



FARM NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2022

Come and see us at the Mid-Somerset Show on Sunday 21st August - we've got centenary caps and cool ciders! You'll find us over by the Main Ring.

CENTENARY "TOUR DE YORKSHIRE"

Last month our centenary celebrations took sixteen of us to Yorkshire on a study tour visiting 3 farms adapting their businesses to be resilient and successful in the rapidly changing farming industry.



Our first visit was to an 800 cow all year-round calving herd that has rapidly expanded from 300 cows while

remaining closed. John and Sally Banks talked us through the changes they had undergone to get to these numbers rapidly and how it facilitated them being able to invest heavily in the facilities – "good facilities attract good staff; this starts with the farm toilets."

The calf sheds were immaculate and Sally described how she would frequently come out last thing at night and do a "rehydration round" if there were scouring calves to treat. Large white boards detailing all information about each calf's colostrum, milk feeding and health events are meticulously recorded for all to see.

Cows on this farm are housed on deep sand cubicles and are compact fed or as John likes to call it 'minimal sorting feeding', where straits are soaked overnight. We noted the difference in how these cows fed, taking bites of TMR and not trying to sort their ration, minimising digestive upsets and optimising time spent at the feed face.

The passion for dairy farming, attention to detail and management of the large team of staff on this farm was remarkable - it was a pleasure to visit.



The second farm visit was to a 200 cow autumn block calving, grazing herd that

had changed their system in order to cut costs and improve the family's quality of life. We learned about their transition from robotic milking to going back to milking through a parlour and their motivations for this.

We were joined by the herds vet who works closely with the farmer, Sean, and his family to achieve their 12 week calving block including testing all of the semen through the semen rate lab to check that is good quality before mating start date. We enjoyed seeing the cows out to grass with the backdrop of beautiful Yorkshire countryside.

The next day, we visited Metcalfe Farms - an impressive Gold Cup Winning farm that milks 1300 cows and has a plethora of other businesses running alongside the dairy.

Phil Metcalfe's main role is in the running of the dairy herd alongside his right hand man Steve, a former ruminant nutritionist. It was apparent that when you have this many cows, you can quickly gather a lot of data from a farm this size which can be very beneficial when assessing the impact of the changes you make.



Phil is always thinking about solutions on farm; this has led to him designing a product called Lactalign – a cluster support, engineered to evenly present the cluster under the cow. Early results have

demonstrated a reduction in mastitis in the front quarters since these were installed on the parlour.

The farm has put safeguarding measures in place to ensure they are not targeted by animal rights activists. They have added rubber matting to a JCB bucket to enable them to move cows safely so that hip hoists are never used to move cows, only to lift them. All staff have training about cattle handling and management. Robotic feeding systems are likely to be trialled on this farm in the coming months, feeding the stock on this farm is currently costing £100 / day in diesel alone. There was so much to see at this farm and we are very grateful to Phil for speaking to us so openly about his business and the industry.



On our final day we visited the Great Yorkshire Show, it was a brilliant show that is well supported with a vast number of cattle, sheep, goat and pig entries.

If you would like to know more about the trip, please speak to Anna or Rosie. Some have suggested this should be an annual event – do let us know if you think you'd be interested in future study tours. Finally, thank you to those that came and made the trip so enjoyable for us all!

/ Anna & Rosie



100 YEARS OF SHEPTON VETS: OUR STORY

Our commemorative book is now available!

"100 Years of Shepton Vets" is our story - published to celebrate our centenary, it's a beautiful hardback book with 180 pages of recollections, commentary and photographs from through the years.

Featuring a forward by founder Tom Patterson's son Bill as well as contributions from past and present staff, it captures key milestones in our history as well as changes in veterinary practice and the farming industry. You're likely to recognise many of the featured contributors, and smile at many of their stories!

The book is available to purchase from the practice or at the Mid-Somerset Show for a suggested minimum donation of £10, with all proceeds going to the Farming Community Network, which supports farmers and their families with mental health and practical help.



HEAT SOLUTIONS AND ANTIBIOTICS STUDY RESULTS

I am sure all the farmers (and livestock) are glad that the weather has cooled down slightly now. We saw an increase in retained membranes on some farms, more sick cows, a spike in problem calvings and a small amount of animals with heat stress/stroke. We saw some ingenious home-made sprinklers and misters popping up made from blue pipe and various bits people had lying around. On one farm they were a little too successful and the cows were happier stood by the sprinklers than going into the milking parlour.

The results of a study into the use of antibiotics in dairy cows were released in July. It was a large dataset of 940 dairy farms from 156 vet practices.

The results were positive with 79% of herds meeting the Responsible Use of Medicine in Agriculture (RUMA) 2020 target of 21mg/kg population correction unit (PCU) by March 2021. This demonstrates that the industry has made good progress in this area.

Rosie has taken the data from our Herd health plans and we are glad to report that our clients are also doing well in this area. I was pleased to see that two farms in particular had gone from the highest 10% of antibiotic users to the lowest 10%.

