

## Practice News

Don't forget that the telephone number of our new premises is:

**01844 260616**

Norcal Vets:  
'Dedicated to the Health of Your Business'



## 'TIS THE SEASON FOR STRIKE

As much as we welcome the lengthening, warming days of spring, so too do female blowflies. Freshly hatched from their pupae, mated and fat with eggs, they are looking for somewhere to deposit their load. And where better than the moist and soiled fleece of a sheep's behind?! The eggs hatch within a day and the larvae (maggots) begin to feed on the host's tissues and secretions straightaway.

Observant shepherds may detect the first signs of strike within 24 hours. The larvae are intensely irritating causing animals to gad, stamp, nibble and tail-shake. Noticing these early signs quickly is important as, left untreated, the disease progresses and the animal will become quiet and depressed, with death due to septicaemia in as little as seven days. Sheep should therefore be observed carefully, twice daily, in high risk periods.

Given that the majority of this process occurs *beneath* the fleece, the extent of lesions is often alarming when an animal is treated. Affected areas should be clipped widely and insecticide applied directly to kill the larvae (and prevent further eggs being laid). Any animals which show any signs of illness should be treated with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories, and those with more severe disease may need additional veterinary attention.

The risk factors for fly strike can be summarised by 1) factors affecting fly abundance and activity, and 2) factors affecting sheep susceptibility. We have little control over the first risk factor, so must act against susceptibility by reducing the attractiveness of sheep to flies through shearing,



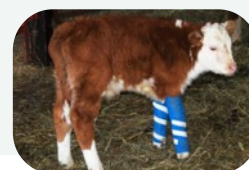
worming to reduce scours and application of insecticides.

Shearers' preferences, meat withdrawal periods and persistence of activity will all influence your choice of insecticide: it's complex, so if in any doubt as to the best product for you, please phone your vet for advice.

## THE YOUNG MEND WELL

Broken legs on calves or lambs can be a heart breaking sight, but all may not be lost! With quick action, even upper limb fractures have a chance of success. However, speed of treatment and stabilisation is the key.

Where fractures have broken the skin, prognosis is significantly reduced and upper limb fractures often need external stabilisation, but call the practice to evaluate the animal as young animals mend well, casting materials are relatively cheap and success rates are good.



## PRRS - NEW TESTING METHOD

The disease known as Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) can cause large losses if present on a pig farm. This can occur in all categories of a swine population through mortality, fertility issues and decreased productivity in either farrowing units or grower/finishing farms.

The standard method for testing has been to blood sample across the herd but this incurs labour costs, laboratory fees and can also stress on the animals.

Fortunately, there is a new test available which tests the pigs' saliva for the virus. This is collected by using a hanging cotton rope which is hung at shoulder height to the pigs in the pen for 20 – 30 minutes, allowing the pigs to deposit their oral fluids by chewing on the rope. The guide line is to use a 1/2 inch (1.3 cm) rope for nursery pigs and a 5/8 inch (1.6 cm) for grower-finishing pigs.

It is important that several pigs in the group chew on the rope and that you do not let the animals destroy it. Dominant pigs can sometimes take charge of the rope and the result is that the test is performed on too few pigs.

Therefore, it is important that the staff watch the animals as they chew, marking each one that does and driving away the dominant pigs. The rope location can be moved in order to facilitate access for all the animals.

The wet end of the rope then needs to be inserted into a plastic Ziploc bag and the fluids should be extracted in the bag by squeezing the rope. The minimum quantity of fluid required is 3 ml, which has to be collected in a clean tube by cutting a corner of the bag. If there is more than one sample to be collected from different groups, you should use disposable gloves and change them after each sample is collected.

The tube needs labelling and refrigerating as soon as possible, then please contact the vets who will help to arrange delivery of the sample to the lab along with the necessary paperwork.



## NEW JOHNE'S INITIATIVE

With the National Johnes Management Plan (NJMP) striking milk producers this year, it would be wise to stay ahead of the game and identify how your herd is likely to fare under the new regulations.

The direction of travel of this initiative is to ensure that all farms have considered the risk of Johnes entering and spreading amongst their herd and implementing a robust Johnes monitoring scheme, as well as a Johnes control plan, to reduce the incidence on the farm.

These are likely to become requirements of all contracts – as some have already seen.

Before we get too upset at this latest red tape obstacle to producing milk, it is worth remembering that uncontrolled Johnes will cost you 2-4ppl.

This should be compared to the cost of any control plan, which is likely to equate to less than ½ppl; the vet costs will be a tiny fraction of the 0.5p.

If ignored, Johnes will continue to get worse – it will never go away by itself; if you are thinking about a farm for your children, it is worth taking immediate action to control the disease.

Defra data suggests that 35% of farms are infected. Other findings suggest it may be as many as 7 out of 10.

Please discuss with us how we can put you on a strong footing with Johnes disease today.

## RETAINED PLACENTAS / FOETAL MEMBRANES

Like humans, cows are individual. Therefore, although there are rules of thumb, it is essential to look at every cow in isolation.

In the majority of cows, the removal of the foetal membranes is a process that will happen naturally within the first 4 days post calving. However, metritis (inflammation of the uterine wall) is the greatest risk as this serious infection can be life threatening. To ensure you avoid or at least get on top of metritis as soon as possible you should take your cows' temperature, look for milk drop, depressed appetite and dehydration.



Please get in touch if you are concerned, but also call if there are membranes present at 4 days (even if none of the signs above are present) and we will attempt to manually remove them and undertake further treatment.