



MILK PRICES VS INPUT COSTS: A DELICATE BALANCE

With milk price falls currently the go-to topic in all farming press, I thought I'd also jump on the bandwagon, but try to keep it cattle health and production-based.

With a reducing milk price, reducing input costs is the simplest thought process for maintaining margin. However, considering only input cost reduction (particularly at the detriment of yields) can have negative impacts on health and profitability on-farm.

With milk price and milk production on a cow level (or herd level if block calving) both being cyclical, any changes need to have their long-term effects considered, so that the cyclicity of production and milk price don't fall out of sync.

Most reactive changes that affect the production of a cow come with a lag period, whether it's nutritional changes or the effects of improved/reduced fertility, as some examples.

The risk with reactive lag, as can be seen in the graph below, is that a small lag over time



can in the short-term look good at mimicking milk price but in the longer term end up in the complete opposite – whereby long-term effects of short-term change can mean that your cows end up producing poor yields when milk price is good and visa-versa.

Some prime examples of what would cause this pattern are not pushing fertility to "save" med costs, or not feeding transition cows adequately to "save" feed costs.

This is not to say do not look at cost cutting but consider and consult with us about the effects that this may have. Improved efficiency across the farm is far more likely to have greater financial effects than simply stopping something.

As vets we love the line "prevention is better than cure" and in a financial sense this translates to "prevent avoidable losses, rather than pay to solve them".

As milk price declines, it is perhaps the time to consider where some inefficiencies lie on your farm and consider the cost:benefit ratio of addressing these with your vet and/or other farm advisors with whom we can work alongside to ensure the best outcome for your farm over this period of uncertainty.

/ Charlie



FULLY-FUNDED ANNUAL HEALTH & WELFARE REVIEWS NOW AVAILABLE

Are you a BPS registered livestock farm? If the answer is YES, then the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway; Annual Health & Welfare Review is now OPEN for you.

This fully-funded vet visit will deliver bespoke health and welfare advice and some endemic disease testing on your farm. Simply register on the website below and then contact Charlotte to arrange your visit.

<https://apply-for-an-annual-health-and-welfare-review.defra.gov.uk/apply/register-your-interest>

MOBILITY REVIEW

Whilst preparing for the final Shepton Top10 meeting of this season, I came across some previous mobility score benchmarking from 2012/13 – some of you will remember the Shepton Lameness Premier League.

In 2012, 33 farms signed up to the Lameness League, a project designed to reduce lameness in Shepton herds. All 33 farms had two mobility scores carried out; one at the start of the project and one 12 months later to measure progress. The average mean Shepton herd mobility from this project in 2012 was 76% which was excellent at the time but within the scores there were quite a few outliers well above or below this. In comparison in 2022 the average herd mobility was 92% with little variation between the best and worst scores, as you can see below.



In 10 years, there has been some real progress improving our dairy herd mobility. As a practice our herds are well above the national lameness

prevalence of 30% (70% mobility), but there is always scope to improve.

One way of measuring your herds mobility is scoring, which has two main roles on farm:

1. To identify herd patterns, monitor treatment outcomes and contract compliance. This is usually carried out by a registered mobility scorer (RoMS).
2. As a tool to implement EDPET. We all know who our score 3 cows are as these are slow, but to make real progress we need to identify score 2 cows - those who have just become lame.

What is EDPET? Early Detection, Prompt, Effective Treatment. This is one of the cornerstones of managing foot health on any farm. If any one of these steps is not carried out, then EDPET fails.

Our Shepton Top10 Mobility Champion is Simon Wells of Camerton Farm. Simon's mobility score is an exceptional 99%, but don't be fooled - he works hard to achieve this. Part of this is down to diligently implementing EDPET on farm, identifying and treating lame cows within 48 hours of them becoming lame. Simon uses pain relief alongside trimming and blocks in treatment of feet, this means animals are more likely to



recover. Alongside this, animals are foot bathed daily and receive routine foot checks/trimming twice a lactation from an external foot trimmer to maintain a functional foot.

