



# FARM NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2022

**Come and see us  
at the Dairy Show  
on 5th October!**

## A SUMMER OF CENTENARY EVENTS AND VERY LITTLE GRASS!



We enjoyed a successful day at the Mid-Somerset Show and enjoyed meeting up with very many of you throughout the day. It was great to be able to celebrate our centenary and support this Show at the heart of the local community. I really appreciated the honor of being invited to be President (President Paddy has a real ring to it!), and I made the most of the day admiring the livestock, sampling some excellent cheese and cider, and presenting some prizes.

My thanks to all our team for helping out on the stand and in particular to Vet Tech Tom and Small Animal Vet Greg for dressing up in inflatable animal suits; they certainly attracted attention and at the end of the day we were awarded the prize for the best stand!



We are now getting ready for our 100km for 100 years Tour of the Mendips on 10th September. A number of us will be cycling around the practice dropping in on farms in all directions, as part of our centenary celebrations. We are fundraising for Farming Community Network, helping them provide free, confidential support to farmers and members of the farming community in times of difficulty. You can support our cyclists by donating to our Just Giving page and all money will go to FCN - all donations really appreciated.

We also now have our 100 years of Shepton Vets book available, with recollections covering the people and changes seen over the last 100 years. Copies available in the practice and on our stand at the Dairy Show on 5th October. We ask for a minimum £10 donation with all proceeds going to Farming Community Network.

The hot, dry summer has brought out some weird and wonderful cases, which have been useful to discuss with students and Charlie has detailed some of them in this newsletter.

Our in house lab continues to be useful and often helps us to pinpoint our diagnosis. We have used it to rule out Babesia (a tick born infection), diagnose cows with low phosphorus and measure the packed cell volume of anemic animals this month.

We always have to have in mind the common but also be aware of the unusual too....

/ Paddy



## SHEPTON VETS 100K CYCLE RIDE

As part of our centenary celebrations, we're going to be RIDING 100k and RAISING MONEY for the Farming Community Network who provide free practical and mental health advice and support to farmers and their families.

On Saturday 10th September, a team of us will be riding a 100km loop from our Shepton Practice, around the local lanes and passing many client farms as well as our Wells branch.

Please support us by donating if you can [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Sheptonvets100](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Sheptonvets100) and let us know if you want details of the route to come and cheer us on!

### **\*\*REMINDER\*\***

**Annual Johne's reviews need to be completed and returned to your milk purchaser by 31.10.2022.**

**If you have not yet booked your review, please contact Sam in the office ASAP.**

**BATH & WEST**  
THE DAIRY SHOW

We'll be at the Dairy Show on 5th October in the same place as last year - next to the main cattle ring in the Showering Pavilion. Come and join us for refreshments and a chat.

We'll have our centenary books available as well as a heritage display of 100 years of Shepton Vets for you to enjoy. We'll also have details of our next Pilton Discussion meetings and upcoming courses.

We look forward to a sociable day with many of you. Keep an eye on our social media pages for a chance to win a pair of tickets to the show.



# CASE STUDY: HEIFER SUCCESS AND PROFITABILITY OF SUCKLER COWS

For suckler cows to be most profitable, calving for the first time at 24 months old is considered optimum. Research suggests that calving heifers for the first time at this age is pivotal for reducing the cost of production and increasing lifetime reproductive performance, but how do we achieve this?

Heifer success is underpinned by **nutrition, genetics, and selection.**

## A Shepton herd case example

A small herd of 15 suckler cows and heifers on a mainly grass based system. The farmer wanted to breed successful replacement animals as well as producing good quality calves for sale. This farm does not have a bull.



Vet Rosie carrying out Pelvic measuring

**Nutrition:** This has a significant impact on age at puberty and rebreeding weights. Without monitoring, measuring, and managing this, calving heifers at two will be a challenge.

*This farm has started monitoring BCS at important times in the production cycle, currently they do not have weight scales, but that is the next purchase. The have also started utilising forage analysis.*

**Genetics:** The age at which a heifer

reaches puberty, along with other maternal attributes, is also influenced by genetics. Understanding what traits to focus on is essential. Terminal sire traits which are often focused on are likely to produce a good, finished beast, but are unlikely to be right for the future suckler cow of the herd.

*This farm is looking at breeding their own replacement from AI bulls which they have selected specifically based on maternal traits.*

**Selection** is key: we should not try to keep unsuitable heifers within the herd. Creating weight targets, implementing tight breeding patterns, and applying rigorous selection criteria to ensure that only the most productive heifers enter the herd.

*Using synchronisation, this farm has bred their heifers 2 weeks before the cows, AI was very successful with 86% in calf for the heifers to first service and 75% in the cows. Animals have only been bred for 8 weeks with the heifer's front loading the block. This will mean that there is a nice compact calving block with extra time allowed for the heifers to recover before next service.*

## Tools for assisting with heifer selection:

Vet heifer pre breeding exams - at these examinations we carry out reproductive tract scanning to the heifer is cycling properly. Pelvic measuring in addition to the pre breeding examination can first where there is a small pelvic area or an abnormal pelvic shape result in elimination from the breeding cohort to reduce the potential risk of dystocia and future poor performance.

