

Farm First Newsletter April 2017

Top Tips for Calving

Essential kit should include obstetric gloves, clean calving ropes for head and legs, obstetric gel, surgical scrub, a clean calving gown, and an NSAID (painkiller and anti-inflammatory). Dedicated calving pens are essential. The pens should be light, airy and well bedded, with electric lighting, water, concrete floors and walls which can be cleaned and disinfected between calving's, secure gates, and secure points where the cow can be safely haltered.

Calving should never be attempted in a conventional crush as if the cow goes down it may be difficult to calve her and to get her out again. If a yoke is used it must have a quick release and be open to ground level, to avoid a choking risk should the animal go down. Calving gates are now widely available and are recommended both for normal calving's and caesareans, as they make the process easier and safer for the cow, the farmer and the vet. These gates are relatively inexpensive and well worth the outlay.

The majority of calving problems are due to an imbalance between the size of the calf and the cow.

Reasons include improper bull selection, unplanned pregnancy (e.g. young heifers served by bull calves) or the anatomy of the cow (e.g. narrow pelvis). Often these calving's are normally presented but the cow fails to progress unaided. It is unlikely that the calf will be safely delivered by traction if

- the calf's head fails to pass through the cervix into the vagina before traction is applied.
- the calf's feet are unable to present side by side i.e. they are crossed over.

In these situations, please call us for assistance.

If traction is to be used, then ropes should be placed on both legs. A head rope may also help and should be applied over the calf's ears. This rope should not be attached to the jack, but handed to an assistant who guides the head into the vagina by steady pulling. Generous amounts of obstetric gel should be used and firm, steady pressure should be applied. If the calf fails to progress then traction should be abandoned and a caesarean section performed.

There are a number of malpresentations which can result in calving difficulties e.g. head back or one leg back. The golden rule would be if in any doubt please call for assistance.

Once you have a calf safely on the ground it should be rubbed vigorously to stimulate breathing. Poking straw up the nose and removing fluid from the mouth will also help. Dopram drops are available from vets which are put under the tongue to stimulate respiration. Once the calf is breathing well the navel should be dipped in iodine to prevent joint ill and then the most vital step must take place i.e. the calf should take in at least 3 litres of colostrum within the first six hours.

Staggers Risk

Over the last week, we have had some rain and therefore the weather is warm, 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.

Make lungworm control a priority this spring

Lungworm infection is unpredictable by nature, and poses a significant threat to young calves, potentially reducing growth rates by over 20% and costing £50 to £100 per head.

Incidences of lungworm are hard to predict and have been consistently reported across the country in recent years. For lungworm incorporating vaccination into your parasite control plan, will help reduce the risk of any performance setbacks as a result of potential worm burdens." Lungworm outbreaks are most commonly seen in first-year grazing calves exposed to the parasite for the first time, when they have no immunity and are therefore completely unprotected. But, occasionally outbreaks are seen in non-immune adult cattle that have had little, or no, previous exposure.

The key factor is to build up immunity, which is best achieved by vaccinating calves, particularly on farms with a history of lungworm disease. Vaccinating young stock against lungworm should ideally be done prior to grazing. Two doses of the vaccination should be given four weeks apart, and to calves over eight weeks of age, to allow a high level of immunity to develop. There needs to be a period of up to two weeks after vaccination where calves must not be exposed to potential lungworm threats. It's therefore important to

plan in advance the purchase of vaccines and consider the correct time for administration, so calves are protected when they're first exposed to the parasite.

When beef farmers are dependent on consistent growth rates, and dairy farmers are relying on rearing healthy, productive heifers, controlling lungworm infection is key to ensure productivity and clinical well-being is not detrimentally affected. For more information on the sustainable control of cattle parasites, please visit the COWS website at www.cattleparasites.org.uk or follow us on twitter @COWSworms and Facebook.

Nematodirus

Use the table below and follow disease forecasts on the NADIS (www.nadis.org.uk) and SCOPS (www.scops.org.uk) websites to determine the *Nematodirus* risk on your farm. We now have Endospec SC in stock, a very competitively priced treatment for *Nematodirus*.

Risk Factor	
Are your lambs grazing pasture that carried lambs last spring?	
<i>If you tick above and then one or more ticks below your lambs are at risk:</i>	
Are they old enough to be eating significant amounts of grass? (generally 6 –12 weeks of age but may be younger if ewes are not milking well)	
Do you have groups where there is also likely to be a challenge from coccidiosis? For example mixed aged lambs are a higher risk	
Has there been a sudden, cold snap recently followed by a period of warm weather?	
Have you got lambs that are under other stresses e.g. triplets, fostered, on young or older ewes?	

Schmallenberg Survey

The University of Nottingham has created an SBV survey and are collaborating with the University of Liverpool to gather evidence on the impact of Schmallenberg on farms this year. The purpose of the questionnaire is to measure how many sheep flocks were, or were not, affected; where and when the virus was active in the UK; what effect the virus had on ewe and lamb losses; assessment of impact of SBV infection on lamb and ewe losses; estimate the cost of Schmallenberg virus in UK and to get your opinion on potential control measures that could be used (including vaccination).

The survey is anonymous, but we ask for the first two letters of your farms postcode only to be able to map the spread of disease, but your farm will remain anonymous and will not be identifiable. We would like as many clients to fill this in as possible because the disease has had quite an impact on some farms in this area this year. The link to the survey is <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/S5RGKS9>

Ram Longevity Survey

Can you help the NSA find out about ram longevity on farm? The National Sheep Association are assisting a group of experts in their investigation in the flock life of rams and reasons for deaths and culling in the UK. The more information they can gather, the better. If you have bred complete this quick survey about how long rams last, ram care and common problems you encounter. The survey can be accessed here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ramlongevity>

Surgery DIY

This is what happens when you ask Robert to take the bottom off the door so it's easier to open!

He said he's available for any carpentry jobs you may have.....evenings only.

