Farm Veterinary Solutions

xLvets Excellence in Practice

Spring Newsletter 2016

First week of spring and we are really kicking on with the work. Great to see all 13 vets working flat out and cheerfully. Seems the girls are the unlucky ones out of hours with both Harriet and Fiona, one of the new vets, having non stop all-nighters! Harriet commented it was her worst night on call since graduating 7 years ago (although not bad if it happens only once every 7 years)!

TB Update

From April, more stringent rules are being introduced to help reduce the risk of TB spread into our area. They are as follows:

1. **Introduction of post-movement testing to the Low Risk Area (4 yearly testing areas).** From 6 April 2016, farmers in the Low Risk Area (LRA) of England must arrange for post movement tests to be carried out on animals coming from annual (or more frequent) surveillance testing areas of England and Wales, between 60 and 120 days after the animal arrives to the LRA. Some exemptions apply. **These tests will be at the cattle keeper's own expense**.

2. Handling of bovine TB breakdowns in the High Risk Area. All herds in the High Risk Area (HRA) of England affected by a new TB breakdown will need to complete a minimum of two short interval tests using 'severe' interpretation before restrictions are lifted. This will happen **irrespective of whether cattle with typical TB lesions or positive culture results have been identified**. This will increase the chances of detecting all infected animals in those herds, helping reduce recurrent infections and protect other herds from the risk of lifting restrictions too early.

3. **Pre-sale TB check test in the Low Risk Area**. Cattle keepers with herds on 4 year surveillance testing looking to sell a proportion of their herd, and subject to meeting a specific criteria, will be able to have a **Defra funded pre-sale TB check** carried out on the whole of the herd. This will provide assurance for prospective buyers on the disease status of the cattle and mitigate the risk of cattle with undetected infection moving to new herds.

4. Private Interferon Gamma Assay blood tests. **APHA will start offering the option of 'private' Interferon Gamma Assay blood tests in certain circumstances**. Permission for these tests must always be sought in advance from APHA.

Dairy

Genomics: What is all the fuss about? Mike has been on two courses now and explains…..

Genomic testing is changing the way dairy producers make management, selection and breeding decisions on the farm. Using genomics, a heifer's genetic potential is revealed early in life, genetic progress can be accelerated with confidence and herd profitability is enhanced by capitalising on improved performance across a number of traits.

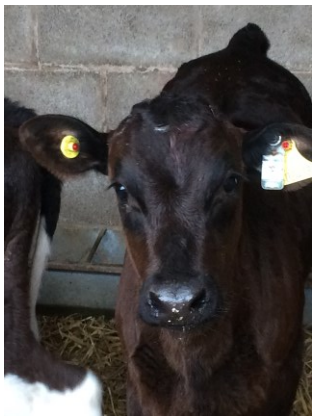
Genomic testing reveals more about the actual genetic potential of the animal than simply measuring an average of the parents' estimated genetic makeup. For a number of traits, testing delivers 60% to 70% reliability as opposed to 20% to 30% for parent average. For example, for the trait Fertility, testing can provide the same or higher level of reliability as data from 115 milking daughters, more than a lifetime of information with one test.

Knowing that an element of health, welfare and productivity is directly related to the breeding decisions made on farm, we are delighted that over the coming months we will be able to offer clients access to a Veterinary Genomics package that aligns breeding decisions with Herd Health goals. We look forward to bringing you more news about this exciting offering and details of the training modules over the coming months. Watch this space!

New Tech or (MOO TECH!)

Moocall: Mike bought one to tell him when his cows are calving: "It's a green device that you easily attach to the tail. The movement of the tail at birth sends a text to your phone and alerts you that she'll be calving within an hour." Mike's problem was nothing to do with the technology - only that he and his son both slept through the text messages!! Then when it stopped working Mike discovered the cow had flicked it off her tail and so it was attached tighter the next time around. His first born calf on the farm was also rather a disappointment, after all the eager anticipation his dairy cow that was supposed to be in calf to a Limi, gave birth to a pure Holstein bull calf! 9/10 for the technology however as it was a very healthy live calf …….just the wrong bloody colour!! You can buy a Moocall off us for £200 and pay the Irish company £89 a year thereafter for a licence.