We generally find that injectable antibiotics make up the highest proportion of a farms mg/kg PCU but we are expecting more focus to be now driven towards increasing teat sealant use and further reducing antibiotic dry cow therapy.

Further reductions have been targeted with a 15% drop to 18.3 mg/kg PCU by 2024 for dairy herds and a 25% mg/kg PCU reduction targeted for calf rearing units. If you would like help to achieve these targets, please speak to one of our vets.

/ Rob

CASE STUDY: TEASER CREATION



This was one of two rams who had his spermatic cord cut and tied, a procedure known as a vasectomy. This means that he will keep his testicles and with it testosterone, still acting, smelling and thinking he is all ram, however he won't be able to breed.

The advantage of this is he can be turned out with ewes as a "teaser" to stimulate their breeding period and synchronising their ovulation. This means that when the rams go in several weeks later, they can work in a way to give a nice compact lambing period.

The procedure takes about 45mins per ram start to finish, sometimes we will use some sedation but more often just an epidural anaesthetic meaning he cannot feel any of the surgery. Both rams were up and about at the end of the visit looking perfectly happy. All healed now, with plenty of time to fully recover before 'work' in November.

These two were selected as the first twin ram lambs of last lambing season, so they were well grown. The farm has grown rapidly and with more groups of sheep in various different places the addition of teasers to groups has kept the overall lambing period tight.

Give us a call if you have any questions about creation of teasers on farm.

/ Alex

HEAT STRESS AND HEAT STROKE IN RUMINANTS

Did you know that during periods of extremely high temperatures, ruminants (cattle, sheep, goats) sweat very little and rely mostly on respiration (ie panting) to cool themselves? Because of this, they are extremely susceptible to heat stress and stroke, with their high critical temperature being 25 degrees celsius. Temperatures above this can be problematic, causing stress, discomfort, and reduced feed intake.

The heat wave that recently hit the UK was enough to send many animals into heat stress, and some even experienced episodes of heat stroke. It is thought that we will be experiencing another heat wave this summer, so it is vital to know how to prevent heat stress in ruminants, as well as be able to detect early signs of heat stress and heat stroke for prompt treatment.

Severe heat stroke causes irreversible organ damage leading to organ failure, and ultimately death. This is why prevention and immediate treatment of heat stress is so vital. If you suspect any of your animals have experienced heat stress or stroke, follow the guidelines mentioned and phone the vet to discuss if further treatment is necessary.

/ Emily

Prevention:

- Provide access to plenty of fresh water
- Provide access to shade/escape from the sun
- Shed modifications: improve ventilation, fans, sprinkler system
- Enough room for animals to have space to dissipate heat - overcrowding causes heat to accumulate from individuals and exacerbates the problem

What to look for:

- Apparent discomfort
- Increased breathing rate, panting with or without open-mouth breathing
- Standing to initially dissipate heat, then may lie down or refuse to stand for long periods of time
- In later stages: lying down/unable to rise, lethargic, weak

Treatment:

- Treatment should be initiated as soon as possible to prevent potentially fatal complications
- Move to cool, shaded space with access to plenty of fresh water
- Clip away any long hair or wool
- Small ruminants can be placed in pools of water (cool, not freezing cold)
- For down animals: place ice packs on large vessels (neck, armpit, between hind legs).
- Give cool fluids by-mouth
- Call your veterinarian for advice and/or further treatment (cool intravenous fluids may be required)

PARASITE CONTROL

It's been an interesting season for parasite control so far. In cattle the parasite challenge may have been limited in part due to the hot dry weather, but we should remain vigilant as we hope for more rain and move into higher pasture burden risk times.

For gut worms, to get from the egg in the pat to infective larvae is largely temperature and moisture dependant - with normal summer temperatures this can occur quickly. The gut worm larvae have adapted to be very resilient; their survival is reduced by hot dry spells of weather, but not completely as they shelter in the soil and emerge after the rain. Moisture is important for the larvae to get from the cow pat onto grass to be

ingested and rainfall softens the pat and helps to disperse the larvae further.

We should continue to monitor for evidence of parasitic disease - this can be achieved through regular faecal egg counting for gut worms and daily liveweight gain monitoring. We should also be monitoring the groups for subtle clinical signs of lungworm such as coughing in the groups and poor growth.

So when the rain finally comes, we should make sure we're thinking about parasite control as well as rejoining.

/ Rosie

WORM EGG COUNT CLUB



Join our worm egg count club! We are offering 10 in-house worm egg samples at a discounted rate of £100 +VAT (samples are usually £15+VAT each).

Just let the office know when you drop the first sample off that you'd like to join the club!



PRACTICAL CALVING COURSE

A group of five enthusiastic farmers joined us for our most recent practical calving course. This course is aimed at those who want to further develop their calving skills and is a mix of both lecture based and practical sessions using our training cow and calving simulator.

The first session of the day went back to the basics to understand what a normal calving looks like, when you should intervene, the differences between heifers and cows and what you should be feeling for when you examine an animal. In the practical we learnt how to place ropes on the legs and head as well as correct malpositions and most importantly when to ask for extra help. We used a cadaver calf to replicate different malpositions within the calving simulator and challenged each farmer to correct the problem.