To prevent the development of new cases of lameness we need to manage the risk factors that lead to new case development. This will vary from farm to farm. Without reducing the rate of new cases, a farm will constantly have to work hard to maintain their level of mobility either through treatment and recovery or culling.

Looking at animals in their environment and their day-to-day routines alongside trimming and mobility records is the best way to understand what's going on at a herd level. As an AHDB Mobility Mentor, these are some of the steps that are taken when assessing a herd's mobility, these allow us to prioritise areas to focus on in the farms action plan.

/ Rosie



IN-HOUSE MILK CULTURE NOW AVAILABLE



We are now able to culture milk samples at Shepton Vets.

By submitting samples for culture, our in-house bacteriology machine can quickly develop a pathogen profile for your farm. We can then set up specific treatment and management plans that will give you the best outcomes.

Samples are £13 each and will usually be turned around within 24 hours. The results will tell you which bacteria have been cultured and

which antibiotics they are sensitive to.

It is really important to use sterile milk pots and follow our sterile milk sampling guide (below).

Call the office if you would like a laminated copy of our sampling guide for your farm office and talk to your vet about which cows to sample and how to get the best out of this new service.

/ Charlie

STERILE MILK SAMPLING COLLECTION

It is essential that sterile milk samples are collected to identify the cause of clinical mastitis or high cell counts. If this procedure is not followed then the results will be of no benefit and a waste of time and money.

You must use sterile sample pots. Do not sample cows which have had any antibiotic treatment within the past 14 days.

1. If the teat is dirty, wash and dry. If visibly clean, then dry wipe with paper towel.
2. Discard three or four squirts of foremilk from each quarter/s to be sampled.
3. Coat the teat with a pre dip [best] or post dip and allow a contact time of 20 seconds and wipe dry with paper towel.
4. Put on a clean pair of gloves
5. Scrub the end of the teat/s with cotton wool soaked in surgical spirit or a Mediwipe so that the end of the teat is spotless.

6. Take the top off the sample bottle and hold it at a 45 degree angle and squirt one good stream of milk into the bottle making sure that you do not touch the end of the teat.

7. Replace the top of the bottle

8. Label with Cow number, quarter/s, farm and date

9. If there is any doubt about the sterility of the sample, repeat the entire procedure again.

10. Freeze or send to practice making sure that samples are kept at 4C or less.

ADDRESSING SCOUR CHALLENGES

January and February have been busy with a lot of calf scour challenges. These months are cold and damp so ideal for bugs to spread. Autumn calving peak can also mean calf accommodation has had repeated use with little rest for cleaning and disinfection. This means Cryptosporidium is causing many of these scour issues.

Progress has been made through attention to detail in a number of areas including:

Cuddle box in the calving yard. To stop mismothering and ensure colostrum intake is managed, one farm now puts newborn calves straight into an IBC lined with clean straw. The cow can still lick the calf dry but the farm controls the colostrum intakes. The result is less exposure to bugs (Crypto and Johnes)

and by managing colostrum total proteins assessed have improved.

Improved nutrition boosts immunity. Two farms have fed more milk or better quality milk powder, and this has boosted growth rates and improved response to scour infections.

Calf jackets. When the temperature is below 10C significant energy is lost by trying to keep warm. When Crypto is present calf jackets must be washed at 60C to stop spread, but will help ensure the calf has good immunity.

Give buildings a break. In the face of challenge, use more straw to act as a barrier from infection on the ground, but even better find a new shed or concrete pad away from existing calves to avoid infection.

If all above is failing then medication can always take the pressure off the calves and the system whilst the above is being addressed.

/ Paddy



SURGICAL FOCUS: TWISTED ABOMASUM



I went to see a cow that had been off colour for a couple days. It had been treated with antibiotics and pain relief but wasn't improving.

On examination, I found the cow was

dehydrated, scouring, had a high heart rate and a 'ping' on the right hand side over an area bigger than my hand, just under last couple ribs.

