

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

Dairy show awards

You may well have received a High Performing Certificate in the last few weeks from Shepton Vets. We want to recognise the high standards achieved on many of your farms, and thought the certificates would let you know when herds were hitting recognised targets in mastitis, cell counts, lameness and fertility.

This meant Vicki and Clare analysing the data across our dairy herds. **Many herds now have mastitis rates below 30%, and cell counts averaging 150. In fact the very best herds in the practice have mastitis rates of around 5%, and the lowest cell count is 63,000 over a 12 month period!** At the Dairy Show we were very pleased to give a low mastitis award to Fred Gould, from East Pennard, and to Mike Dewey, from North Brewham, as they were identified as having both the lowest mastitis rate and cell count across the practice.



We have now produced a Health and Fertility Cup to award to the overall best performing farm in the practice. Congratulations to Y Farms, this years winners. They have excellent fertility and low mastitis levels, with improving mobility scores.

Assessing disease levels is also about controlling costs. This is really important when the milk price is low. We recommend having your herd mobility scored by Clare Maggs, to independently assess the level of lameness in the herd. This helps to see whether lameness should be a priority area on the farm. Again important when time is short, and when there are many tasks to be carried out. It can also help identify cows developing lameness for the foot trimmer.

Paddy Gordon



DISEASE SURVEILLANCE, not knowing is no longer enough!

Some of you will be aware that Sainsburys have now added a compulsory BVD control scheme to their supplier scheme. The aim is to identify all persistently infected animals (PI's) within herds followed by active surveillance. This allows eradication of the disease and therefore better control than with vaccination alone, helping to reduce the costs of disease. We can help with advice and supply easy to apply management or identity ear tags for the Tag and Testing identification of BVD PI animals.

Many of you will also be getting notes through the door from Arla as industry interest in the wasting disease Johne's gathers pace. Tesco's recently revised livestock Code of Practice requires farmers to update their Johnes management plan annually, and have this reviewed and signed by their vet. We can advise how best to test, monitor and manage Johne's Disease in your herd. Please speak to your routine vet initially or contact Alex for more information.

Alex Perkins



Tel: 01749 341 761

Fax: 01749 342 363

farm.animal@sheptonvet.com

Training Dates

~

DIY AI Course

16th –19th November

£425+vat

~

Winter discussion club meetings

7.30pm at Pilton Working Men's Club

Monday 16th November

How to adapt to a changing world in dairy

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 any of these training dates, please contact Georgina in the farm office on 01749 341 761.

TESTING, TESTING, TB testing

The vets in the practice were recently talking about testing and the various pitfalls of handling systems they had used on farm. None of us really liked testing in a parlour but, on occasion it may be possible to satisfactorily test each cow under the right circumstances. Cattle that throw their heads around when they are being clipped and measured are difficult to inject accurately. We need to see where we are injecting so good lighting is needed. If either injection is missed because of poor lighting or the animal being a moving target it may result in incorrect interpretation of the skin test, either falsely finding a reactor or indeed missing one.

We all liked races and some liked to yoke and test each animal in the crush. Access from both sides is important. One of the best races that I have used recently was offset from the wall with access on both sides. On this occasion, the farmer asked me to start testing the last animal in the race and work forward. The animals moved far less as they don't see me coming. A bar was placed behind the last cow in the race and as I worked my way forward, each animal's head and neck had been directed to my side so that I could clip, measure and inject accurately each time. It worked well, and quickly, as we weren't delayed trying to lift cows heads. If the race is made of gates hinged to posts, remember to fit pins to prevent an animal lifting a gate off its hinges when it gets its head stuck.

Modern crushes have more steel bars and sheeting than older designs. Whichever crush is used, invariably the yoke obstructs the sites that we need to access for testing. For this reason your vet may have a preference not to yoke animals, but a bar behind them may be helpful. We all hope for a clear test wherever we are and the best way of trying to get that result is by clipping, measuring and injecting as accurately as possible but that can only be achieved where we have good access to the animal's neck.

Ralph Drouin

DRENCHING GUN INJURIES are recognised as an issue in sheep, but recent experience tells us that injuries can happen with cattle too. Perhaps this is not surprising given some cows can be difficult patients. We are also drenching, bolusing and stomach tubing many more cows and calves now. The following stories did not all occur locally but we have all experienced cows with aspiration pneumonia—where fluid inadvertently goes into the lungs throat infections—calf diphtheria—and are suspicious that this could occur from older stomach tubes where the pipe becomes rough.



CASE1: Three cows in a dairy herd had died in a week following drenching three weeks before. The last cow to die was submitted for post mortem (PM) examination. She had shown no warning signs, but collapsed and died. The post mortem findings were consistent with a severe drenching gun injury to the back of the throat with death likely a consequence of asphyxiation and blood loss due to arterial damage caused by the infection. It seemed likely the other two cow deaths had been due to the same cause. The farmer had purchased a new gun prior to drenching the cows; the gun was longer (top of picture) and had a more acute bend, with damage a consequence of the gun being used by someone who was used to using the shorter gun.

CASE2: a heifer was presented for PM. It was the only heifer affected in the group and the animal had been a poor doer for many months. The only clinical sign the farmer had observed was a green discharge from the nose. There was a penetrating injury in the throat which had caused an abscess track containing foul-smelling pus consistent with a traumatic lesion to the back of the throat which had caused a purulent pneumonia as a sequel. The likely cause of the traumatic lesion was a drenching gun injury possibly due to a sharpened nozzle.



These cases highlight the potential risk of injury to cattle when drenched and the importance of careful handling, especially with new equipment, even when experienced. Head scoops can help, or bulldogs to calm a fractious animal, and some people find the long handled hook drenches reduce the restraint required making life easier. We want to reduce the risk of injury to both cattle and people!



Oliver

