mobility, considering how farms can monitor and reduce the level of lameness in their herd.

Vin has been busy in the dispensary taking lots of herd vaccine orders. Our vets have been reviewing vaccination protocols to ensure vaccines are being used correctly and are most appropriate considering disease risk on farm.

Understandably, we often get asked about TB trends. Paddy has looked at the numbers of reactors found on client's farms since 2018 and analyses the reduction in reactor numbers in this newsletter. Our team of TBAS advisors has expanded this month, addition of Harry who is really keen to visit farms and discuss steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of a TB outbreak in your herd. Alex is attending a 2-day advanced TB training course this month



which will equip the team with further knowledge on a disease that continues to frustrate us all.

We eagerly await news from APHA on the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway - this is due to launch imminently. All clients with >10 cattle or >20 sheep claiming BPS are eligible for a fully funded vet visit every 10 months, the first round of visits will include BVD screening for cattle keepers. For sheep keepers testing will be carried out to establish the effectiveness of wormers used on farm. Once this testing has been done the remainder of the visit can be used to review health and welfare issues most relevant to the farm, discuss biosecurity and medicine usage. Charlotte in the office has a sign-up sheet for those who would like to register interest.

/ Anna

UDDER HEALTH TIPS

We had a great second Top10 meeting at Pilton last month, focusing on udder health. Thank you to all that attended and a big congratulations to The Doman Family at Manor Farm for becoming our Udder Health Champion, and to all the Top10 award winners for achieving high performance in what can be a very tricky management aspect of dairy farming. For those that were unable to attend, but are interested in your results, please speak to your routine vet and they'll be able to bring your data to show you where your farm sits in our benchmarking group.

The evening focused on three simple metrics, for which we have accurate data – a key component of successful benchmarking. The metrics covered were bulk milk SCC, milking cow tube usage and dry cow tube usage; all used a proxy-measures to udder disease and therefore profit associated with having healthy udders. We learned that as a



group, the Shepton Top10 farmers outperform UK targets and averages, but there is still

a substantial difference between the top and bottom quartiles of our group, equating to financial differences of over £20,000/100 cows!

When looking at improving udder health, there are some recurring themes, whether you are looking to lower SCC, reduce clinical mastitis/ tube usage or improve dry-off outcomes/ selective DCT, which are:

Know where the risks are – this requires data analysis, using specialist programmes that we have at Shepton Vets. Analysing the data shows what areas on the farm or what points in time appear to have associated risk. Once we know this, we can focus on-farm investigation exactly where it's required to yield results.

Know your bugs – if we know where the bugs are coming from, but don't know which bugs they are, it makes it very tricky to make informed decisions on how to manage infections (treat, if so which treatment; or no treatment?). By submitting samples for culture, which we now carry-out in house, we can quickly develop a pathogen profile for your farm and set up specific treatment/management protocols that will give you the best outcomes. I advise at least annually that 3 highest SCC cows, 3 new SCC cows are sampled and 3 chronic (3+ high recordings

LAST FEW SPACES AVAILABLE:
BOOK NOW!



SHEPTON TOP 10 MOBILITY

MON 27TH FEB @ 7.30PM
PILTON CLUB

Join us for supper and a discussion about our third 'Shepton Top 10' topic, Mobility.

Farm Vet Rosie Lyle will talk about measuring a herd's mobility and how to reduce the impact of lameness in your herd.

There are limited spaces available so please call us on 01749 341 761 to confirm your place and let us know of any dietary requirements.



in a row) cows are sampled, as well as 6 clinical mastitis cases – all of which can be frozen and stored until they are submitted for culture.

Act upon problems – just knowing your risks/ bugs is not enough, you must act on the information you have, and the advice given. Setting up effective and easy to follow plans with our vets will be the easiest way to succeed in improving udder health.

Consistently good udder health is tricky to achieve but engaging with the above steps will help you on your way. If you are interested in anything I have summarised above, please speak to your routine vet.

We now look forward to welcoming you to our next Pilton Top10 meeting this month - please book your places ASAP!

/ Charlie



QUALITY COLOSTRUM IS (LIQUID) GOLD

February 2023 is the start of a new AHDB campaign #ColostrumIsGold.

Failure of passive transfer of immunity (FPT) in calves occurs when they do not absorb enough antibodies from colostrum.

