



## SUMMER NEWSLETTER...

Dear Customer

I'm delighted to announce details of our newest full-time member of staff with the recruitment of Jono Cooper MRCVS, who joined our practice on 25<sup>th</sup> July. Many of you may remember him attending farm visits with me whilst he was at Nottingham University. He comes from a farming background - his father milked 200 Ayrshire cows until 2004 and his mother's partner farms a mixed beef and sheep farm in the area. Jono is very experienced despite only being recently qualified this summer and I hope you will give him a very welcome when he next visits your farm.

Jono's fees will vary to mine with his consultation fee at £85.00 per hour – this reflects that initially he may be a little slower on farm.

Contact Jono on m: 07889 701340 or e: [jono@webmail.norcalvets.co.uk](mailto:jono@webmail.norcalvets.co.uk)

### Vans

Both Jono and I have new silver vans! My trusty red van was beginning to crack under the strain so was sold to make way for these two more economical and modern Berlingo vans.



### Dairy Cows

Feeding dairy cows economically could mean the difference between profit and loss. Many of first and second cut silage analysis are back and ME values (11-13MJ) are impressive, however quantity is down.

While looking at one client's costs of feed the following questions were raised:

- Can we get feed costs down?
- Are there cheaper feeds out there?
- Can you grow your own and is this cost effective?
- How can you maximise forage intakes?



Do you need every ingredient in the ration?  
By maximising DM intakes one could eliminate Megalac which is very expensive.  
Do you need additives to reduce acidosis?  
Do you know your cows DM feed intakes (top intakes can reach 23-24kg DM)?

Changing feed availability, timing of feeding and composition could decrease additives in ration and decrease feeding costs. This will have benefits in cow health, fertility and profitability.

## Lameness in Sheep

### Causes and Recommended Treatment

If it is a sheep's most fervent ambition to die in the most dramatic way possible, then surely the next desire in its woolly head is to go lame. For many UK flocks, lameness is an endemic problem and prevalence has probably increased following the change in weather patterns to mild winters and wet summers.

The two most common causes of lameness in sheep, scald and footrot are linked by a common cause, the bacterium *Fusobacterium necrophorum*, which is present in all ruminant faeces and therefore on any pasture grazed by sheep.

#### Scald

Scald occurs when the interdigital skin becomes infected by this bacterium, causing inflammation and pain. Unlike in footrot, there is no under-running of the horn. Factors causing the development of scald include wet pastures and long grass. These damage the inter-digital skin and allow *F.necrophorum* to colonise the damaged area.

Uncomplicated cases of scald will resolve spontaneously if the sheep are moved to dry pasture.

Alternatively, individuals can be treated topically with oxytetracycline spray, or on a flock basis, by footbathing in 10% zinc sulphate or a 3% formalin solution. Footrot vaccines are ineffective against scald.

#### Footrot

Footrot starts as scald but requires the presence of an additional bacterium, *Dichelobacter nodosus*, which is found only on infected feet but can survive for 2-3 weeks on pasture.

The combination of the two bacteria causes separation of the horn from the underlying structures of the foot.

This separation may spread across the sole and up the wall of the hoof. Anyone who has trimmed a diseased foot will know that the disease is associated with a characteristic foul smell, which tends to stick to the fingers! The treatment and control of footrot is reliant upon footbathing, remedial paring, antibiotic injections and vaccination.

Footbathing, in either 10% zinc sulphate or 3% (not stronger) formalin solution, works well provided that the sheep are stood in the footbath for long enough (particularly important with zinc sulphate). Leave the sheep on hard-standing for at least one hour post footbathing and then ideally turn them onto fields that have been free of livestock for at least two weeks and hence are clean.

Both the bacteria involved in footrot are anaerobic and so paring the feet to expose the infected tissues to the air will aid recovery. Keep trimming to a minimum and do not to cause bleeding. Disinfect hoof-trimming equipment between animals and sweep away hoof trimmings and dung from the trimming area between groups.

The footrot bacteria respond well to antibiotic injections such as Pen/Strep or Oxytetracycline. A single long-acting injection will cure most cases of footrot, but is expensive on a flock basis and gives no protection against re-infection.

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Vaccination is an important part of a footrot control programme. Vaccinate sheep twice, 4-6 weeks apart, for maximum resistance and then give a booster dose before periods of maximum risk. Vaccination can also be used to aid recovery from footrot, but vaccination alone will not control footrot on a farm and must be part of an overall control programme.

Some sheep will prove impossible to cure and repeat offenders should be culled, as they will simply re-infect their flock-mates. Susceptibility to foot rot is inherited and so do not keep replacements bred from ewes or rams that are repeatedly lame with footrot.

Isolate any bought-in sheep, or sheep returning from eatage for at least 3 weeks and inspect them regularly for signs of lameness.

Eradication of footrot on a farm is possible through application of the above regimes but attempts to eradicate the disease under UK conditions which favour transmission of the disease often fail. In addition, the cost of eradication can be considerable and must be balanced against the cost of endemic footrot in the flock.

### **Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis**

A relatively new cause of lameness is Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis or CODD. This serious infection of sheep's feet is characterised by lesions that begin at the coronary band and then rapidly spread down the hoof, often causing the whole hoof to be shed leaving a raw stump.

This condition fails to respond to orthodox treatments for footrot and you should seek veterinary advice if you think your flock is affected by this disease. On no account should affected sheep be footbathed with formalin because of the painful nature of the lesions.



If in doubt, please call us out – ring the Vet Practice on 01844 212034 Option 3