AFON VET CENTRE FARM PRACTICE

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2012

PRACTICE NEWS

The weather remains very changeable over the last 6 weeks and in comparison to last year all our clients are well behind on silage making.At least we have been spared the golf ball sized hail stones and flash floods of some areas!.Colleagues in Scotland tell me this is the wettest year they have ever recorded. Under less than optimal conditions it is important that when you finally do get it in you have the silage analysed to plan winter feeding programs in advance to ensure stock remain fit and productive over the winter.

On the markets cattle prices have been very strong whereas lamb has taken a real hammering in the last month - we are told this is a result of over production – in reality I suspect the high price of lamb in the shops has more to do with it - someone is maintaining their margins! all the more reason to optimise productivity and gain the best price for those fat lambs and cattle when the time to sell comes along.

We are currently taking part in the Farming connect worming study across the whole practice area .Thank you to all those taking part , we will hold a meeting in the autumn at the end of the study to let you know the results but are already seeing interesting data showing evidence of wormer resistance coming back. Details of parasite forecast levels across Wales can be found at www.nadis.org.uk as well as useful stock articles on health and production ,please visit this useful site.

Keep an eye out for us at the Royal Welsh show (mon and tues) where we will be on a stand J584 near entrance D *with several other farm vet practices across Wales.You are welcome to come along and have a chat .We will also be present at the Vale show in August where we are promoting our bull fertility testing service.*

We have now had full planning consent for our stable block at Neath and hope to begin construction in the next month in time for the Autumn. The block will provide a new lambing pen and hospitalisation facilities for calves including overnight accommodation where required.

CATTLE NEWS

It is likely that given climatic conditions lungworm is likely to be a problem from early July onwards with a peak of infection likely to occur in late August. Lungworm can cause sudden death in severely affected cattle but losses in less severely affected cattle include weight loss of 20-40 kilos in growing cattle with extended periods to slaughter. As a consequence of lungworm infection cattle are more susceptible to bacterial pneumonia. Cattle are affected at grazing and show increased respiratory rate and coughing especially after short periods of exercise.It is very important that you have a planned program of anthelmintic usage as failure to treat at the wrong time can result in an outbreak of disease and using some treatments may result in no lungworm challenge during their

first grazing season leaving cattle susceptible during their second season at pasture.See www.nadis.org.uk for the latest parasite survey

We have identified several farms where we have seen cases of Digital dermatitis in cattle and this is spreading in the local area. In lame cows this is seen as moist brownish lesions approx 15mm diameter often with matted hairs encircling the space between the digits most commonly in the heel area. When cleaned up the area is red, painful with a necrotic smell-lovely!! We have seen animals where there has been some extensive tissue damage done and the condition is highly infectious rapidly spreading in naive herds especially at housing. Treatment involves cleaning and the topical use of antibiotics often herd based in footbaths so not very practical in the beef herd. **Examine the feet of all cattle purchased to check for the characteristic lesions to avoid introducing this condition in to your herd.**

SHEEP NEWS

We are heading in to the time of year when we see cases of pasturellosis and pulpy kidney in lambs start to take their toll.These conditions become particularly evident after periods of stress eg following moving / weaning.Remember that vaccination of the ewes only protects the lambs for up to 4 weeks against pasturellosis and 12 weeks against clostridial disease. Farms with a history of problems would be well advised to vaccinate their lamb cropto prevent unnecessary losses.

The continued wet weather is resulting in large number of worm eggs being spread across the pasture and infecting susceptible lambs and dosing regimes need to be adjusted accordingly.Faecal egg counting is available from the practice. In general, if lambs are to be dosed and moved to safe pasture (e.g. silage aftermath) at weaning, they should be allowed to carry some anthelmintic-susceptible worms over onto the new pasture to avoid heavy selection for anthelmintic resistance. For example, a proportion of the lambs (perhaps around 10 per cent) could be left untreated, or the lambs allowed to graze the contaminated paddock for several days after treatment before moving to safe grazing (unless a persistent anthelmintic is used), in line with SCOPS guidelines.

Watch out for fly strike!-Topical application of high *cis* cypermethrin (CROVECT)pour-on preparations provides protection against fly strike, these preparations persist for only 6 to 8 weeks at the site of application and require re-application in most situations. The insect growth regulator, cyromazine(VETRAZIN) applied before the risk period is very effective against blowfly strike for up to 10 weeks after topical application and dicyclanil(CLIK) affords 16 weeks' full body protection.

Focus on pain relief in farm stock

Definition of pain

There is no simple definition of pain and the association with disease is complex. Pain may be acute, chronic, localised, generalised, physical, emotional, adaptive and maladaptive. An individual may experience several types of pain at the same time. The presence of pain can generally be more reliably identified than the intensity of pain. Pain may also involve fear and lead to the anticipation of more pain causing anxiety – use of electric goads during handling/loading animals would be a good example.

