



Calf Health at Turnout.

With the nights drawing out, and summer fast approaching, it's time to start preparing for turning cattle out to pasture. There are several problems to consider which can affect health and reduce growth rates, particularly in first season grazing calves.

Ostertagia spp are the main parasites that affect the gastro-intestinal tract of cattle. Calves with a high worm burden (*parasitic gastro-enteritis – PGE*) will present with scour, ill thrift, poor liveweight gain and potentially death. With the winter having been relatively mild but extremely wet this means that many worm eggs and larvae will have successfully over-wintered and this can result in high levels of pasture contamination. Naive cattle turned out to graze will ingest low levels of these over-wintered eggs in the spring, which will then develop inside the calf into adult worms which will lay more eggs. Particularly warm weather will speed up this rate of development, resulting in a peak of infectious larvae around late June and July. If the weather is hot and very dry this peak will be delayed until later in the summer. Knowing this means that calves can be treated with anthelmintics at specific times after turnout to ensure that they have ample exposure to the worms to develop immunity, but not enough to cause disease. This means the cattle are less likely to require treatment in future grazing seasons. Calves can also be moved to "safer pasture" which is less heavily infected, such as aftermath or pasture not previously grazed by cattle. If calves are over-treated and not allowed to develop immunity, then they will always be highly susceptible to infection. A good parasite control plan will help to minimise disease but should allow development of natural immunity.

Lungworm (*Dictyocaulus viviparus*) is a common problem in the UK and unfortunately pasture contamination with larvae is very unpredictable meaning that control plans using anthelmintics and "safe" grazing are often unsuccessful. But as with PGE, natural immunity does develop. Clinical symptoms appear after ingestion of only a few larvae and can result in respiratory distress and death. The best method of protection is to vaccinate calves with Bovilis Huskvac prior to turnout.

White muscle disease is due to a deficiency of selenium or vitamin E, or both of them. The delayed form of the disease is often seen in young, fast-growing cattle and can present as sudden death after vigorous exertion (such as playing when turned out). This is due to the lack of selenium causing scarring of the heart muscle. The disease can also present as ill-thrift, stiff gait and reluctance to move, where the scarring has occurred in the skeletal muscles. Selenium levels in the pasture can be tested through soil sampling, or cattle can be blood sampled to assess the potential risk. Prevention can be achieved by supplementation of selenium by giving boluses or long acting injections.

If you want to protect your cattle in the coming grazing season please ring us if you would like us to tailor a health plan for you.

Worms and Cocci in Lambs

Both nematodirus and coccidiosis are causes of scour and death in young lambs. Lambs born in February/early March may be at risk, particularly on south-facing pastures if the weather suddenly warms up. We urge all clients to regularly check for updates at www.scops.org.uk. The first case of Nematodirus causing deaths and scouring in lambs was confirmed in the Hereford area in mid March. The lambs were about 4 weeks of age and grazing high risk pasture with south facing slopes. Since then, colder weather has helped keep a lid on nematodirus hatching, which means we need to be all the more vigilant when it warms up!

SCOPS urges sheep farmers to watch the forecast for their nearest weather station regularly and assess the risk to groups of lambs. 'This season we expect to see huge variation in timing across the country due to the unusual weather patterns' says Lesley Stubbings 'This is not the year to rely on routine timing for treatments' she adds

Coccidiosis is most often seen in 3-8 week-old lambs but can occur up to 6 months of age. Lambs are usually protected in the first few weeks of life by colostral antibodies. The period between infection of an animal with oocysts and them shedding oocysts themselves is 2-3 weeks. Early-born lambs are often exposed to low numbers of oocysts shed by ewes and, although not clinically affected themselves, they shed higher numbers and are an important source of infective oocysts to those lambs born later on. In situations of high stocking densities, stressed lambs are exposed to a high environment level and are more likely to succumb to the disease. Clinical disease can follow a stressful event such as adverse weather, weaning or sudden dietary change.

Diagnosis of coccidiosis is most commonly based upon history (age of lambs and intensive rearing system) and clinical signs. Faecal egg counts are useful to rule out worms as the cause of scour, but high faecal Eimeria oocyst counts alone do not confirm the diagnosis. Oocyst counts of up to 100,000 cysts/gram of faeces have been found in healthy 8-12 week old lambs, as there are several strains of sheep cocci which do not cause disease. Harmful species can be identified by specialist laboratories.

If you are concerned about either of these diseases on your lambs please speak to a vet to discuss

Staggers Risk Over the weekend we have had some rain and the forecast is for the weather to warm up, so it is likely that we will see a flush of grass growth and cases hypomagnesaemia or grass staggers. Remember to supply your sheep and cattle with a source of magnesium at turnout. This may be in the form of minerals on feed, in the water, boluses or ad-lib blocks. It is sensible to always have a bottle of magnesium with you to give to any animal that you find showing signs of staggers, as they can die very quickly, before the vet arrives. The injection should be given under the skin, NOT in the vein.

Dog Microchipping

As of 6th April 2016 it is a legal requirement to have your dog microchipped. We are hosting another Dogs Trust Free Microchipping Day on Tuesday 24th May at our office. To get your dogs done just turn up between 11 am and 3.30 pm on the day. No appointment is needed.

Car Sticker Competition

We are going to run our car sticker competition again from this month. All you have to do to have a chance of winning a prize is to be spotted with one of our stickers on display in your car. If you need a sticker please ask at reception.

Sports Report 2 very cold runners holding their medals at the end of the Cardiff World IAF Half Marathon. Ian Whistance (aka 'the machine') with a personal best of 1hr 29 mins 29 seconds and Rob (aka 'stickman') with his veterans pb of 1hr 32 mins 28 secs'