I discussed potential diagnoses with the farmer including right displaced abomasum or a twisted right displaced abomasum. One could be treated medically but if the abomasum was twisted then surgery is required.

The farmer made the proactive decision for me to perform surgery on the cow there and then.

I opened her right flank and found a huge right abomasum that was mostly full

of liquid and had begun to twist.

I released the small amount of gas at the top and then inserted a tube into the abomasum to remove the liquid. I removed at least 2 buckets worth of liquid stomach contents and then stitched her up.

The farmer and I worked together to provide lots of supportive treatment and within a few days, she was feeling much better. It's always very satisfactory to bring a poorly animal back to health.

/ Harry

AVOIDING BACTERIAL CONTAMINATION OF COLOSTRUM AND USE OF PRESERVATIVES TO EXTEND SHELF LIFE

	Total bacteria count (TBC) (contaminated >100,000)	Coliform count (CC) (contaminated >10,000)
Cow's teat (average)	32,079	21
Colostrum collection bucket (average)	327,879	13,294
Feeding equipment (average)	439,438	17,859



NEOSPORA: ABORTION IN YOUR HERD?

MON 17TH APRIL
FROM 7.30PM
@ PILTON CLUB

Join us for supper and discussion about Neospora, the last of the winter discussion meetings this season.

Farm Vet Alex Perkins will talk along with guest speaker about Neospora, the UK's most commonly diagnosed infectious cause of abortion. Often a frustrating one for beef, dairy farmers and vets alike. Both our beef and dairy clients are welcome to come and hear how we can best test for and manage this disease on farm.

Limited spaces available - please call us on 01749 341 761 to confirm your place and let us know of any dietary requirements.

/ Rob

A 2020 research project looked at 328 samples of colostrum from 56 British dairy farms on a supermarket contract. Samples were measured for total bacteria counts (TBC) and coliform counts (CC) with the average over both thresholds. The average was driven up by some farms that were particularly high, but over 1/3 of farms had contaminated colostrum.

Bacterial contamination interferes with the uptake of colostrum by binding and neutralizing antibodies in colostrum, damaging cells that absorb colostrum and competing with colostrum antibodies for absorption.

Failure of passive transfer of immunity (FPT) occurs when calves do not absorb enough antibodies from colostrum. Calves experiencing FPT are 1.5 times more likely to be treated for scours, 1.8 times more likely to be treated for pneumonia and 2 times more likely to die.

Colostrum is very important for health and welfare, but if we are not careful it can act as a vehicle for pathogenic organisms into the calf. Bacteria levels in colostrum can be checked by taking a milk sample and sending to a laboratory.

Key points to reduce bacterial levels in colostrum include cleaning of colostrum collection and feeding equipment after

every use with hot water. Hypochlorite or Peracetic acid is preferred to water or parlour wash. Cows teats should be prepared with a pre-milking teat disinfectant and wiped with a clean, dry paper towel prior to colostrum collection.

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 colostrum preservatives**. Pasteurisation (60C for 60 minutes) can extend refrigeration to 8 days.

Preservatives will help reduce the speed of bacterial growth in colostrum and are widely used in the USA and NZ.. Preservatives will inhibit new bacterial growth, colostrum already contaminated will remain contaminated.

We are now stocking colostrum preservative in pots. 30mls of clean water should be added to the pot with a syringe and shaken. This should be then added to 4 litres of colostrum. The cost of this is £1 / calf.

Reducing calf scours and pneumonia is an industry target and reducing bacterial contamination of colostrum is a good place to start. If you would like to discuss further then please speak to one of our vets.

FLY CONTROL FOR THE SEASON AHEAD!

Flies disrupt grazing, lowering production - it is estimated that milk production can drop by 5%. It's not just irritation they cause but the associated diseases they bring too. Summer mastitis and new forest eye are just two examples both incurring further costs and lowering production.

Flies will never be eliminated, but many measures can be taken on the farm to reduce numbers. We offer a holistic approach to fly control and are able to tackle multiple stages of the fly lifecycle.

