

FARM

NEWS

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ELLA HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY CERTIFIED! – CERT AVP (CATTLE)



After three years of hard work Ella has passed her final exams & been awarded the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (Cattle). This is a fantastic achievement – Congratulations & Well Done!

Spring Time = Booster Vaccination Time!



For the majority of our farm clients Spring is the busiest period of the year for administering annual preventative booster vaccinations for both cattle and sheep.

BVD, Leptospirosis, Clostridial and Lungworm vaccination are almost exclusively seasonally used at this time of year. Please plan ahead and place your vaccine orders with the farm office early in order to allow sufficient time to complete your vaccination programmes before turnout.

Sheep clients please do not skimp on clostridial and respiratory protection by cutting out use of either Heptavac-P Plus prior to lambing or Ovivac-P in your growing lambs this year. This is always false economy and will lead to losses being incurred later in the season when disease inevitably strikes!

Product Availability Update

As many of you will be aware there are an unprecedented number of products that are currently affected by various manufacturing problems & batch failures.

Lactating Cow Tubes

There is currently a national shortage of lactating cow tubes for the treatment of mastitis, which is affecting the majority of the most frequently used brands. Tetra Delta and Synulox have both experienced batch failures, which has coincided with a factory re-fit affecting supply of all products manufactured by Norbrook, whilst Ubro Yellow has been discontinued by Boehringer. We are currently only able to source a small amount of Combiclav tubes (sufficient to maintain supply for regular users). The only other tube available currently

is Ubrolexin, of which we have secured a reliable supply. Ubrolexin is a once daily broad-spectrum intra-mammary tube offering good efficacy against all of the most common mastitis pathogens.

We do not anticipate this situation to change for several months, as predictions currently suggest supplies will not return to normal until at least late May for many of the products affected.

Long Acting Penicillin Injections

There are similar production issues affecting all of the UK licenced long acting injectable penicillin products, which includes the products that we normally stock - Betamox LA and Ultrapen LA. We hope to have an imported equivalent product available in the near future, particularly with the busy spring season upon us. However, in the meantime,

the only first-line long acting injectable antibiotic preparation that we have available is the oxytetracycline based Alamycin LA.

Blackleg Vaccine - discontinued

Blackleg Vaccine was discontinued by the manufacturer last year & is no longer available. In order to vaccinate stock effectively against Blackleg you must now use one of the multivalent clostridial vaccines – Covexin 8, which is available in 20 and 50 dose pack sizes.

Lepto Vaccine

Spirovac is back in full supply this year after the product shortages that we experienced last spring; however we are only able to supply the 25d pack size as no small bottles of either Spirovac or Leptavoid-H are available for this season. ■

Bull Fertility Testing

Keeping an unproductive bull can be a costly business, an infertile or sub-fertile bull can be catastrophic for herd performance and economics. Particularly as the problem is often not detected until well after the target time for cows to have become pregnant, usually via either a poor PD session or worse still

cows failing to bag up and calve at the expected calving time! It can be very difficult to detect and correctly identify an infertile bull, particularly on farms where several bulls are kept and there is no accurate recording of which animals have been running with which bull at what time, but finding a sub-fertile bull (or ram) without specialist investigation and

testing can be even more of a challenge. SAC benchmark figures for beef suckler herd performance suggest that a 9 week service period is optimal for overall herd profitability and performance. Within this period the target is to calve >60% of the group in the first three week period/cycle which requires a fully functional highly fertile bull to achieve. With this

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level of fertility performance it has been shown that pregnancy rates of >96% are achievable with the best herds managing to wean in excess of 94 calves per 100 cows served annually. Do you achieve these targets in your herd? If not, could your bull be under-performing and letting you down?

Fig. 1- High numbers of morphologically abnormal sperm on a nigrosin-eosin stained smear.

Truly infertile bulls are thankfully relatively uncommon, however sub-fertile results are frequently identified in up to 20-25% of animals

tested. A sub-fertile bull (or ram) will get some animals pregnant each oestrus cycle, however it will take an overall

increased number of services and a prolonged service period in order to get enough cows in calf, leading to spreading of calving pattern. This is not only a nuisance, as late pregnant animals need to be supervised for longer at calving (which has an impact on labour costs, staff morale), but it will also lead to a variation in the age of the calves, which will have an impact on both calf weaning weights and calf health. Calf scour pathogens, for instance, need time to build up. Therefore, calf scour is normally a problem encountered towards the end of the calving season, hence the longer the calving season, the worse the disease problems. A variation in calf ages can also result in an increased risk of pneumonia around the stressful time of weaning and housing, typically the older stronger

calves carry and spread pathogens to the younger, more susceptible animals.