FPT has been linked to increased calf disease, increased death rates, reduced weight gain, increased age at first calving, reduced first and second lactation milk production and increased first lactation culling.

Quality and volume of colostrum fed are the two biggest factors affecting the amount of colostrum antibodies consumed. An achievable herd level goal is to harvest colostrum $\geq 22\%$ on the Brix refractometer in 90% of samples tested.

Colostrum quality is affected by:

Delayed collection - concentration of antibodies in colostrum is highest immediately after calving and decreases by 3.7% during each subsequent hour milking is delayed.

Dry period - cows with a 40-day dry period produced 2.2kg less colostrum



Colostrum pooling - insufficient research is available about the effect of pooling on colostrum quality. It has been discussed that higher yielding cows with low antibody colostrum could potentially dilute colostrum quality when pooled. The disease risks are known for pooling colostrum with regards to Johnes and calf diarrhoea meaning we do not recommend

Breed - A small research study found antibody levels were higher in Jersey and Ayrshire colostrum than Holstein colostrum.

Age of dam - it is common practice to not use colostrum from 1st-lactation cows. Several studies have found no significant difference in colostrum quality between 1st and 2nd lactation cows. Cows in the 3rd lactation and greater generally produce colostrum with the highest antibody levels.

Dry period nutrition - dry cow nutrition can affect colostrum antibody content however research has shown this is not commonly the case unless nutrition is severely restricted.

Volume of colostrum produced at first milking - a 1991 research project observed that cows producing less than 8.5kg of colostrum had a higher colostrum antibody concentration. More recent research has found no significant relationship between volume of colostrum produced at first milking and colostrum antibody concentration.

If you would like to test the quality of colostrum on your farm, test antibodies in the calves or discuss colostrum management on farm then please speak to one of our vets.

/ Rob

than cows with a 60-day dry period in one trial. Cows with dry periods <21 days produced colostrum with lower antibody concentration.

Bacterial contamination - increased colostrum bacterial levels reduce antibody absorption; bacteria compete with antibodies for absorption or bind with antibodies affecting absorption.

Unless colostrum is fed immediately it should be frozen or refrigerated within 1 hour of collection. Refrigerated colostrum should be used within 24 hours, this can be extended to 6 days with the addition of colostrum preservatives. Pasteurising (60C for 60 minutes) can extend refrigeration to 8 days. Pasteurisation of colostrum and milk significantly decreased calf disease from 15.0 to 6.5% and death rates from 5.2 to 2.8% in one research trial.

Hygiene of dump buckets and colostrum feeding equipment is vital - think of all the work we put into keeping parlour bactoscans low and apply the same principles.

Dam vaccination - vaccination is unlikely to increase the total antibody count but will increase concentrations of antibodies for pathogens including Coronavirus, Rotavirus and E. Coli. Bovigen scour is used successfully on many farms.



PRACTICAL LAMBING COURSE - EXTRA DATE ADDED!

We had a full house for Bibby's Practical Lambing course at the end of last month - in fact, it was so popular that Kate had to run a second group on the night AND we've added an extra date for another session this month too!

Delegates with a range of experience and with flocks of varying sizes attended the evening and went home with lots of tips for the upcoming lambing season as Bibby and Kate shared information and top tips on caring for the ewe before lambing as well as common lambing problems and associated diseases. Delegates also learnt practical lambing skills, which they practised using our lambing simulator.

There are still a few spaces available at the next session if you'd like to join us. Details on the back page of this newsletter.



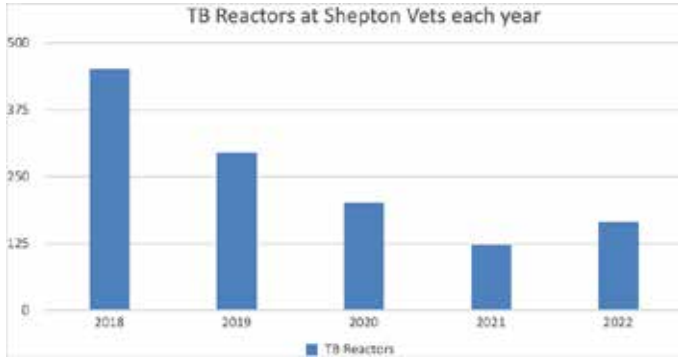
TB TRENDS: IN DECLINE BUT STILL A CONCERN

Bovine TB continues to be a concern but the long term trends indicate that TB is in decline across the High Risk areas, including Shepton Vets client's herds.