The first dose of **Fly Pour** needs to go on early! We advise starting treatment before flies are excessive, to stop them landing on cows to begin with and travelling to farmyard areas where they can breed. This will help treatment work more effectively and it will be more likely to last the 6 weeks. Starting late in the season when flies are at the peak the treatment will be much less effective

and therefore require more frequent usage.

Fly parasites are tiny insects from the wasp family that live only to search out, eat and lay their eggs within the fly pupae, preventing adult flies from hatching. They are sprinkled around yards and dung heaps where flies lay their eggs killing pupae for approx. 2 weeks. We recommend starting this in the spring, our Techs will do this for you and place the parasites strategically.

Fly boards are made in house. These are large blue boards that attract flies to them, on which they land and eat the bait. These are not waterproof so best placed in sheds and high up in parlours. Our Techs will out boards up and replace them when needed.

Fly buckets are used in high traffic areas. They are waterproof so ideal for use within the parlour.



WE'VE GOT OFFERS ON SPOTINOR: CALL US TODAY FOR A PRICE!

The buckets are filled with a liquid which entices the flies through funnels, which after entering they cannot leave. They catch impressive numbers of flies! Our Techs can also deliver these and advise on placement.

Give us a call if you would like prices or to find out more

/ Jamie

HUSKVAC HELPERS

Now is the time to start thinking about lungworm prevention. Using Huskvac as part of a sustainable parasite control plan will boost immunity and reduce the need for wormers.



Did you know our team of Vet Techs can help with administering Huskvac as part of their usual visit, with no extra cost? Please contact the practice now to order your vaccine and let us know if you need an extra pair of hands!



MEDS UPDATE & VACCINE OFFERS

Ubrostar Red Herd Packs are now back in stock and available.

The expected arrival date for Heptavac P has been delayed and it is now due mid-April.

Huskvac has healthy stock levels. Anyone looking to administer in March and April, now is a great time to get yours ordered and ringfenced.

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.

Don't forget, you can order medicines at any time of day by text or WhatsApp!

07592 307 394

TRAINING COURSES



Our APHA-approved DIY AI course at the end of March is now **fully booked** but we will be releasing further dates soon



LUNCH & LEARN PRACTICAL SELECTIVE DRY COW THERAPY THURS 4TH MAY / 11AM-2PM

Join us to learn which cows you should select, how to do it effectively and how to monitor outcomes.

Cost £60 (+VAT) per person, additional team members £20 (+VAT)

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

We will also be running courses in Foot Trimming, Practical Calving, Cow First Aid, Mobility Scoring and Youngstock Care - watch this space for details! You can also email us to register your interest for any of our courses and we will keep you updated.



RAY CREED

MEET THE TEAM

Name: Ray Creed / Job: Approved Tuberculin Tester / Vet Tech

Where are you from? I'm originally from West Pennard and now live in Baltonsborough.

How long have you been at Shepton Vets? Nearly 3 years.

What did you do before? I was a Dairy Farmer.

Why did you want to do this job? I could transfer a lot of the skills I already had and with Shepton Vets tremendous reputation it seemed a good place to work.

What do you like best about it? I enjoy being on farm chewing the fat with local farmers and their staff. Having spent 25 years looking at the same 4 walls of a milking parlour, it is great finding different places and meeting new people in Somerset and neighbouring counties.

Favourite animal and why? Sheep. I have a flock of around 60 mule x texel ewes.

Do you have any pets? We have 2 dogs - a cockapoo and a labradoodle.

Favourite biscuit? I'm not fussy - I will eat anything. If it has chocolate on it's a bonus!

Interesting fact about you? I spent time on a distant relatives cattle station in Queensland, Australia mustering cattle on horseback.



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Shepton Veterinary Group
Allyn Saxon Drive
Shepton Mallet
Somerset BA4 5QH
Tel: 01749 341 761

Email: farm.animal@sheptonvets.com



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

We also provide a 24 hour emergency service