

PRACTICE NEWS

New Vet

We are looking forward to welcoming a new vet to our team this month.

Jo Card, who has previously worked as a mixed animal vet in South Oxfordshire, is joining the practice on 6 October.



Please give her a warm welcome when you see her on her rounds!

Norcal Vets:

‘Dedicated to the Health of Your Business’

TIME TO SERVICE

We will look again at a different time of year how to best judge the time to serve a beef cow, but in dairy circles there is often advice to start serving early, perhaps even as little as 40 days after calving, to bring the average calving to conception interval down.

However, as with any average though, this is only part of the story and we have seen a number of farms where there are effectively two groups of animals, both costing money through sub-optimal timing of conception.

The first group conceive to this early 40-day service, giving them a calving interval of under 330 days. They end up with a shortened lactation, short dry period and lose productive performance as a result. Every day under 365 costs around £2.10 in lost milk and increases the risks associated with calving.

The second group, who are more of a fertility challenge, conceive much later, around 120 days, giving a calving interval of around 400 days. Every day over 390 days costs between £3 and £10 as this interval extends. They set in motion the cycle of poor fertility and, over a 3 lactation life, they may end up losing as much as a whole lactation.

So actually, very few of the animals end up in the sweet spot of 365-390 days calving interval. But if you look at the average calving to conception interval alone, you would see that it looked good, and certain farm advisors would be encouraging you to continue to push for this.



We would advocate looking at other parameters, such as % of cows in calf by 100 days in milk, before congratulating yourself. Please let us know if you would like to look more closely at this data with us, and we can see if we can help to improve your profitability through reproductive efficiency.

BACKYARD POULTRY - ARE WORMS THE ISSUE?

Gut worms are very common in chickens and signs include: diarrhoea, poor quality shell, loss of condition, dullness or lethargy, pale wattle and, in the worst case, death!

But there is another worm to consider - *Syngamus trachea*, a tapeworm, causes birds to open mouth breathe as the worms inhabit the trachea. The most effective licensed treatment is Flubenvet, which is mixed in feed for 7 consecutive days.



LISTERIOSIS AND BIG BALE SILAGE

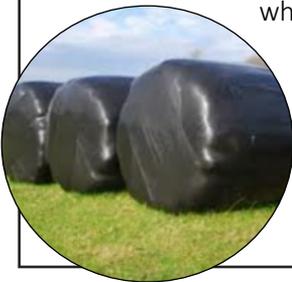
The production of good silage relies on the absence of air and the presence of sugars. This leads to good anaerobic fermentation which produces an acid environment. And when the sun shines, sugar levels are higher, leading to better silage.

Production is more difficult with bale silage as the plastic wrap doesn't always exclude all of the air and the bale may not be sufficiently hard packed. Bale silage is also generally made with late cut grass, which has lower levels of soluble sugars and, in bad weather, is susceptible to soil contamination.

Listeria bacteria replicate rapidly in soil-contaminated, poorly-conserved big bale silage. It leads to diseases that affect the brain, eyes and can cause abortion:

- Meningoencephalitic forms of the disease have symptoms including fever, depression, head-pressing, problems with eating and possible facial paralysis. In sheep, circling to one side is often evident before the animal becomes recumbent. Cattle show a one-sided facial paralysis as the disease progresses.
- 'Silage eye' is often confused with New Forest disease but is more aggressive and is seen in cattle and sheep being fed big bale silage, often in ring feeders.
- Listerial abortion can occur at any stage in pregnancy – in sheep it has been seen from seven days after feeding contaminated silage; it is important to remember that this can also affect humans and anyone who is immunocompromised or pregnant should take extra care.

Listerial diseases are generally difficult to treat, and options should be discussed with your vet as soon as a problem is identified; the sooner the treatment begins, the better the response is likely to be.



MILK PROGESTERONE (3)

In the final of our articles looking at the benefits of using milk progesterone tests, we will look at the issue of using it to confirm that a cow has held.

Using the milk progesterone at initial service you should be sure that you served her when her progesterone was very low.

If it is still low 21 days later, then you have the confidence that you served her at the right time. Sadly, it also means that she did not hold in calf!

If you find her progesterone is high at 21 days, then good news – she has held in calf.

Sadly, it is not safe to rely on this for a PD. We know that around 95% of services result in a conception. However, at 35 day PD we only find about 60% of animals in calf. This is due to the losses that occur naturally over this period.

Therefore, it is a really useful way to confirm that you shouldn't serve the cow again – especially if she is one of those cows who continues to show bulling even when pregnant.

However, it cannot be used as confirmation of a viable pregnancy, and it can't diagnose twins! Therefore, we would strongly advise a physical PD at or around 35 days.

FOG FEVER - ARE YOU AT RISK?

Sometimes also called 'acute bovine pulmonary emphysema', Fog Fever is an uncommon condition causing severe respiratory distress in adult cattle one to two weeks after moving on to a lush silage/hay aftermath in June/September.

The animal stands with its neck extended, head lowered and moves very reluctantly. Nostrils are flared and the animal breathes through its mouth with an expiratory grunt and frothy saliva around the protruding tongue; temperatures are normal, animals rarely cough. Usually only 2-5% of the group are affected.

Unfortunately death rates can be high and although early treatment can help survival rates, it is not always successful. So prevention is definitely key and that is down to management.

