NorCal Veterinary Services

NEWSLETTER

September 2014

PRACTICE NEWS

We have a number of farmer meetings coming up over the next few weeks, so here are a couple of dates for your diary!

Thursday 25 September

This is a meeting for our dairy clients to introduce the DairyCo Mastitis Plan and also discuss the use of Kexxtone.

Kexxtone is a new bolus that minimises ketosis in the fresh calver and may result in the production of an additional 300-500 litres of extra milk over the lactation.

Wednesday 1 October

Our second meeting will be focused on youngstock, covering the topics of pneumonia and scours.

Both meetings start at 7pm and food and drink will be provided.

Please call the practice for more information and to reserve your place!

MILK PROGESTERONE

In the second in this series of articles on milk progesterone, we will look at how it can help you serve a cow at the right time. Next time, we will be looking at how to use the test to give an early indication of pregnancy.

There have been significant advances in milk progesterone tests, with products such as P4 rapid from Ridgeway Science arriving on the scene last year. The question is, did we need them and can they help to manage your herd?

Even with the use of available aids, heat detection in the modern dairy cow can still be a bit of a mythical science, with open cows 'just blinking once' to demonstrate they are bulling, whilst cows who have been served may continue to show bulling activity through their pregnancy.

Monitoring milk progesterone can help to overcome these hurdles.

Milk progesterone is a very good proxy for blood progesterone. Progesterone drops when a cow comes bulling; it should drop to very nearly zero at this time. However, it has been found that for some cows, their progesterone level decreases but doesn't fall away altogether - this is due to the ovary not preparing itself adequately for the reproductive cycle.

If you know roughly when a cow is expected to come bulling, you can collect and test a milk sample in the preceding days and monitor for the time it drops away sharply.

You can then assess whether it has actually fallen right away to nearly zero, or whether the cow still has some progesterone in her system when she is bulling. This way you can be sure to serve her at the most appropriate stage, as well as getting assistance if her progesterone has not dropped as far as it should have done.

SHEEP SCAB ALERT

The incidence of sheep scab has seen an unusual increase during August.

As a rule, every case of groups of itchy sheep should be considered as scab until proven otherwise. We are able to collect skin scrape samples (hair plucks are not really enough) to help diagnose this disease.

With a confirmed diagnosis, even organic farms are able to use the most appropriate drugs to help treat the condition. Please give the surgery a call if you require assistance.

Address: NorCal Veterinary Services Limited, Pearces Yard, Aylesbury Road, Thame, Oxon OX9 3AS

Telephone: 01844 212034 **Mobile:** 07725 039093 **Website:** www.norcalvets.co.uk

MAEDI VISNA

Maedi Visna is a condition caused by a *Lentivirus* (slow virus), part of the Retrovirus family which includes the HIV-AIDs virus. It combines with the DNA of white blood cells and these sheep become chronic carriers.

Transmission usually occurs early in life from drinking infected colostrum or milk. It is also spread by close contact (probably by the respiratory route), the use of contaminated needles and via semen.

Maedi-Visna Virus (MVV) infects the animal for life, but the amount of virus carried can vary. Infected sheep with no symptoms can also transmit the disease. Diagnosis is often difficult due to the vague symptoms and the diseases typically goes unnoticed until a large part of the flock is affected.

Maedi: Maedi (gasping or panting) is the most common observation. The incubation period is at least two years, symptoms normally appearing at three or four years old. The clinical signs normally seen are wasting but with a good appetite, worsening breathlessness and sometimes a cough. This is progressive and usually leads to death in three to six months.

Visna: Visna (shrinking or wasting) is less common in sheep. The incubation period appears shorter and signs can be seen at two years of age. Symptoms usually begin insidiously with hind limb weakness, trembling of the lips, head tilt and loss of condition which progresses to paralysis.

MVV can also cause lameness due to progressive arthritis and chronic indurating mastitis with decreased milk yield. There is a large production loss due to increased mortality rates, high replacement costs, poor fertility and poor lamb weight gain.

Unfortunately there is no treatment available for the condition, so prevention is the only way forward.

Given that MVV is normally introduced by bought in animals, care should be taken to assess incoming stock and biosecurity measures imposed alongside testing.

Ultimately, the slaughter of infected animals is the only effective method of control.

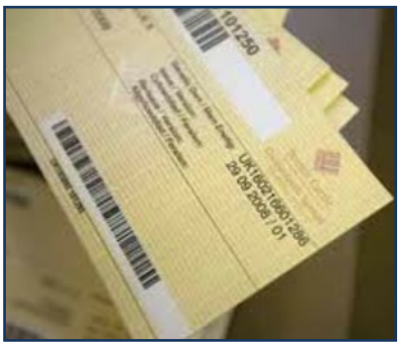
HUSK

Whilst Husk was typically uncommon in older cattle, there appears to be an increasing incidence in recent years, especially in dairy animals.

For adult cattle to develop husk, they must have been shielded from a significant natural challenge for several grazing seasons. This could be due to a number of factors, for example:

- Long, dry grazing periods
- Grazing on clean pasture for most of the season
- Long-lasting worm control

If these animals are then exposed to a significant larval challenge, clinical disease is likely to be the result. Treatment options are similar to those for younger cattle, but remember to consider the withdrawal period.



NEW STOCK?

So, you're thinking of buying in stock, but have you discussed it with your vet?

Each year, hundreds of thousands of livestock animals move around the UK and onto new farm holdings.

And we all know that there is a very real risk of buying in disease, but very few of us take any action to reduce that risk.

If you know your seller in advance, then why not ask them to give their vet permission to speak to you or your vet about the diseases on their farm?

It is reasonable to assume that if they do not wish you to speak to their vet then they have issues on the farm they would rather you didn't know about and you can immediately place them at the top of your risk scale!

As vets we are very happy to make these phone calls, and to appraise the relative risks of buyers and sellers to address any potential problems.

To be clear, this is not about never buying any animals from a farm which is not accredited.

Rather, it is about balancing the risk, aiming not to expose your own herd or flock to a greater threat than already exists on your farm.

Doesn't that sound sensible?