



# SPRING NEWSLETTER 2013

## AFON VETS FARM PRACTICE

At last the clocks have moved forward to herald the end of winter, however temperatures in the last week have been below average for the time of year with a bitter east wind for the last two weeks although thankfully we avoided the snow and it has been nice to feel the sun on our backs .

At long last our new lambing and calf pens are nearing completion on our Neath site and the meeting/training facility is also progressing.

All clients should make use of the parasite forecast at [www.nadis.org.uk](http://www.nadis.org.uk). We advise all stock clients should be taking note and using the SCOPS guidelines on good parasite control (for more info visit [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk)). The development of anthelmintic resistance is inevitable in the future and it is vital that you all put the right steps in place to slow resistance from developing on your farm. Once resistant worms are present on a farm they will never leave - there already farms in the UK where the keeping of sheep has had to be abandoned due to the development of anthelmintic resistance!

### **Cattle News**

We now stock in-house diagnostic kits for calf scours which proved so successful last year, so if you have scouring calves now or later in the season please drop a fresh collected sample of scour down to us at the practice and we will test them free of charge. The kit will test for E. coli k99, rotavirus, coronavirus and cryptosporidiosis.

After another less than ideal summer last year spring calving suckler cows struggled on a lot of units post weaning to regain their condition in the autumn prior to winter housing and heavy silage demands with below average supplies have led to several clients having to buy additional fodder in , Cows are typically back over 50 kilos per head with in particular first and second calvers been most affected. It will be a challenge to get the fertility on all suckler cows up to target this spring but remember the target to aim for is BCS 2 at calving.

All out wintered stock should receive an additional flukicide dose now with another dose needed in all probability later in the spring/early summer for all grazing stock.



## PROTOCOL FOR SCOURING CALVES

- WET TAIL
- DEPRESSED
- RELUCTANT TO STAND AND POOR SUCK
- DROOLING
- SUNKEN EYES/ TENTING SKIN ON PINCH

COLLAPSED CALF WITH ABSENT OR POOR SUCK REFLEX AND COLD ROOF TO MOUTH NEEDS IV FLUIDS.VET.

- ISOLATE CALF FROM MOTHER IN DRY WELL BEDDED PEN
- GIVE 2 LITRES OF ELECTROLYTE (LECTADE , EFFYDRAL,REHYDION) MINIMUM OF 3 TIMES DAILY
- ONCE CALF IS IMPROVING THEN ALTERNATE MILK FEEDS ON COW WITH ELECTROLYTE FEEDS EVERY 2-4 HOURS. ( USEFUL TO GIVE REHYDION GEL 40ML NEAT TO THE CALF AT THE FIRST FEW COW FEEDS)
- VITAL TO CONTINUE NORMAL MILK FEEDING AS GIVES ENERGY

In the run up to the main calving season monitoring your cows for their condition score is vital. Remember that 2/3 of the growth of the calf occurs in the last 1/3 of pregnancy period (average calf growth rate 0.6 kilo/day) so beware of pushing excess feed into cows during late gestation to make up on cows in below desirable condition. If cows are too thin colostrum quality will be reduced and subsequent infertility/ slowness to return to the bull can be a problem.

Mineral and vitamin nutrition is critical in the last month of pregnancy, not only is the calf growing quickly but the last 2 weeks or so the cow will begin preparations for lactation -e.g. demand for Calcium and magnesium will rapidly increase and a failure to provide enough of these 2 minerals has been associated with weak uterine muscles and slow calving.

**Target Condition Scores for beef cows and heifers to optimise winter feeding, fertility and minimising calving difficulties.**

	<b>Spring calving</b>	<b>Autumn calving</b>
<b>calving</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>mating</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.5</b>
<b>turnout</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.5</b>
<b>housing</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>

\*leaflet on cattle condition scoring available from surgery FOC\*

**Improving newborn calf environment:**

- Ensure in the month before calving bedding levels increase to ensure cows have clean udders and teats.
- provision of clean calving pens (12m sq), do not skimp on straw in the calving pens – this helps avoid cases of scour and joint ill (preventing losses from 1 calf scouring will save money to buy 1.5 round bales of straw).
- Disinfect calving pens with powder disinfectant between strawing out.
- Ensure the cows udder is clean before the calf sucks.
- All calves born indoors are navel dipped in strong iodine (10%) solution at birth and again within 2-4 hrs as the cow often licks off the first application.