Fever tags: We had a very interesting afternoon at Joe Robinson's dairy inserting thermometers into calves' ear holes! This is an American innovation whereby a tag with a thermometer probe is inserted into the earhole of a calf. It remains in there as long as necessary, normally until after weaning. If the calf has a temperature for more than 6 hours the tag flashes a red light. It has been shown to assist in much earlier intervention and prevents pneumonia from becoming established. Very handily the tag fits a conventional eartag applicator too. Each tag cost £15 from us and can be re-used on up to three consecutive calves. We have sold some onto another farm so will be interested to see what the client feedback is like.



Calf Tracker Update

Calf Tracker was successfully launched by 2 well-attended introductory meetings in February. Several topics for discussion were raised and there was keen interest in the massive impact that nutrition and health factors play in the vital first 6 weeks of life in order to rear healthy, productive and profitable animals.

Our first meeting is planned for the Spring and is to focus on Colostrum Management. This key area is the cornerstone to successful calf rearing. Calves are born with a totally naive immune system, they rely entirely on colostrum intake to provide them with protection against diseases they encounter in the first few weeks of life before their own immune system develops, as well as vital nutrition.

If you miss out any of the following Four Q's to colostrum management then you should not be surprised to see poor health, low growth rates and high mortality in calves.

1. Quality

   Colostrum quality can vary enormously between animals, so only feed high quality colostrum, ideally tested using a colostrometer. A minimum of 100g of IgG antibodies fed to the calf is likely to result in adequate passive transfer. Colostrum quality can vary for many reasons including; the age and breed of the cow, the length of the dry period, milk yield and hygiene factors. Good quality colostrum should be frozen ready for future use when the dam's colostrum is of poor quality or unsuitable for use. There are various options for freezing, storing and thawing colostrum to ensure quality is maintained and potential disease transmission eliminated. A colostrometer should be used to test the quality.

2. Quantity

   A minimum of three litres in the first six hours, split into two feeds if necessary. Remember, approximately 30 minutes of continuous sucking is required by the calf for it to have consumed three litres of milk from the cow.

3. Quickly

   Ideally, colostrum should be fed as soon as possible after birth, and within six hours at the latest. At birth, the calf's gut is permeable, which means it can absorb the large antibody molecules directly into its bloodstream. Over the first 24 hours the gut rapidly 'closes' and these molecules can no longer be absorbed, so it is essential that the calf absorbs sufficient antibodies as soon as possible after birth. Continue feeding colostrum for at least the first three days of life if possible, as this has been shown to have other benefits encouraging early gut development and laying a solid foundation for fast efficient future growth.

NOTE: Giving a small amount of colostrum to get the calf going is not advised because of the effect on gut closure. Even worse is to give some milk as an interim measure because gut closure will be accelerated while no significant amount of antibodies will be gained. It is better to wait a few hours if necessary until a proper feed can be given. With an understanding of these factors it is easy to understand why cross suckling and even natural suckling may result in inadequate immunity – passive transfer failure occurs in an estimated 30% of calves. It is safe and appropriate to give a calf colostrum once it is dry, holds its head up strongly and is able to swallow.

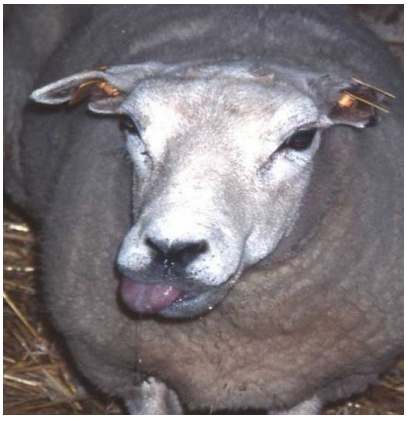
4. Quietly

   If calves are stressed while being fed colostrum, then they won't absorb the antibodies as efficiently as those that are calm. This means a stressed calf will require more colostrum in order to achieve the same level of immunity. Colostrum can be fed by bottle or stomach tube – ensure it is done gently, patiently and observing good hygiene to minimise the possibility of stress or infection.

For more information about Calf Tracker or to discuss any calf rearing issues please contact Harriet 07776 995556.

Sheep

Bluetongue risk 2016



There is a high risk of bluetongue type 8 spreading into the UK this summer. Cases have been confirmed in France and if infected midges are carried by the wind from France to the South-East coast then it is likely we will see some cases in

England. The course of the disease will be weather dependent. Stay vigilant and monitor livestock for the following signs:

Sheep:

- Mouth ulcers
- Drooling and mucus from the mouth and nose
- Swelling of the mouth, neck, head and at the top of the foot, which can result in breathing problems and lameness

Cattle:

Are the main carriers of bluetongue but infected cattle do not normally show any signs of the disease. However you should monitor for:

- Mouth ulcers
- Nasal discharge
- Swollen teats
- Lethargy

Please contact the practice if you have any suspected cases.

