

March Farm News

Environmental mastitis challenge this winter

Environmental mastitis is common with mild and damp conditions providing an excellent environment for bacteria to grow.

One such case where there was a high mastitis rate occurred in cows throughout lactation with different quarters affected. A mastitis investigation was carried out



with data analysis and a farm visit. The cubicles and their management was found to be an issue with damp sawdust increasing the mastitis rate. Other areas such as milking routine were also tweaked to improve milk let down. Since the visit, mastitis rate has reduced significantly – this costly problem was resolved for the price of 2 cases of mastitis! This common and costly problem often has simple solutions, but finding these solutions can be a challenge.

Environmental mastitis can occur in two forms:

1) Infections which are picked up during the dry period. Even with antibiotics, it is possible for udders to be infected if the environment is dirty, particularly around calving when the teat seal opens and antibiotics wear off. This type of infection is characterised with lots of mastitis cases in cows in the first 30 days of lactation.

2) Infections which are picked up during lactation. These infections are usually picked up at, or shortly after milking. Any cow at any point of lactation can be affected and classically lots of different quarters from different cows get mastitis, with no obvious pattern – the 'shotgun effect'. Generally, environmental mastitis does not raise the cell count significantly.

I am keen to help with any mastitis, cell count issue or in discussion of selective dry cow therapy.

Charlie Neale

Rapid treatment aids recovery with lame cows

Research just published proves delaying of treatment has a profoundly negative effect on results. Mobility score 2 cows treated promptly recovered from their lameness, while if treatment was delayed until two weeks after onset then cows failed to recover. This was for cows with claw horn lesions. Cows with mobility score 3 often failed to respond to treatment.

The study also suggests that in all but the worst cases the opposite limb should be lifted, trimmed, and treated if necessary on initial examination, reducing the likelihood of lameness occurring on that limb in the following weeks as the opposite lesion heals.

Dates for your diary:

Dutch Foot trimming course – 23rd March

DIY AI Course – 18th –21st April

Shepton Vets Discussion Group Meeting-open to all.

TB in other countries 7th March—7pm at The Red Lion, West Pennard, BA6 8NH

If you wish to come along please RSVP to Georgina at the practice .



Long acting Pain Relief

There are times when pain relief is an essential part of treatment. These include conditions where there is fever, swelling, inflammation and pain such as pneumonia, mastitis, lameness and post-surgery.

METACAM has a longer duration of action and lasts approximately 3 days though some of its effects may be even longer lasting. There is evidence that with mastitis cases treated cows show a reduction in cell count but also are more likely to get back in calf. Its milk withdrawal period is 5 days (meat 15d). When given with antibiotics the withdrawal period is not likely to be longer than that for the antibiotics.

Metacam is licensed as safe to use in very young calves (one week of age) and there is much data to support its use to improved outcomes for calf pneumonia, scours and obviously provide pain relief after routine dehorning/castrates.



The cost of a dose of Metacam providing 3 days cover is about half of 3 days of Cronyxin. Feedback from our farmers using Clare Maggs' stress free dehorning has noted a marked improvement in calf recovery with the additional pain relief.



More Digestive Upsets

This month the practice has seen a number of caecal dilatation cases. The caecum is a large blind ended sac found between the small and large intestine. Its role is to ferment fibre that has not been fully digested by the rumen. Problems occur when too much carbohydrate bypasses the rumen and ferments in the caecum instead. This causes the caecum to fill with gas and is known as caecal dilatation. This can be mild and signs may be similar to a left displaced abomasum, there may be a drop in milk yield and appetite and she may just be generally a bit off-colour. But sometimes this can be serious if the caecum twists on itself causing a disruption to the cows blood supply.



On one such case earlier this month the cow was very depressed, with a low temperature, a high heart rate and decreased dung coming through. A ping could be heard on the right side. The cow required immediate surgery. The caecum was emptied, sutured up and replaced back into its normal position. 'Spikes caecum' looked a lot more unhealthy than the one pictured but she has made a good recovery, is back in milk and is doing well.



She was given Buscopan and Flunixin and pumped with fluids to prevent dehydration, she was tempted with plenty of free access to straw and grass silage.

Risk factors for this include high levels of concentrate in the diet, and high starch levels in maize silage, but also moving to different pastures and lack of mineral supplements. Some farms are also affected with RDAs. We can analyse the fibre content of the diet as part of any investigation.

Michael 'Spike' Head