Armed with long gloves, plenty of lube and knowledge from course, one of our delegates put their new skills to the test the very next day, helping to safely deliver this calf which had been trying to come out backwards!

/ Rosie

IMPROVED OUT OF HOURS ANSWERING SERVICE

We are looking to improve our out of hours answering service and will use our night nursing team to answer emergency calls from early August. This will be a more personal service from the practice with better links to the duty vet so we think this will enhance the service received. Please take the time to give the nurse your name, address including postcode and contact number. There will still be times when you may be transferred to the answering service call centre, as nurses can be busy with hospitalised cases.

DISBUDDING HELP AVAILABLE



There are lots of calves due on the ground in the coming months and with labour short on many farms, why not let us take care of your disbudding?

Our Tech team has expanded, so we now have Ray, Jade, Tom, Jamie and Jo ready to help save you time on farm.

We charge £7.90 +VAT / Calf (6 calves minimum), which includes all medicines used and we'll always ensure we leave all the information needed for your medicine records on farm.

One of our farmers already using the service said, "The service provided is very good, efficient, welfare friendly and it takes some of the pressure off us meaning there is one less job we have to do".

TB OR NOT TB?

APHA announced without warning in May that it would suspend its role in CHECS TB until early June at the earliest. Two months later, APHA has yet to resume its role in the Scheme. APHA gave its reason for suspending its involvement as the backlog from the bird flu outbreaks and the extra workload caused by the arrival of Ukrainian refugees and their pets.

We obviously do not know how many outbreaks of bird flu there will be this winter so there is a risk that any resumption of CHECS TB involvement could be curtailed as soon as it starts.

We do not know how clients who are wanting to renew their membership of the CHECS TB Accreditation Scheme will be affected. We do know that the confusion over the fate of resolved IRs still on farm has now been clarified. All IRs which have tested clear since 1st November 2017 must be culled within 6 months of being disclosed as inconclusive. I apologise for the confusion but it took a lot of probing to finally get an answer. Before you ask, yes, I still think the Scheme is worthwhile.

/ Ralph



TUP TESTING

WEDS 10TH AUG

11.30^{AM} - 4.30^{PM}

@ Shepton Vets

We're running a dedicated 'Tup Testing Day' at the practice, where you can get your rams checked with an overall health assessment as well as an evaluation of semen samples, helping to make sure they are fertile and in optimum condition for maximum reproductive performance. Assessing fertility can help to avoid poor scanning percentages, prolonged lambing windows and the subsequent negative effect on flock profitability.

Bringing your flock into the practice on our Tup testing day is just £70 for the first animal and £30 for each additional one in the same session - and of course, you won't have to pay a visit fee! Booking is essential so please call the office to arrange your testing slot.



MEDS UPDATE

Calciject is unavailable from all suppliers until early September. We have an equivalent product called Calcibel but supplies may be limited over the next couple of months so we suggest using it only for intravenous treatment to ensure you have sufficient stock, using OD Calc drench oral calcium for supportive treatment. Please contact the office for more info.

Alamycin 300 remains out of stock (expected end of August). We recommend Tetroxy LA as a short term alternative for infections caused by oxytetracycline susceptible bacteria.
Milk withdrawal: 10 days cattle / 7 days sheep
Meat withdrawal: 31 days cattle / 9 days sheep

Engemycin is expected back in stock approx 10th August.

UPCOMING TRAINING



APHA APPROVED DIY AI COURSE

WED 21ST - FRI 23RD SEPTEMBER
10am - 3pm

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

£550+VATpp includes comprehensive course notes and lunch



HERDSPERSON COURSE

THE NEXT COURSE WILL RUN IN THE AUTUMN

An intensive two day practical course designed to provide essential skills for those working as a dairy herdsman, including:

- calving, fresh cow care and calf-rearing
- cow first aid
- fertility management
- hoof care and lameness
- milking routines and mastitis

Give us a call for more details or to book your place.

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

We can also organise one to one foot trimming training with Charlie and other practical support sessions for your team - give us a call on to book onto a course or for a chat about how we can help with other training needs.



CHARLIE NEALE

MEET THE TEAM

Name: Charlie Neale / **Job Title:** Farm Vet and Director
How long have you worked here? Seven and a half years.
Where are you from? I'm from Bristol originally and worked in farm practice in Wiltshire before migrating South to Somerset where I now live with my wife, Becky.
Where/what did you study? I studied Veterinary Medicines at the Royal Veterinary College, London (the best university!).
Why did you want to do this job? I love dairy farming and the dairy industry, that's part of what brought me to the area. I enjoy most cattle work, but particularly enjoy udder health work. I also hugely enjoy the people I work with, both at the office and out on farm - I get great satisfaction in seeing the farm businesses that I work with thrive.
Favourite animal? Probably a monkey, because one slapped me in the face once, so they must be a good judge of character!
Do you have any pets? I have a Labrador called Molly, who can sometimes be found riding around in the back of my car on work days.
Favourite biscuit? One with cheese on it!
Hobbies? Rugby, shooting and helping out on my wife's family farm.



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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