Most of you are well into the lambing season and some of you have already finished. As we all know potential diseases and problems don't stop there.

Watery mouth in lambs

This is caused by an *E.coli* infection in the small intestines. The *E.coli* rapidly multiply and cause lethargy, profuse salivation (watery mouth) and abdominal distension, some lambs will also retain feaces. When lambs do not receive adequate colostrum then there can be rapid and fatal multiplication of the bacteria. Treatments are based on clinical signs. Antibiotics are important to treat the bacterial infection and, despite stomach distension, oral electrolyte therapy at a rate of 50ml/kg four times a day is essential.

The disease can be prevented by improving hygiene standards in lambing sheds, use clean dry straw and disinfect lambing pens between ewes. Ensure all lambs receive adequate colostrum (50ml/kg during the first 2 hours of life) as soon as possible after birth and administer an oral antibiotic (Spectam) within the first 15 minutes after birth.

Navel ill

This is a common infection in young lambs. Infection may remain localised to the umbilicus and a small abscess will form or may extend further to cause peritonitis, liver abscessation, swollen joints, meningitis and infections in the liver and kidneys.

Liver abscesses can form when an infection with *Fusobacterium necrophorum* (the bacterium which causes footrot in sheep) enters the navel. Lambs with such an infection tend to be between 10 and 14 days of age and become dull and depressed. Unfortunately

despite treatment these animals will normally die or have to be euthanased on welfare grounds.

Prevention is by dipping navels with strong iodine within the first 15 minutes of life and then repeating this 2 to 4 hours later.

Joint ill occurs when the bacteria localise within the joints. Joints become swollen, hot and inflamed. Penicillin is the drug of choice when more than one joint is infected and should be injected once daily for five days. In the face of an outbreak then all lambs can be treated with a single injection of long acting penicillin, but please call us to discuss the diagnosis and options.

Coccidiosis

Coccidiosis can have severe consequences; this microscopic parasite attacks the gut lining of the lamb so that it loses fluids and struggles to absorb food. Lambs can be obviously ill and scouring, or have a subclinical infection which affects development and growth rates.

Once a single coccidial oocyst is ingested by a lamb, it will multiply internally and around 16 million will be excreted back into the environment. This massively amplifies the disease challenge for future batches of lambs. When clinical signs show such as scours, dirty back ends and lambs that generally appear tucked up with a dull poor appearance, the damage to the gut has already been done. Treating the affected and all in-contact lambs with a coccidiocide at this point is essential, but prevention of clinical signs is always better; it is important that the whole group is treated, not just those showing clinical signs.

Coccidiosis outbreaks can differ from farm to farm, and as such effective control will vary - Decoquinate (Deccox sheep premix), diclazuril (Vecoxan) and toltrazuril (Baycox) can be used for the treatment and prophylaxis of coccidiosis in lambs; the choice of medication will depend upon individual farm circumstances and it is important to get an accurate diagnosis which will then help in planning an effective control strategy. Please phone the practice to discuss your farm's requirements.

MOT your bull - Examination of bulls for breeding soundness

With the majority of spring calves now born it is important to remember that your bulls will soon be required once again. No other individual makes as much of a contribution to the herd in terms of genetics, calves born/milk in the tank and disease status than your bull. However on both dairy and beef units they are an often neglected area of herd fertility, all too commonly resulting in extended calving blocks and increased barren rates with serious financial consequences.

The main objective of Pre-breeding Examinations (PBE) is to identify bulls that are potentially unfit for breeding use. Very few bulls are totally infertile but research has shown that 20-30% of bulls are sub-fertile and failed PBE during routine screening. Pre-breeding examination is all about risk management, and whilst a "Suitable for Breeding" bull is not

guaranteed to be of normal fertility, an examined bull should be of considerably less risk than one not examined prior to breeding. PBE prior to sale can also provide a useful marketing tool and act as supporting proof of a bull's fertility should buyers later question this. It is advisable to MOT your bull several months before the breeding season begins as with semen production taking over 8 weeks, he must be in good health and ready for work at least 2 months before service starts.