A Bull Breeding Soundness Evaluation (BBSE) performed in advance of the service period allows a proactive approach to screening out sub-fertile bulls. We would encourage clients to check all bulls annually for a pre-breeding bull fertility check, as bulls can become sub-fertile at any time. Most farms spend a lot of time and money checking aspects of their cows' fertility, so why not also pay attention to the bull's fertility? After all, in a beef herd the bull is responsible for 50% of the herd fertility performance! If you are interested in getting your bull(s) tested, have concerns about herd fertility performance or would like further information on this service please phone the farm office. ■

Coccidiosis in Calves & Lambs

Coccidiosis causes scour, ill thrift and poor growth rates in both calves and lambs during the rearing period. The causal protozoal organisms are ubiquitous in the environment on most livestock farms; however clinical disease is not always seen. Similar to with many other neonatal diseases there is often a delicately maintained balance between good management practices & the magnitude of the disease challenge.

Disease is transmitted via the faeco-oral route, with infective oocysts being excreted in the faeces of infected individuals and contaminating the environment ready to be ingested by others within the group. Most antibiotic preparations are completely ineffective against protozoal infections, so specific anticoccidial preparations must be used for treatment and control of disease, alongside good husbandry practices to control the environmental oocyst challenge. The prolonged wet weather is presenting a considerable challenge to health this year and we have already seen some positive coccidiosis diagnoses in early born lambs.

Coccidiosis typically causes scouring in calves and lambs from 3 weeks to 3 months of age. The clinical presentation

is of a red/brown bloody scour accompanied by a moderately elevated temperature (103°F), abdominal pain and straining. Coccidia cause massive disruption to the gut wall along both the small and large intestine during replication of the different life-cycle stages within the animal. This leads to rapid dehydration in affected animals due to poor fluid absorption by the damaged gut & predisposes to secondary bacterial infections. Losses can be high if infections are not detected early and treated appropriately. In addition, subclinical infection with coccidia has been proven to have a significant negative effect on growth rates across whole groups of growing animals

There are several available treatment and preventative measures for controlling coccidia in both cattle and sheep. Decoquate (Deccox) is frequently added to concentrate feed for growing animals as a coccidiostat, which inhibits coccidial development whilst the animals are fed the Deccox. Provided feed intakes are sufficient to ensure that the required dose of Deccox is ingested, this should prevent disease for as long as the medicated feed is in use. There are also several oral drenches for coccidiosis

which can be used to both treat and prevent disease. Vecoxan is widely used, whilst Toltracol is a newer preparation to the anti-coccidial market. These products should be targeted at the expected risk period for clinical disease development and used to eliminate coccidia from a group of animals just prior to a clinical disease outbreak. Toltracol is now the treatment of choice for this purpose as it eliminates all intracellular stages of coccidia from the animals. It has a nine day half-life in the body, which means that they persist longer than Vecoxan thus taking some of the critical timing out of the dosing regime. Therefore a single dose of Toltracol will be much more effective than Vecoxan, which in many instances can need a repeat dose.

Remember that the main Coccidiosis risk period for the majority of spring lambs will shortly be upon us & it is vital to differentiate coccidiosis from nematodirus infection to ensure that the correct treatment is administered. Please submit laboratory samples for analysis to confirm the diagnosis so that money is not wasted on ineffective treatments. We have competitively priced anti-coccidial products in stock. ■

DEW Club

Our DEW club was very lucky to welcome James Hanks to talk to us earlier this month where we spent the evening assessing the group's progress over the last 5 years. Members were anonymously benchmarked on key performance indicators with trends from two years ago used for comparison on progress made. It was fantastic to see the improvement in all areas with farms achieving decreased somatic cell counts, improved heat detection whilst still managing to increase their yields. We were also very pleased to see how our client's fared against national trends, with most of our



herds well within the top 25%.

We followed up our evening meeting with a farm walk around one of our Omsco antibiotic free dairy farms. During the visit, we introduced the new AHDB QuarterPRO initiative and it's mastitis pattern recognition software. This tool aims to help you achieve continuous improvement in mastitis control and udder health on farm leading to more saleable milk, higher milk quality, improved cow welfare and less antibiotic use. Thank you to Miles Saunders of Step Farm for hosting us.

Beef Club

Beef Club met for a discussion on The Calving Cow and Neonatal Calf Disease where members worked through different case scenarios. The scenarios enabled members to assess husbandry practices within their herd and choose the right treatment for different diseases seen. Following the discussion, the group assessed the housing environment on farm using our ventilation testing device and humidity monitor. Having filled their boots with items from Drove's 'pop-up shop' they left fully prepared for what spring calving could bring.