Recognition of pain in farm animals

Pain in farm animals is typically assessed by changes in general body functions, such as reduced food intake, decreased production and lameness; physiological response (e.g. increased heart rate); and include:

Dull, depressed, lethargic demeanour

Isolation, failure to graze with others in group

Expiratory grunt, teeth grinding

Inappetance, decreased rumination

Increased respiratory rate

Increased vocalisation

Increased sensitivity (hyperalgesia)

Attention/licking at site of wound/lesion

As stockpersons it is important that you are able to recognise signs of pain in animals so that you are then in a position to do something about it. Remember that pain reduces animal performance, whether milk yield or growth rate, and thereby reduces farm income. Diseases and injuries causing pain must be prevented wherever possible.

As vets you will see us give pain relief to stock prior to the commencement of surgical procedures eg replacement of prolapses or carrying out caesarean section and in cases of difficult lambings and calvings.We have certainly radically reassessed the way with deal with pain prevention in animals we treat and there is still more we could do.

Common sources of pain

Two key areas are responsible as the source of pain in farm animals: disease, both infectious and non infectious and the environment in which we house our livestock.Pain associated with inflammatory diseases is probably the major source of pain in ruminant species.

Therapy to reduce pain

Therapy to reduce pain often involves several treatments in combination .Typically on farm the most widely used pain relieving agents are local anaesthetics and NSAID's (eg Meloxydyl , ketofen and cronyxin)

1. LOCAL ANAESTHESIA

In the UK, local anaesthesia is a legal requirement before disbudding calves more than one-week old. Chemical cautery (caustic paste) can only be used in calves less than one week old.

The three methods used to castrate calves in the UK are:

rubber ring or other device to restrict the flow of blood to the scrotum

Bloodless castration by crushing the spermatic cords with the Burdizzo

Surgical castration

Rubber ring castration is only permitted within the first week of life. Local anaesthesia is a legal requirement before castration of calves more than two-month old. The injection of a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) before castration and disbudding has been shown to reduce acute pain associated with these procedures but is not widely practiced – this should be considered on all farms - calves in pain stop sucking

2. NON-STEROIDAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DRUGS (NSAIDs, analgesics)

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are widely used in small animal veterinary practice and their use has dramatically increased on farm in our practice in the last 10 years but still more could be done

Cattle

In farm practice in the UK, NSAIDs are used to treat a wide range of infectious conditions including mastitis, respiratory disease, lameness, and joint infections in young calves.

We routinely use NSAIDs before surgical procedures and now will administer NSAIDs after calving a cow. NSAIDs are particularly effective in reducing acute pain associated with castration and disbudding/dehorning but are not often administered because of cost and lack of perceived need for pain relief.

Sheep
The fact that NSAIDs are only rarely used to treat sheep may result from a lack of perceived requirement for anti-inflammatory or analgesic therapy, cost, and lack of products licensed for use in sheep. With respect to NSAID use in sheep in the EU, it is possible to use products registered for other food-producing species (cattle) through "The Cascade System"- so we routinely use meloxdyl after lambings and caeserian sections.

Vets routinely use NSAIDs before surgical procedures
NSAIDs are particularly effective in reducing acute pain associated with castration and tail docking but are not often administered because of cost, time required to inject every lamb, and lack of perceived need for pain relief.
It is essential to treat disease and remove the source of inflammation and pain. Prompt treatment of disease returns the animal to normal more quickly with increased production and profitability. Treatment of pain is described as a win-win situation with advantages for the animal and the farmer in terms of reduced loss of production/performance

Prevention of Pain
Since many causes of pain in animals can arise from diseases which are preventable by vaccination, vaccination should be major component of the farm's herd and flock health programmes and is a cost-effective means of preventing disease such as pneumonia and the pain associated with that disease.

Management of sick/injured animals
Sick animals should be isolated, placed in clean, well bedded areas with individual food and water supplied. They should be observed frequently.And given pain relief as necessary.Pain reduces animal performance, whether milk yield or growth rate, and thereby reduces farm income. Diseases and injuries causing pain must be prevented wherever possible and is the goal of all farmers and their veterinary surgeons.

Conclusions
As vets and farmers we need to be more aware of how to recognise and reduce pain in farm animals. NSAIDs are an important component of the treatment regimen to reduce pain and treat disease. Never underestimate the importance of nursing care by providing an appropriate environment with ready access to food and water.Next time you reach for the bottle of antibiotic consider whether you should be reaching for the bottle of NSAID as well!

We hope that the weather improves for us all in the next few weeks. Don't forget to come and say hello to us at the Royal Welsh!

Good farming from all the team at Afon vets