



St David's Farm Newsletter

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Bluetongue update

You are probably tired of hearing about bluetongue, but it is a very significant disease that is already in the UK. Our stock is at high risk if nothing is done to prevent this disease.

Why is it important?

Transmitted by midges in the warmer months, the virus can infect ruminants (cattle, sheep, goats) and camelids. Bluetongue's devastating effects on mortality rates, milk yield and reproductive performance (returns,

abortions etc.) make this disease economically significant.

The effects on animal welfare with mouth ulcers and coronary band sores (where hoof meets the skin) causing lameness, is severe.

When do I vaccinate?

The best time to vaccinate is now as the weather is getting warmer, to allow plenty of time for a full primary course and for the animals immunity to develop before the main risk period of summer/autumn.

How much is vaccination?

At St David's, the Bovilis vaccine has been reduced to a cost of 37p per shot per animal (1ml) – cattle need two doses three weeks apart for a primary course and sheep one dose. If you started vaccination last year they will need just one booster. Everything over one month needs protecting with the bluetongue vaccine.

Monitor your stock regularly, if you suspect one of your animals has bluetongue call your nearest animal health office or the DEFRA helpline on **08459 33 55 77**.

Jenny Smith – 07921109226

Understanding Bovine TB

In a series of articles I will try and simply explain some aspects of bovine TB, the testing procedures and the control strategies in an attempt to help with your understanding of this disease which blights us.

Part 1: Why do TB reactors not have lesions?

One of the most frustrating parts of TB control is when results from reactors come back as no visible lesions and negative on culture. It can feel like a herd shutdown for no good reason and a vicious waste of life, particularly if the animal was a freshly calved heifer. I can't change the test but I will try and explain how it works.

Simplified there are two main types of immune response. When bovine TB (*M. bovis*) infects an animal a cell mediated immune (CMI) response is activated. In an ideal situation this enables the bacteria to be engulfed and destroyed by the right kind of immune cells. An excessive or hypersensitive CMI response produces masses of immune cells which instead of killing the bacteria die and become necrotic (rotten) producing the cheesy lesions typical of TB.

The skin test works by stimulating this hypersensitive reaction with parts of *M. bovis*. The swelling is greatest at 72 hours hence this being the time the test is read. The skin test is an objective measurement of the hypersensitivity reaction to *M. bovis* compared to *M. avium*. It accurately shows animals which have produced an immune response to mycobacteria. It does not

show if a cow has lesions. Cattle with a marked reaction are far more likely to have lesions, but we do not know for sure that they all would have gone on to develop the disease.

The problem is that there are many types of mycobacterium and they are difficult to grow and identify. We are only interested in the ones causing disease in animals and humans. Some types can accidentally infect a cow and in some cases produce a TB-like lesion but could not go on to infect others. *M. bovis* can only be distinguished from other mycobacteria by culture, hence the reason visible lesions are cultured. Where visible lesions are not found at PM, the chances of finding the mycobacteria to culture are very small even if they are present in the animal.

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It also depends on the timing of the test in relation to infection – in our area with so many farms on 60 day testing, animals which have been infected with M bovis often have not been infected long enough to grow visible lesions since it is a very slow disease. Therefore although they react to a short interval test no visible lesions will be found at the abattoir since they are in the early stages of disease. The same can be true at annual or any test if the animal has just been recently infected.

Another problem with the skin test is that it only tests the hypersensitive CMI response. In the late stages of the disease this type of immunity switches off and the antibody response takes over. These cattle can have extensive lesions and be highly infectious to other animals but do not test positive to the skin test. This 'harbour' of disease is the reason for the development and use of the more sensitive blood test.

In summary, reactors come back with no lesions because although the test

accurately detects animals which have been infected with mycobacteria and produced an excessive immune response, it does not show if they have lesions. They are far more likely to have lesions but we do not know for certain that they would have gone on to develop the disease. Lesions may also be very small and spread throughout the body and M bovis can only be definitely identified by culture, which is slow and difficult.

Emily Simcock – 07968305227

Faecal Egg Counts – why, when and how?

Why do FEC's?

Faecal egg counts:

1. Save you money
2. Save you time
3. Improves your efficiency
4. Prevent poor performance due to sub-clinical disease.
5. I test for fluke, lungworm, stomach and intestinal worms.

Farms that do regular worm egg counts use less wormer and generally have higher daily live weight gain than those who worm their sheep and lambs routinely or when they see obvious scouring. There are very significant savings to be made by only using wormers when there is evidence of a problem. By doing regular worm counts you see the trend of worm burden change over time and allows you to make the most effective use of both your time and the available drugs. There is also the very important issue of Wormer (Anthelmintic) Resistance amongst the worm population on many farms. Wormer resistance to the white drenches is very widespread and represents an expensive problem in many flocks. Regular faecal egg counts and good veterinary advice are key to avoiding this problem on your own holding.

When to do FEC's

Pooled samples every 4-6 weeks from lambs and calves or more frequently if clinical signs are seen. A pooled sample from the ewes pre-lambing and pre-tupping.

How to Do FEC's

A group of 10-15 animals needs to be sampled to get a representative result. Samples can either be mixed together on-farm before being sent to us or sent as 10-15 separate samples which we will weigh and then mix. If the pooling of samples is done on farm it is important that each of the individual samples which contribute to it is of the same weight. Samples also need to be as fresh as possible in order to give an accurate result. This means collecting

samples direct from the anus with a gloved hand.

We will send you the pots and gloves for collecting the samples for £5.50 and they can then be posted back to us or dropped in at the practice. We will be able to get you the result and give you the best advice that same day for the stomach and intestinal worms and the next day for fluke and lungworm.