Fostering calves – sometime a necessity but is it worth the risk? - we should be asking was it the cows fault the calf was lost? and is she likely to do it again? e.g. if all the other cows have calved ok to the same bull yet this cow lost her calf to calving difficulties, it suggests the calf was born too big, the cow was overfat, or the cow has a small pelvis all of which are influenced by the cows genetics - if this is the case she is better dried off and culled out of the herd as it will probably happen again. Better off culling the cow now when the cull cow prices are near maximum compared to the lower prices in autumn and early winter.

If you do decide to keep the cow next question is where to get the foster calf – there is always a risk fetching in disease with a calf from another herd, better off perhaps taking a homebred calf off a cow who is to be culled and use it as a foster rather than take the risk of bringing disease in to the herd?

Calving difficulties cannot always be avoided and calves delivered after a difficult birth are at more risk - the more human assistance required at birth the lower the calf survival rate past 48hrs. These calves need particular care;

- ensure all the airways are clear –weakness and lack of vigour are signs of low blood oxygen
- towel dry the calf to stimulate breathing and prevent hypothermia - esp important if calf not up within 30 minutes after calving
- check calf temperature - normal 38 deg c if below 37 deg c consider a heat box/lamp
- check calf thoroughly for damage to limbs , ribs
- get calf standing as soon as possible
- treat navel with strong iodine solution
- spend extra time on colostrum management
- mark the calves so they can be closely monitored in first week of life

Where possible keep individual cow health records ( free copy at surgery)- to include ease of calving score, post natal problems and calf health to weaning - this will allow you you to select your most productive cows for retention in the herd

## **BULL SEMEN TESTING**

Increasing numbers of bulls are now being semen tested at least 6 to 8 weeks prior to being put to service. A few years ago 386 beef bulls were examined in south east Scotland with a failure rate of 33% .

Testing early allows time to purchase a replacement if necessary before the bulling period. If not wanting to purchase at a sale then private purchases can be undertaken before the choice of bulls becomes limited.

### **What about Sub Fertile Bulls?**

Those sub-fertile bulls can also be tested again prior to mating to look for improvements in semen. However prior to the retest you are often then left with a dilemma whether to purchase another or wait to the result of the retest. Maybe you have enough bull power anyway if other bulls have passed with flying colours.If not, it is best to have a bull either purchased or at least ready to be bought if the bull fails a retest. Often they are retested very close to the bulling period. Veterinary advice should be sought at all times. Increasingly therefore the advice is to cull such bulls as soon as possible unless there is any suggestion that they might recover following a short period of rest.A good policy is to have newly purchased young bulls semen tested.

### **Bull Power**

After the bulls have gone out, problems often occur such as lameness which requires another bull to be used. But time after time many farmers fail to have back up and desperately get on the phone looking for another bull to purchase or hire. Most pedigree herd have sold their best and have very few left in months such as June. To hire a bull which have been used onother farms is a health risk and cannot be advised! Too often what is purchased or hired in is a bull

that most will say "It will have to do". Plan B – back up always needs to be in place before the season not during.

### **Ratio of Cows to a Bull**

When the question is asked "How many cows to each bull, the overwhelming answer will be that it should be about 30 to 35 cows to a bull. This still remains true but one of the main reasons this figure came about was simply down to average grass field sizes that existed. Young bulls will often have a guide figure of about 15 to the bull. With the addition of bull and semen testing advice has advanced to about 50 to 55 cows to a bull which has successfully passed the bull and semen test but it has to be argued if this is a good move or not. Many would agree this could be done but not until after the first 3 weeks that the bulls have been out as 65% should be in calf anyway. It will take time to get many to have the confidence to run at this high ratio.

### **Breeding period**

Having the bull in for 9 week realistically gives the majority of cows 3 turns to the bull. Some extend to 10 weeks to cover those cows that return to heat over 21 days. Cows can vary cycling from 18 to 24 days.

## **BULL PROMOTION OFFER FOR MAY / JUNE 2013- MOT YOUR STOCK BULL**

**Open to Afon vet farm practice clients only**

**Bull clinical exam and assessment, fertility test up to BCVA national std**

**Total cost £85 plus vat per bull including visit- additional bulls at reduced rate**

**(additional cost will be incurred for blood sampling/tests and sheath washing where necessary)**

**Afon vets - Wales most experienced bull testing team.**

### **. CATTLE NEMATODES**

Worm control for the grazing season needs to be arranged as part of a veterinary health plan taking into account the type and age of stock and the history of the available pasture.