*We carried out pre breeding examinations in the heifers this time, including assessment of BCS and temperament. We checked with the ultrasound the uterus and ovaries to see*

Age (months)	Horizontal measurement (cm)	Vertical measurement (cm)	Total pelvic area (cm <sup>2</sup> )	Reproductive status	Temperament	Weight (kg)	BCS (1-5)
COW	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.5
COW	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
COW	—	—	—	—	—	—	3.2.7
COW	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.5
COW	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.75
COW	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.75
COW	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
COW	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
14m	15	17	—	cycling	good	—	3.8
14m	17	14	—	small CL	good	—	3.5
14m	15	15	—	—	good	—	3.2
14m	17	15	—	FO 210	good	—	3.5
14m	15	16	—	—	good	—	3.5

Reproductive scoring and recording the data

*if they were cycling and measured pelvic size all animals met the minimal criteria for breeding.*

The use of EBVs to reduce the risk of fetal oversize – used in conjunction with the pelvic measuring of heifers – can reduce cases of dystocia and improve overall production. Dystocia costs money in both direct costs – such as veterinary bills, farm labour, caesareans, dead calves and injured downer cows – but also indirect costs, such as reduced cow fertility, increased culling rate and cows that calve later in the calving pattern the following year.

*On this farm 3 sires were selected. The sire used on the heifers was one selected for calving ease to give the heifers the best chance of calving without problems. A sire with strong maternal traits was selected for breeding to produce replacements.*

/ Rosie

Sire Name		Sire Stock Number		Sire Tag	
ELDERBERRY GALAHAD		BQH11-020		UK 142417/400490	
Sex:	MILBROOK ALISTAIR G8H129	Sex:	DIABLESSE 24-24-499-126		
Status: Sold	Date of Birth: 26/09/2011	Sex: M	Breed: LHM/SHEN		
Color: Red	Color Genotype: Myostatin:	Color Profile: Yes	Registered: Main Herdbook		
Performance Recorded: Yes		Homologous Genotype:	Protophyria:		

  

Analysis date: 24/05/2022					
	60	80	100	120	140
Birth weight	Heavier				Lighter
Calving Ease	Harder				Easier
Maternal Calving Ease	Harder				Easier
Gestation Length	Longer				Shorter
200 Day Growth	Lighter				Heavier
400 Day Growth	Lighter				Heavier
Muscle Depth	Smaller				Bigger
Fat Depth	Leaner				Fatter

EBV for the AI sire used in the Shepton herd heifer



Did you know that more than 20% of Rams are sub-fertile? It's important to check Rams at least 8 weeks prior to tupping, in case any problems are identified as this gives you an opportunity to resolve any issue with sufficient time prior to service.

We recently had a great turnout for our Tup Testing Day. Rams were brought to the Practice to have a full MOT prior to service.

## "5T" MOT TUP CHECKS FOR OPTIMUM RAM FERTILITY

As part of a Ram MOT, we are checking the "5T's" to ensure optimum fertility.

**"Toes"** - we want our rams to have great mobility to ensure they can cover a good number of ewes.

**"Teeth"** – our rams need good dentition to ensure they can maintain as much condition as possible during tupping. Rams in poor BCS will have reduced fertility.

**"Testicles"** – we check size, shape and structure and also assess a semen sample.

**"Tone"** - we are aiming for our Rams to be condition score 3.5-4 as they will lose condition during tupping.

**"Treat"** – it's important to make sure your Rams are in good health, they are up to date with their vaccines, such as Heptavac P Plus and if necessary have been treated for Fluke if this is an issue on your Farm.

If you have any questions about maximizing reproductive performance in your flock, please contact Rosie or Bibby at the practice.

/ Bibby





## RINGWORM STRIKES IN CALF HEIFERS

We usually associate ringworm with young calves, and it is usually worse in the winter months. I often say to farmers it will get better in the summer when there's lots of UV light around to kill the fungal spores... UV light isn't something we've been short of this summer and I was a little surprised to find a bunch of in calf heifers with severe ringworm in the middle of a field that were healthy at turnout.

We questioned whether this group could be lacking something in their diet, making them prone to this infection - drought conditions and lack of fresh green foliage can predispose animals to Vitamin A and Vitamin E deficiency. We screened the group, but trace elements and these vitamins were normal.

This herd ceased Ringworm vaccination in 2018 and these are the first animals that have developed clinical signs since stopping. Milking heifers in the herd have also now been infected although older cows that were vaccinated as calves remain clear.

Immunity against Ringworm from the vaccine is generally life-long and these animals have thus far demonstrated the effectiveness of the vaccine.

This group of heifers has suffered all summer with concurrent New Forest Eye. Most of the ringworm lesions have been around the eyes and on further research I found a paper that described flies in Texas being a possible spreader of both New Forest Eye and potentially Ringworm.