How much does it cost?

£18 +vat this is really good value for money especially for the larger flocks and herds where the cost of buying wormers unnecessarily can be very high!

Peers Davies – 07826916935



St David's notice board!

We will be opening a new office in Dartington, Totnes on June 1st to help service our clients in the South Hams.

The office will be staffed from 9am until 5pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Thursday's from 9 - 12:30pm. We will continue to deliver orders to the Eden store but you now have the option of collecting from Dartington up until 5pm. There will also be a Farm Vet based from the office everyday.

Going forward we hope to have a full supply of medication at the Dartington

branch available for dispensing. The telephone number will remain the same and will divert through to Dartington if the main lines are busy. This will give all clients a better service as we all have access to on-line diaries.

New staff

As many of you will know John Stephens left the Dispensary at the end of May for a new career helping to run his family catering business. We wish him the best of luck and I'm sure he would be happy to see you in his restaurant 'Castle Bistro' in Woodbury!



We have now employed Paula Rogers who has many years experience in the

industry having run the Hermitage Seaborough AI stud since 2001. Paula is keen to develop her skills in the Dispensary and will be attending the AMTRA Merchants training course in October at Bicton College.



Rhonda Barbut is also joining the team and will be based at the new Dartington branch. Rhonda is coming to us with a wide range of office and

secretarial experience. She has also worked with animals in both Australia and at Dartmoor Zoo. Rhonda is interested in conservation and regularly undertakes volunteer work her next project being a two week trip to Peru in the Autumn.

Congratulations to the Morrow Family

The Maymor pedigree herd has long been associated with very high quality dairy stock, as any selective buyer from Halworthy market will know.

But, Neville and May Morrow, together with their son Irwin and daughter Wendy and son-in-law Paul have recently succeeded in reaching the No. 1 position in the NMR rankings. With 185 qualifying lactations, the herd averaged a staggering 85 I kg of fat and protein with a yield of I 1,258 kg on twice a day milking.

Farming over 500 acres at Ladock, near Truro in Cornwall, the Morrow family total commitment to quality and attention to detail has always been the major driver for the farming business. Irwin carries out most of the farm



tractor work, cultivating almost 60 acres of maize, 25 acres of wheat and feeding the 220 strong dairy herd and 300 followers on a daily basis.

"Simplicity and consistency are the main goals of the feeding system", he says.

The cows are kept in one group and fed maize and grass silage with a protein pellet and sugar beet to a level of 4 kgs

in total (via a vertical mix feeder) outside the parlour. Then out of parlour and in parlour feeders are used to target compound feed to the cows that require it. With some animals giving upwards of 70 litres it is vital that they have as much high density feed as possible thus the little and often of the OOPF helps achieve this without the problems of acid loading in the rumen.



High quality ingredients, together with fixed formulation dairy cakes, have enabled up to 16kg of concentrate to be fed to some cows, without the fear of digestive upsets or feet problems. Three Counties Megamilk rations are fed in the parlour and via out-of-parlour feeders during the summer and winter.

The ability to target feed the high yielding cows has led to a rolling feed rate of 0.32kg/litre and a feed cost well below 8p. With a calving index of 420 days, rolling bactascans of 12 and SCCs of 81, the overall picture of the dairy business at Treveale is truly astonishing and it is this whole farm attention to detail that has secured the top spot for the Morrow's.

With 90% of the herd going to Holstein semen and half of the reared heifers going to market there are plenty of opportunities for other top dairy producers to buy into the this top herd and be able to fully unlock the potential from their own dairy systems.

In practical terms, attention to detail and a life times dairy commitment are what has got the Morrows to where they are today, i.e. the top of the tree. However the real achievement is that they are total proof that a family run, quality driven team can still out perform all other types of unit when it comes to managing healthy, profitable, high yielding dairy cows.

Raw material update

Soya – It's all China's fault! It seems all raw materials are rising in cost due to China's huge appetite for just about everything, or that's what we're told. There is no doubt China have imported a massive amount of Soya. Combine this with virtually no beans out of Argentina and it means short supply until Argentine farmers attempt to reach an agreement towards the end of June. For the short term little or no relief until July, when there maybe some hope of reductions. Further bearish news will be the arrival of new crop in the autumn.

Soya Hulls – Good news on fibre sources. With a sensible price for beet, hulls are very attractive this summer at around £100/t ex/dock. Fibre raw materials look to remain fairly flat this summer, rising slightly for the winter period.

Sugar Beet – With beet being priced more realistically, Trident are hoping to

Raw material prices

	Mar 09	Apr 09	May 09
Hipro Soya	£288	£311	£315
Wheat Distillers	£169	£170	£170
Sugar Beet	£155	£153	£135
Soya Hulls	£110	£101	£100
Rapeseed Meal	£166	£167	£177
Wheat	£105	£103	£108
Barley	£100	£98	£101

claw back some of their lost business. Winter prices are already available and look very competitive against cereals. So if you prefer sugarbeet in your diets take some cover now.

Wheat and Barley – Cereal prices have fluctuated quite a bit over the last couple of months. More recently prices have firmed on the back a number of things; poor weather conditions, high soybean cost and capital funds investing money. To take some cover for the winter may not be a bad move.

Molasses – Supply and demand has forced molasses upwards in the region

of £15/t. Standard molasses looks over priced but products like Regumaize could offer an alternative to expensive proteins with sugar thrown in for little additional cost.

Rapeseed Meal – Due to the spiralling costs of soya, rape has once again returned to £180/t level. At this high point to remain spot through the summer and be patient before booking winter requirements looks to be the best option.

Steve Symons – 01884 256256
(Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays)