



New Website

Our new web site is now up and running. Please take a look at it and let us know what you think. All our recent newsletters are available along with details of upcoming meetings and factsheets.

TB and Wildlife

In case you missed it, here is Rob's article which was recently published in the Abergavenny Chronicle and Monmouthshire Beacon: As I sit here on a Friday afternoon, our vets are gathering in our office. They are returning from reading their TB tests with confirmation of more TB outbreaks on our farms. This is a devastating disease for the farming community and their cattle and one we are losing the battle against.

Why do we need to control Bovine TB (bTB), I hear you ask? Well, bTB poses a risk to animal health and welfare in a wide variety of species, not just cattle. BTB can cause a chronic wasting disease in animals, often involving skin and respiratory abscesses, kidney infection and death. It is a zoonotic disease – one that can be transferred between infected animals and humans. The recent incident of infected domestic cats infecting humans has highlighted the serious nature of the problem and the risks we run in not tackling this disease more effectively.

At present the authorities employ an ever increasing plethora of methods to control the disease in cattle, but the disease is continuing to spread and incidence is increasing. This has cost the taxpayer a considerable sum of money (in the last 3 years, TB Testing and compensation alone has cost the Welsh Government an estimated 70 million) and will continue to do so. Unfortunately the cattle control measures on their own are not preventing either the increase in incidence or the spread of bTB. One of the big issues with the control of bTB, is that there is a reservoir of infection in wildlife (mainly badger and to a lesser extent deer) in many areas of the UK. This is leading to considerable difficulties in limiting the spread of the disease. The randomised badger control trial carried out from the late 1990's to 2005, demonstrated that in areas which have a problem with bTB, 30% of badgers have the disease; also in these same areas, up to 50% of cattle breakdowns are attributable to badger transmissions. Scientific evidence from this and other trials have demonstrated that badger control is an effective means of reducing the incidence of bTB in cattle. Badger to cattle transmission of bovine TB is recognised as an important factor (though not the only factor) in the epidemiology of the disease, so we need to do something to control this.

So what options are there for control? Badger vaccination by injection (using the badger BCG vaccine) is being trialed but is difficult, expensive to administer and only confers a degree of protection (thought to be about 70%). It does not confer any benefit or protection to infected badgers. An oral badger bait vaccine would be easier to administer and trials are ongoing in many countries to produce one but this has yet to be achieved. It is likely to take several years before one is available.

Work is ongoing to produce a cattle vaccine but again there are problems. Efficacy is not brilliant (70%) and there are many questions about its practical use that need to be addressed. Cattle BCG vaccine use is not permitted in the EC because of the difficulty in differentiating a vaccinated animal from an infected one. Vaccinated animals would test positive to the test we currently use. Development of a test which would allow us to differentiate infected animals for vaccinated animals (DIVA) is being developed. Any vaccine that is used would have to be authorized by the EC, with field trials set up and completed. This will take years (current estimates suggest 2023). Meanwhile as we prevaricate, the disease situation continues to deteriorate amongst our cattle and badger populations.

Controlling the badger population is an unpalatable choice to have to make but it is one which we need to embrace. Although badgers are protected they are not endangered (they were originally given protected status to stop badger baiting). The trial mentioned above, established that 70% of the badger population in a control area has to be controlled to have a meaningful impact on disease reduction in cattle. This of course has to be done in a humane, well managed, targeted, carefully monitored, safe and cost effective way. The aim is not to eradicate badgers, the aim is **healthy wildlife** and **healthy cattle**.

Enzootic Abortion Vaccine It is the time of year to think about vaccinating your sheep for enzootic abortion. This year the vaccine will be priced as follows:

50 dose pack - £89.77 (includes 15 % pat discount) = £1.80/dose;

20 dose pack - £42.32 (includes 15% pat discount) = £2.20/dose (Plus free gun (for purchases of 60 doses and above).

For under 200 doses there will be a 10% discount plus free gun (£1.90/dose-pat).

The vaccine consists of a 2ml dose into muscle or under skin. Ewe lambs can be vaccinated from 5 months of age. Older ewes vaccinated from 4 months to 4 weeks prior to the rams going in. (NB not to be given less than 4 weeks before tups go in) 1 dose required. Don't need to boost annually (lots of people just vaccinate their replacement ewes). **Remember it's a vaccine so it needs to be kept cool.**

We can also order Toxovax if toxoplasmosis has been diagnosed in your flock. If you had abortions diagnosed this year and no diagnosis was made there is still time to get your ewes tested under the Flockcheck Scheme.

Meetings

- There will be a meeting on Mastitis and Dry Cow Management sponsored by Hipra. Date and venue to be confirmed.
- We are holding a Young Farmers sheep quiz/meeting on Tues 8th July at the Beaufort Arms in Raglan. It's open to Gwent YFC members, associate members and parents, and is sponsored by Novartis.

Open Day Along with the other businesses at The Bryn Garage we held an open day on Friday 6th June. Clients who came along were able to look behind the scenes at the new premises. Several of our suppliers came along with trade stands and demonstrated things such as how to correctly tube cows at drying off. There was a competition to guess the weight of two Ryeland lambs. There were 3 correct guesses of 64.5kg and the winner of the Kindle, whose name was drawn out of a hat, was Phoebe Chandler. The winner of the Eprinex coat was Matthew Evans who correctly guessed 230 sweets in the jar.

The Joke

Once upon a time there was a shepherd looking after his sheep on the side of a deserted road. Suddenly a brand new Porsche screeches to a halt. The driver, a man dressed in an Armani suit, Cerutti shoes, Ray-Ban sunglasses, TAG-Heuer wrist-watch, and a Pierre Cardin tie, gets out and asks the Shepherd:

"If I can tell you how many sheep you have, will you give me one of them?" The shepherd looks at the young man, and then looks at the large flock of grazing sheep and replies: "Okay. "

The young man parks the car, connects his laptop to the mobile-fax, enters a NASA Webster, scans the ground using his GPS, opens a database and 60 Excel tables filled with logarithms and pivot tables, then prints out a 10 page report on his high-tech mini-printer.

He turns to the shepherd and says, "You have exactly 1,586 sheep here."

The shepherd cheers, "That's correct, you can have your sheep." The young man makes his pick and puts it in the back of his Porsche.

The shepherd looks at him and asks: "If I guess your profession, will you return my animal to me?" The young man answers, "Yes, why not".

The shepherd says, "You are a Management Consultant"

How did you know?" asks the surprised young man.

"Very simple," answers the shepherd.

"First, you came here without being called.

Second, you charged me a fee to tell me something I already knew,

And third, you don't understand anything about my business...

Now can I have my DOG back?"