To control ostertagiosis, dairy calves and autumn-born suckled calves will require strategic early season treatment in their first grazing season unless they are on safe grazing. If pasture contamination is suppressed until at least mid-summer, most worm larvae on the pasture should have died off by that time and the pasture should remain safe for the rest of the season if set stocked.

Alternatively, calves can be dosed and moved to aftermath at mid-summer, although a proportion should be left undosed to carry some anthelmintic-susceptible worm larvae onto the new pasture.

Spring-born suckled calves will not usually need preventative treatment for gut worms in their first grazing season (apart from a housing dose) but they will probably need some control in their second grazing season.

Vaccination (Huskvac) is often the best way to control lungworm in dairy replacements and in suckler herds with a history of disease, as disease can occur during the late grazing season even if the above control methods for ostertagiosis have been followed.

## SHEEP NEWS

Ensuring good lamb birth weights and a plentiful supply of colostrum from ewes at lambing cannot be overemphasised - these are the major contributors to lamb vitality and ultimate survival. Lambing has been underway on a lot of farms for some weeks now - Schmallenberg virus has not caused many problems but we have seen heavy ongoing losses in some flocks due to severe ongoing fluke infection and the knock on effects with ewes producing smaller lambs and poorer colostrum, in conjunction with a poorer quality silage on offer on many farms losses have been substantial

Post mortem of neonatal lambs is an invaluable tool to determine the common causes of neonatal lamb losses, so next time you skin a lamb - open him up for a closer look - perinatal lamb mortality rates range from 7-25% with an average of above 15% and there may be something that you could be avoiding if the underlying cause was known.

Target for lamb losses from birth to turnout from sheds are ..... and from birth to weaning are.....

At this time of the year it is essential that ewes are treated with an effective wormer either during late pregnancy or within the periparturient period, to prevent pasture contamination (don't forget the rams as well). For ewes turned on to clean pasture after lambing a short acting wormer is appropriate prior to turnout – SCOPS recommend that this dose is targeted so that not all ewes are dosed which allows some wormer susceptible parasites are carried over to the clean pasture - so you should target the dose on younger ewes, twin rearing ewes and those in lower condition. Ewes turned on to contaminated pasture may need a persistent wormer to prevent immediate re-infection with overwintered larvae - again this dose should be targeted to the ewes most at risk.

**Warning:** There is likely to be a heavy burden on the pasture of overwintered nematodirus larvae ready to infect susceptible grazing lambs in the coming growing season typically in late April early May. Please contact us for advice on tactical dosing on your farm.

For general information on the parasite forecast for cattle and sheep please visit [www.nadis.org.uk](http://www.nadis.org.uk)

After lambing Intervet are running 'Flockcheck' a free blood diagnostic service for aborted ewes to check for evidence of abortion due to Chlamydia/enzootic and toxoplasmosis we would advise you take advantage of this if you have experienced an abortion problem in the ewes (abortion rate >5%)

Reviving a hypothermic lamb:

TEMPERATURE	AGE OF LAMB	TREATMENT
37-39 DEG C	ANY AGE	DRY THE LAMB AND FEED VIA STOMACH TUBE

< 37 DEG C	0-5 HRS(has supply of brown fat as energy source)	DRY THE LAMB,WARM UP TO 37 DEG C THEN FEED BY STOMACH TUBE THEN RETURN TO EWE/HOSP AREA
< 37 DEG C	MORE THAN 5 HRS AND CAN HOLD HEAD UP	DRY THE LAMB FEED BY STOMACH TUBE THEN WARM UP TO 37 DEG C RETURN TO EWE/HOSP AREA
< 37 DEG C	MORE THAN 5 HRS OLD AND CANNOT HOLD HEAD UP (too weak to swallow)	DRY THE LAMB,GIVE INTRAPERITONEAL GLUCOSE.WARM TO 37 DEG C,FEED BY STOMACH TUBE THEN RETURN TO EWE/HOSP AREA

### **INTRAPERITONEAL INJECTION TECHNIQUE**

Volume required:	large single	50ml 20% soln glucose
	medium twin	35ml 20% soln glucose
	small lamb	25ml 20% soln glucose

1. Hold lamb up by its forelegs
2. Spray the injection site 2cm to side and below navel
3. Fully insert needle with syringe on (19g 1 inch needle) at 45 degree angle aimed towards the lambs rump
4. Empty the syringe and withdraw
5. Give shot of long acting antibiotic (penicillin or terramycin)

If you have any queries on the contents of the newsletter or require any advice then please call us on the Neath Surgery tel 01639 642739.

Best wishes