APHA changes in policy means more tests are being carried out, both skin and gamma blood tests. This has resulted in slightly more herds being under restriction - 9% of all herds in high risk areas.

However, the big improvement is seen in the number of animals slaughtered which is down by 19% in the past 12 months, from 29,000 cattle to 23,000 cattle. Half of reactors are now identified with the gamma test and half from the skin test.

Across the practice we have seen a big reduction in the number of reactors found on skin tests since 2018. However there has been an increase in 2022 as shown in the chart below.



These trends indicate to me a reduction in overall disease levels in the cattle population. This is important as it should result in less likelihood of a TB breakdown again in the future.

It is also likely that badger culling since 2018 has reduced the external infection pressure on cattle. 2018 was followed by culling licenses being issued in this area. 2022 was a hot dry summer and this can force badgers into farmyards looking for feed and may account for the increase this year.

It is important to focus on factors important on your farm for ongoing disease control. At the cattle vets conference in the autumn it was apparent that some practices are looking at culling more rigorously any cattle with bovine TB reactions. We think there is still opportunity to improve biosecurity on many farms – looking at where cattle and badgers come into contact.

You can have a free TB review under the TBAS scheme with Harry, Alex or Ralph. Please contact Zoe to arrange a visit.

/ Paddy



Want to reduce your risk of a TB Breakdown for FREE? TB Advisory Service (TBAS) is in full flow all around the country and we want you to book in a FREE visit before they sell out. You do not have to be in the middle of a breakdown to benefit from this service. This service could benefit all holdings, for example:

- A recent TB breakdown
- A TB Free holding who would like to reduce chance of a breakdown
- Holdings with regular IRs
- Any sheep, goat, alpaca holding
- Farms designing new buildings
- TB breakdown in neighbouring farms

DEFRA has supplied a new contract to Farmcare Solutions to carry out 2,400 pairs of farm visits throughout the whole of England, as well as telephone advice and Badger Set Surveys. The previous run of visits was a success, with 92% of the farmers saying the recommendations were 'very useful'.

The initial visit will last 2-3 hours, involving a farm walk and risk factor discussion. Four recommendations will be agreed to best help that farm reduce its TB risk. The follow up visit, lasting around 30 minutes will take place six months later to see if the recommendations have been completed.

These visits can be easily organised by contacting the office.

/ Harry

LUNGWORM: DIAGNOSIS AND PREVENTION

This year we haven't seen many cases of lungworm, and those we have seen were later in the season due to the long dry summer followed by a wet and mild autumn. There has recently been a suspected lack of efficacy of eprinomectin against lungworm in a 7 month old suckler calf reported in the South West of England. This is of concern and highlights the importance of vaccinating to protect against lungworm.

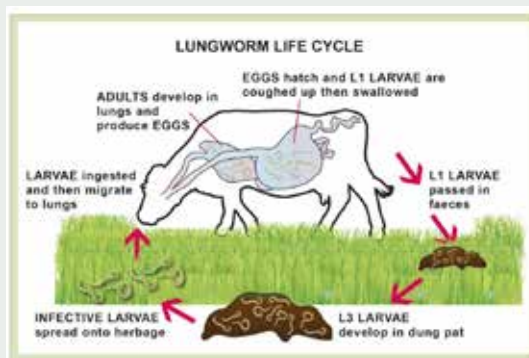
Clinical signs of lungworm:

- Widespread coughing in grazing cattle
- Increased respiratory rate
- Difficulty breathing
- Loss of condition
- Reduced milk yield in adult cows
- Severely affected cattle may also be reluctant to move, stand with their head down and neck extended.

The life cycle of lungworm (*Dictyocaulus Viviparus*) can be seen in the diagram: lungworm larvae are eaten and then migrate to the lungs and produce eggs. These eggs are then coughed up and swallowed into the stomach where they hatch and L1 larvae develop. Larvae are then passed in faeces where they finish maturing into infective larvae and spread onto pasture.

A definitive diagnosis of lungworm can be made by finding larvae in faeces under the microscope and post-mortem. Affected cattle should be treated as early as possible because severely affected animals may not respond. In some cases, symptoms may even be exacerbated as dead or dying larvae block the lower airways.

