

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER



**SHEPTON
VETS**

FARM

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Winter discussion club meetings

7.30pm at Pilton Working Men's Club

Tuesday 8th December

What's new in calf pneumonia?

Monday 11th January

Managing the cow around calving — vital 90

If you would like to attend, please contact Georgina in the farm office on 01749 341 761.

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Christmas Opening Hours

Xmas Eve 8am – 4pm

Closed 25th–28th Dec

29th Dec 8am –5.30pm

30th Dec 8am –5.30pm

New Year's Eve 8am – 4pm

Closed 1st Jan

Training Courses

Practical Calving
20th January 2016

Responsible use of Medicines
17th February

Artificial Insemination and Low Conception Rates

We have had a number of our clients complaining of poor conception rates. There are lots of factors to consider but a good start is to test the AI flask and AI technique.

Testing can easily be carried out on farm, with the aid of a microscope while sacrificing a couple of semen straws. We select AI straws based on performance over the past year, identifying those bulls that have low conception rates.

First of all, we test how well semen in the AI flask has been handled. Straws are thawed to 37°C and placed under the microscope to test for motility. Secondly, we test how well the thawed semen is prepared for insemination. Here, we see a straw thawed, loaded in an AI gun and placed under the microscope, just before it enters the cow.



On one occasion, the farmer's AI technique was flawless, but the semen was handled badly by the AI merchant. This resulted in thermal shock and poor quality semen, before it even arrived on the farm. On other occasions there has been an issue with the AI preparation and technique. Either poor thawing of the straw to 37°C, or short duration of thawing, or cold shock due to handling issues on the way to the cow.

If you are interested in these tests please contact the practice to talk to Sotirios or for an AI refresher course, please contact Michael.

Sotirios



I have been involved in a project looking at transition animal health – cows from drying off until 30 days calved – or the Vital 90 days. This has been to help Elanco in developing new iPad apps to assess cows, feed, housing and management. A cost calculator has also been developed to assess the financial impact of disease. The project has looked at six Shepton Vets farms and key findings have been:

- The most common disease issues after calving are mastitis and metritis
- Issues with nutrition and cow condition were identified. Advice on farm most commonly related to farm management and therefore in most cases simple changes could be made with the potential to greatly improve cow health.
- Ketosis incidence was high initially on 4 out of 6 farms, but this reduced to one out of 6 farms after visits.
- Ketosis incidence can be variable, with some herds seeing an increase as feeds change or due to other factors, such as crowding in dry cows.
- Investment (dry cow treatments) and disease costs in the Vital 90 days averaged £171 per cow calving, with most of this cost being due to disease.
- Overall disease costs reduced by £19 per cow calving during the project, or £4,000 per year for the typical 200 cow herd.

A Vital 90 assessment using the App takes around an hour of vet time.

To find out more come to our meeting January 11th, or speak to Paddy and we can come out for a Vital 90 assessment.

Paddy

IBR Vaccinations

With the mild weather and winter housing it's the time of year to remember IBR vaccinations. We have had clinical cases in the last few months, causing deaths in otherwise healthy animals. Many of you vaccinate for IBR between the months of October and December. If you would like assistance setting up a vaccination programme for your herd, please let us know. For advice or to order your vaccinations please contact the practice.



Case Study

Cows on one farm have been scouring, not milking well and butterfat and proteins have been falling. This has been a problem for a long time but recently has got worse and led to more mastitis and digital dermatitis, as well as making milking unpleasant!

Kate and Anna went out to assess the cows and take some samples of rumen fluid. The pH of the rumen fluid was then measured to see whether the cows have acidosis. The procedure is minimally invasive and quick to perform. We suspected the cows were acidotic as when walking round we noticed lots of cows were not cudding, the dung was very inconsistent (some loose, some firm) and cows were swishing their tails. This was confirmed by our results from the rumen taps – 3 out of the 7 cows sampled had low rumen PH's confirming our suspicions.

The ration was changed to improve rumen health, with the addition of long fibre, additional buffer, and less concentrates. Milk has gone up by one litre per cow, with cows more settled especially in the parlour.

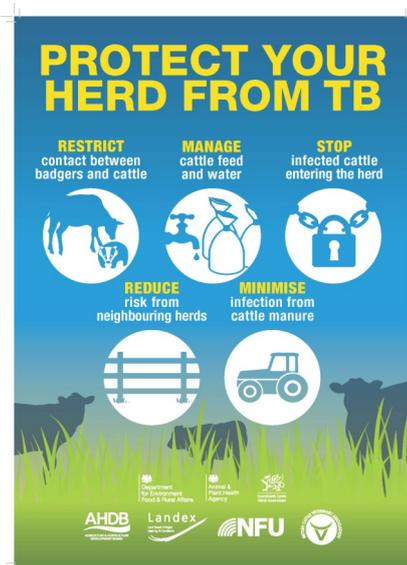
TB what's new?

You may have read about the launch of the TB Hub this month www.TBHub.co.uk which provides practical advice on dealing with bovine TB. It also has a map of the UK showing areas where herds are restricted with TB.

One feature suggests a biosecurity plan to help farmers reduce the risk of their herds becoming infected with TB. Our Top Tips from the practice include:

- Badger access to feed stores and cattle housing should be prevented by the use of sheeted gates with gaps of no more than 7cms and/or by 4 strands of mains fencing at 10,15, 20 and 30cms above the ground.
- Clean up any feed spillages next to hoppers and troughs.
- Post- movement test all purchased stock 60 days after arrival on farm.

We can provide a farm assessment to look at likely areas where badger incursions may occur. Contact Ralph Drouin for more details.



Winter Discussion Club

At our next meeting in the winter series Oliver will be talking about Mycoplasma pneumonia. You may have heard of *Mycoplasma bovis*, a common cause of mastitis, swollen joints and a bug also indicated in 45% of calf pneumonia cases. Is this a new challenge on farm? Come and join us on **Tuesday 8th December at 7.30pm.**

In the New Year Paddy will be sharing findings from the Vital 90 project. Come and find answers to the following:

- What are the most common disease issues after calving?
- How much investment and disease costs are farms incurring in the Vital 90 days post-calving?
- What savings can be made on-farm if you implement a Vital 90 assessment and utilise this alongside the App to help make those key management decisions?

This meeting will be held on **Monday 11th January at 7.30pm.**

We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