It has been a very bad season for flies so you should continue to use Fly Pour regularly as we enter the late summer. Give Vin a call in the dispensary for a price on Spotinor if needed.

/ Anna

## POOR GRAZING LEADS TO RISE IN POISONOUS PLANT INGESTION

With drought conditions and poor grazing availability, we have recently seen several cases of animals with illnesses caused by ingestion of poisonous plants.

These are often ingested when cattle browse hedge lines in search of additional forage and subsequent clinical effects can be severe.

Many of the plants we see causing illness from ingestion have the suffix -wort, the most common being St. John's Wort, Ragwort and Dropwort.

These plants cause different clinical signs such as photosensitisation (sunburn), liver failure/poor thrift and total organ failure/death, for St. John's Wort, Ragwort and Dropwort respectively.

These clinical signs are attributed to the metabolites formed as the plant is digested, and can appear very rapidly – sometimes before the plant-matter has even passed through the rumen!

Often the diagnosis is presumptive, based on history and clinical signs, but if

there are animals dying from a suspected poisoning, a post-mortem examination for confirmation is well advised.

To avoid these poisonings (assuming you've not already just housed your cows!), fencing cows away from hedges or rough ground is sensible in hot/dry weather spells, as well as providing plenty of buffer feed if grazing is short, to limit an animal's desire to go in search of "alternative" nutrition.

If you have any concerns about animals with plant poisonings, please contact that practice as soon as possible as rapid treatment can limit clinical signs.

/ Charlie

*St Johns and Drop Wort - some of the most common 'worts' to keep an eye out for*



It is with sadness that we report the death of Peter Clark.

Peter first joined the practice in 1980, becoming a partner and was a key member of the team until ill health forced him to retire in 2005. Peter was always enthusiastic, supporting younger members of the practice, and happy to turn his hand to most species. He was happy to train farmers at a time when this was not as well established, carrying out work for the Agricultural Training Board and Open University. He was also active in the local community with Round Table and Rotary, as well as a keen rugby supporter at Bath and Twickenham. He attended the Royal Bath and West Show this year, helping with biosecurity and sharing stories with colleagues, and a number of you may have met up with him at our centenary party.

Our sympathies go to Hilary, David and Susan at this time.



Congratulations to Vet Rosie who has just passed the next stage of her Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice at the University of Liverpool, assessing all aspects of cattle health and production. Well done Rosie!



Farewell (au revoir?) to Vet Tech Tom who, having joined us as a Business Apprentice when he was 16, is now off to Bristol University to study Veterinary Medicine. Good luck Tom! (He'll be returning for placements and weekend work so you may still see him around).



## MEDS UPDATE

Engemycin has unfortunately been delayed again and we now expect to have stock by the end of September.

*Please note that whilst we make every effort to provide accurate 'back in stock' dates, we are limited by the information given by our suppliers. We always monitor any 'out of stocks' very closely and will advise alternatives where appropriate, fulfilling any outstanding orders as soon as we receive stock.*

**Don't forget, you can order medicines at any time of day by text or WhatsApp - 07592 307 394**

**We can also deliver your meds order directly to your farm, saving you time - ask us for details!**

## UPCOMING TRAINING

1 SPACE LEFT!



### APHA APPROVED DIY AI COURSE

WED 21<sup>ST</sup> - FRI 23<sup>RD</sup> 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

WEDS 9<sup>TH</sup> & THURS 10<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER

**An intensive two day practical course designed to provide essential skills for those working as a dairy herds person, 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](mailto: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.

## MEET OUR NEW TEAM MEMBERS

As we welcome two new graduate vets to the team, we thought we'd introduce them both to you this month!



### ANNA HEWISON

I've recently graduated from the University of Nottingham - this is my first job as a vet. I grew up on an arable, beef and Boer goat farm in Reading and have moved down to Somerset, not too far from Shepton Mallet.

I was inspired to become a vet when I watched my dad and grandpa calve a cow when I was 7. I love being outside and working with all farm animals, as well as the variety of the job. I am proud to be joining Shepton Vets in their centenary year and look forward to getting to know the farms and meeting new people!

I love all animals, but my favourites are cows and goats (they have great personalities!). My favourite biscuit is probably a chocolate digestive.



### HARRY CONNOCK

I'm from Somerset and have lived here my whole life. I studied Veterinary Science at Bristol University and will now be a part-time pet and part-time farm animal vet here at Shepton Vets so I'll be getting the best of both worlds.

When I was younger I used to ride horses and from then I have always had an affinity for animals. I really enjoyed studying the sciences at school and figuring out and understanding how things work. Science + Animals = Vet!

I'm looking forward to joining the team as I've spent a lot of time with Shepton Vets doing work experience with both pets and farm animals. The team have always been very friendly and I've enjoyed meeting clients who have always been very welcoming too.

My favourite animal is probably a horse but there are a few in the running! My favourite biscuit is a Custard Cream (dipped in tea!).



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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