Calves in their first grazing seasons, particularly dairy calves and autumn born suckler calves are the most at risk due to never having been exposed to lungworm before, and this risk is further increased with wet summers and heavy stocking densities.



cattleparasites.org.uk



Lungworm can be prevented by vaccination with Huskvac. 2x 25ml oral doses should be given at an interval of 4 weeks to healthy animals over 8 weeks old. This needs to be completed 2 weeks before turnout. Lungworm immunity is then maintained from season to season by exposure to lungworm larvae, which in most cases occurs from the grazing of normal pastures after vaccination. However, if animals are not exposed to lungworm whilst grazing, for example due to extensive use of anthelmintics or using clean pasture, then immunity drops off and a single dose booster of Huskvac should be used before turnout.

/ Anna Hewison

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



**** EXTRA DATE ADDED****

PRACTICAL LAMBING

WEDS 15TH FEBRUARY / 7-9PM

Join us for this practical lambing course, including:

- caring for the ewe before lambing
- common lambing problems and associated diseases
- practical lambing skills and top tips using our lambing simulator

Cost £45 (inc.VAT) per person.



LUNCH & LEARN MASTERING MEDICINES

THURS 2ND MARCH / 11AM-2PM

Join us to learn more about safety, good practice and legislative requirements for giving, storing and recording on-farm medicines.

Cost £50 (+VAT) per person.



APHA APPROVED DIY AI COURSE

WEDS 22ND - FRI 24TH MARCH 2023

Our 3 day APHA approved DIY AI course includes:

- a combination of classroom theory (with the help of our training cow) and on-farm practicals, covering anatomy, fertility management and AI technique including lots of practice passing AI guns through cervixes on our training cow, cadaver tracts and live barren cows
- leads to a licensed AI Certificate and includes a follow up visit on your farm a month later to check progress

Cost £550 (+VAT) per person.

NEOSPORA DISCUSSION GROUP PILTON CLUB

MONDAY 17TH APRIL FROM 7.30PM

We will also be running courses in Dry Cow Therapy Administration, Foot Trimming, Practical Calving, Cow First Aid, Mobility Scoring and Youngstock Care - watch this space for details!

**Booking is essential - please call
the office on 01749 341 761
or email training@sheptonvets.com**



MEDS UPDATE & VACCINE OFFERS

Ubrostar Red is now in the country but currently in QA (Quality Assurance) and we are still waiting on confirmation of when this will be available. We do have alternatives available so please contact the farm office to discuss.

We have just received an allocation of Spirovac. This initial batch will be used to fulfil 'back-orders'. We are expecting the next batch very soon, which will be available to order.

Vin will be continuing to ring around to take your Spring vaccine orders. Having BVD, IBR, Lepto and Huskvac dose numbers to hand is useful to get orders secured.

We also have promotions on pour-on wormer and fly treatments for the forthcoming season, so please speak to Vin regarding prices of these products.



PADDY GORDON

MEET THE TEAM

Name: Paddy Gordon / Job: Farm Vet and Director

Where are you from? I have settled into the house I built in North Wootton with my wife, Maddy, and sometimes my 3 adult kids. Two are away at University and one is now working as a junior doctor in Torquay.

Where / what did you study? I studied in Cambridge, and recently went back for a reunion dinner which was a lot of fun, meeting up with my best mate. We have known each other for 37 years now. He reminded me of the time in an embryology practical when he swapped my egg (which should have had a developing chick inside) with a hard boiled egg. Gently peeling off the shell only revealed a cooked egg white and caused all sorts of confusion to me and the teaching staff.

Why did you want to do this job? I was really well supported by the practice when I was a student and recognised that Shepton is a great place to be a dairy vet.

What do you like best about it? Lots of variety which always makes for an interesting and challenging job, working with really committed vets and farmers.

Favourite animal and why? My Dorset Down sheep. I would love to produce a Show winner. I really admire those who know what it takes to breed, prepare and show.

Do you have any pets? Dizzy the delinquent Labrador often joins me at work.

Interesting fact about you? When not at work I can be found watching Bath at the Rec with Peter Morley in the winter, and fly fishing with Peter Edmondson in the summer. We usually need to stop off at the Waitrose fish counter on the way home....



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Office Opening Hours
Mon-Fri: 8am - 5.30pm
Sat: 8.30am - 12.30pm

We also provide a 24 hour
emergency service