A Bull Breeding Soundness examination comprises three stages to assess likely fertility:

1. General Physical examination – BCS/mobility etc.
2. Genital Examination (including accessory glands)
3. Electro-ejaculation and semen evaluation

It should be kept in mind that libido and the physical ability to serve are not directly assessed, so bulls should also be observed serving cows to spot other problems such as penis deviation. As a rule of thumb, if a bull is put with a cow in heat he should serve her within 20 minutes and ideally within 10 minutes.

It is important to remember that bulls can be highly infectious to the breeding females after exposure to disease. Therefore ensure all routine vaccinations (e.g. BVD, IBR, Leptospirosis) and treatments for liver fluke, worms and external parasites (e.g. flies, lice) are up to date. Remember that yearling bulls working hard over the summer are probably even more susceptible to worms than grazing stores, with disastrous effects and even losses seen by us every year. If a bull is hired in or has worked in other herds we can perform sheath washes to identify sexually transmitted infections such as Campylobacter and help prevent them entering the herd.

At Rutland Vets we have experienced and trained bull fertility vets who can perform a Pre-breeding Examination for young bulls pre-sale, as routine checks before the service period or for those suspected to be sub/infertile. An accompanying certificate is then produced detailing any findings and deeming whether bulls are 'Suitable for Breeding'.

If you require any further information, or to book your bull in for a PBE, please give the practice a call.

TB testing Camelids

Henry had one of his most traumatic calls last year trying to TB test 2 unhandled Llamas with a scared owner. This is more involved than TB testing cattle whereby you have to inject the TB into skin in the Llama's armpit having marked the injection site with a marker pen and measured the skin with a Vernier calliper. You then read them 72 hours later like cattle. Then take a blood sample 10-30 days afterwards.

Camelids are considered an incidental spill-over host for *M. bovis*. They become infected by coming into contact with maintenance hosts and vectors of infection (i.e. cattle and badgers).

There is now an easier method for TB testing camelids, either for voluntary herd health surveillance, and pre- and post-movement testing. The test involves taking one red top tube and sending it off to a specialised lab. If any of you are interested in testing your Alpacas/Llamas, please contact Henry at the practice because special permission is required from APHA, and he is well practised at it now!

New for the 2016 rearing season…..

FVS - Gamebird Veterinary Services

In-house post-mortems & diagnosis. Telephone advice. Shoot/rearing site visits.

Medications available from your nearest branch.

For more details and to register your shoot/birds please speak to Max at the Melton branch on 01664 567481.

G-VETT

If you, like many of the vet staff, had bets on who would be the first to crash G-VETT, you may have lost your bet!

It was neither Mike nor Mossy, but the hangar which 'protects' G-VETT from inclement weather. It decided to take off one night at the beginning of March and unfortunately hit the helicopter in the process causing significant damage.

Mossy arrived early one morning to take the helicopter for a service and found it not quite flyable!

It's currently being decided if it can be fixed in the UK or if it needs to go back to France, to the factory it was made, to be repaired. In the meantime, Mike and Mossy will be forced to use conventional means to reach their calls for the foreseeable future!

Staff News

We have welcomed two new vets to the practice since Christmas, Lee is filling the hole left by Matt's departure and Fiona is an addition to the team.

Hi Lee, would you like to introduce yourself? Where have you worked before Rutland Vets?
I graduated from the University of Nottingham in 2013 and have worked in Mixed Practice in Melton Mowbray since then.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

During the summer I play cricket, and during the winter I can be found watching Leicester Tigers where I have been a season ticket holder for 11 years. Otherwise I enjoy exploring with my dogs.

What have you thought of your first month or so with us?! I'm getting used to doing a few more miles in my car! Everyone I've met so far has been great and it's been good to join during such a busy time to get out and about as much as possible and start meeting everyone.

What are you looking forward to about working here? Joining an experienced and knowledgeable team of vets, and developing my skills as much as possible whilst also hopefully bringing in some new ideas as well.

What's your favourite drink - tea or coffee? As long as there's caffeine, milk and one sugar I don't mind!

Lager or beer? I'm an ale man. Everards Tiger or a Doombar do nicely.

Rugby or football?! Rugby of course...

Where would you want to visit if you could go anywhere in the world? I would love to go and follow a Lions tour in New Zealand.

And finally what would you do if you won a million pounds? Buy a chalet in a ski resort and try to negotiate with Mike to have a couple of months off every winter!

Please watch this space for Fiona's introduction in the summer.

PLEASE REMEMBER AS OF 6TH APRIL ALL DOGS NEED TO BE MICROCHIPPED. THIS CAN BE DONE ON FARM, PLEASE ASK YOUR VET.