

PRACTICE NEWS

Position Vacant

We are looking for a Receptionist to work three days a week. If you are interested in applying for the position or would like to know more please give Evan a call or drop us an email on evan@norcalvets.co.uk.

Celebration Time

We are having a drinks and nibbles party to celebrate Norcal's 5th Anniversary!

Come and join us for a drink on the 20th November at the Spread Eagle in Thame at 7pm!

Hope to see lots of you there!

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



Your Dedicated Farm and Game
Veterinary Specialists

ARE YOUR COWS REACHING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL?

Researchers in Holland have identified that a cow's most productive lactation will be her 5th. Into her 6th and 7th lactation she will begin to settle off, but will still produce a lot of milk.

In the UK, the average age at exit from a herd is 3.6 lactations. This means that we could be missing the peak for so many of our cows and are not getting the full potential from each life that we nurture.

In the Netherlands, the top 1% of herds have a herd average of 6 lactations, each one averaging over 10,000 litres; the thing that these herds all have in common is deep beds

A milking cow requires plenty of space and comfort to lie down - inadequate lunge space is the biggest block to cows lying down for prolonged periods. However, it is in the dry cow housing that these 1% of herds do so well. On average, transition cows in these top 1% of herds were lying down for up to 16 hours per day; on other farms this was as little as 9 hours per day.

Standing up for this extra 7 hours per day simply wears cows out. They are not as healthy entering the next lactation and are therefore more likely to fall over with milk fever, LDA, ketosis and so on. They also show more signs of physical deterioration, for example, the fat pad in their hooves becomes thinner, making them more likely to suffer solar ulcers.

So, improving your cows' transition period can help improve their life expectancy, which can make them more profitable. It may also half the number of heifers you need as replacements. Surplus heifers can be sold, or more selective culling criteria applied to further improve your herd.



BULLS AND BVD CHECKS

If you use a bull and are concerned about the risk of BVD on your farm, then it would be worthwhile adding a BVD screen to the routine monitoring of his semen for quality purposes.

A bull named Cumulus gave rise to our understanding of the phenomenon of a silent BVD infection of the testes, which may not show up in any blood screening. This may be passed to the cows and reduce conception rates. Bulls with this problem will still get cows in calf so he might otherwise avoid being the prime suspect in any investigations.



ANTHRAX IN THE UK



With the recent report that anthrax has been exposed in a cow found dead in the southern region of England, it is worth revisiting the reasons to be suspicious of this disease.

- Any sudden death.

That's it! What is more involved is what we then do about it. Anthrax would be a particular concern if the animal was outside, weaned and otherwise healthy before death. Unlike a death from staggers, you will see no evidence on the ground of the animal having struggled, or paddled around.

It may in fact look more like a lightning strike – so the question is whether the prevailing climatic conditions, and the location of the animal make lightning strike likely or unlikely.

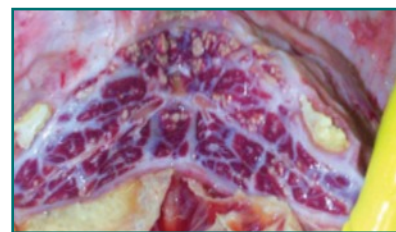
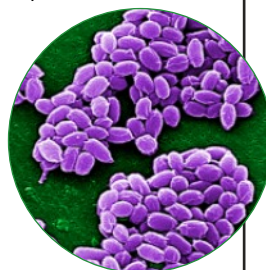
If you feel that you have ruled out these two other likely causes of death in such animals, then it is definitely worthwhile contacting your vet.

We will be able to request a licence to undertake an anthrax enquiry. If we are granted this licence then it will cover the costs of us attending your farm and collecting the relevant samples.

It is of huge importance that you do not move the body until given the all clear on the results of the test. Normally, the test will only take a few minutes to set up and read back at the surgery, so it should not delay movement for too long.

The discovery of this disease at the end of October demonstrates that anthrax is more than a theoretical risk. And remember, there is a significant risk to other livestock and humans if an infected carcass is allowed to leak blood.

The motto for this killer disease has to be – “If in doubt, check it out”.



MYCOPLASMA IN ADULTS

There is increasing detection of Mycoplasma (often *M. Bovis*) in adult cattle in both dairy and beef herds. The clinical signs can be various, but include swollen hocks and udders with a high temperature, which resolves over time.

It is also often found to be a key contributor to calf pneumonia. Typically, calves affected with Mycoplasma may develop middle ear infections alongside any pneumonia. These may present as a head tilt, droopy ear (usually just on one side) or swelling to the side of the head.

If it is caught at this early stage, then treatment with some antibiotics can be very successful; a vet may also make a judgement on whether the middle ear infections requires releasing.

Your adult cows will continue to circulate the infection and, whilst a blitz treatment with antibiotics may be helpful, it will not eradicate the disease. Therefore, where a diagnosis is made, we may discuss generating a vaccine bespoke to your farm.

This is straightforward from the cows' point of view – we need only collect a few swabs. However, it can prove difficult for the lab to culture and there may be a need to have a couple of tries at getting this right.

If you suspect Mycoplasma in your herd, we can screen for it with a blood sample from some adult cows or from a clinically affected calf.



ACTION JOHNE'S IS COMING

From 2016, nearly all dairy farmers will be required to have a Johne's action plan and there is a lot of sense in beef and sheep farmers following suit.

In a recent study of dairy herds, it was found that, if the herd was positive in any way for Johne's disease, there was an average 366 litre per cow loss in milk yield per lactation and a 79% lower likelihood of being in calf by 100 days. Of course, this is of importance to beef and dairy farmers alike.

These measures of productivity are just two which have been highlighted to demonstrate the insidious nature of Johne's. It is worth remembering that the top performing farmers will never see clinical Johne's disease as they will have culled the cows for productivity loss long before they become clinical. Controlling Johne's is good for your herd.