

## Farm First Newsletter July 2015

**Heat Stress in Dairy Cows** the ideal ambient temperature for a dairy cow is between 5 and 25° C. Above 25° C, cows have to use energy to cool themselves through sweating and by increasing their respiratory rate. In the UK, as ambient temperature increases, atmospheric humidity increases and air movement decreases, it then becomes even more difficult for a cow to cool herself adequately. Milking cows are more prone to heat stress than dry cows or beef cattle due to their high feed intakes and milk output. In badly affected animals, the body temp will often rise dramatically to between 106 and 110F and cows will often pant and drool. Some will recover as day time temperatures drop, but some badly affected cattle signs progress to collapse, convulsions and death. Treatment by spraying with cold water and removing affected animals to a shaded building with good ventilation is usually very successful. Access to fresh cool drinking water is essential. Intravenous fluids are also very effective.

During a long spell of hot weather, heat stress can have a more widespread effect on the herd in general. When day time temperatures reach 30° C, dry matter intakes may fall significantly and milk production losses of over 5 litres/cow/day may occur. Heat stressed cattle eat less frequently and mainly during cooler periods of the day (in order to reduce the heat produced in their bodies by fermentation). This can have the effect of creating 'slug' feeding and increases the risk of acidosis. Lameness incidence in the herd can increase several weeks after a period of heat stress due to this acidosis.

Cattle may require an extra 25 litres drinking water on a hot summer day. As well as losing water through increased sweating, there is also an excessive loss of certain minerals. During hot weather, potassium, sodium and magnesium are all required at higher than usual rates. There are also effects on fertility As well as showing less activity during oestrous, heat stressed cattle will have reduced follicular activity and there may well be a significant increase in early embryonic death between 4 and 6 weeks of gestation.

During periods of hot humid weather it is necessary to consider several factors in an attempt to reduce heat stress in dairy cattle.

1. Should/could cattle be kept indoors during the day? 2. Do these cattle have adequate access to fresh drinking water and can the water supply cope 3. Do the milking cows have a long way to walk in an afternoon for milking and can this be reduced? 4. Can the time spent in the collecting yards be reduced or can sprinklers and/or fans be fitted? 5. Is it possible to increase the feeding frequency to reduce slug feeding occurring? Is it possible to feed more of the diet overnight when it is cooler? 6. Do the cows look acidotic, might it be worth testing a few rumen samples 7? Watch feeding large quantities of poorer quality/stemmy forages as these may increase the heat produced inside the cow as she tries to ferment this feed.

**Wormer Questionnaire** We have been asked to circulate the following questionnaire to our clients. We would encourage you to participate as the information gathered will be used to tackle the problem of anthelmintic resistance

As part of a UK Veterinary Medicines Directorate funded project, we would like your opinions on purchasing dewormers (anthelmintics). As you may be aware, dewormers are used to control worm infections, but reports of resistance are increasing. Promoting the sustainable use of dewormers is required to reduce the spread of resistance and maintain efficacy of the currently licensed drugs. Our questions cover a range of topics, for example, your experiences when purchasing dewormers, the advice you receive at the point of purchase and your thoughts on best practice use. Completing it should take less than 20 minutes. If you would like to complete the survey please go to:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/farmerattitudes>

All responses will remain anonymous and confidential. The results will be published in 2016.

Thank-you very much for participating!

**Meat withhold Change** Please note that the meat withhold time for Alamycin 10 has changed for meat from 20 d to 16 days for cattle. The milk withhold stays the same.

**Cefimam Dry Cow Tubes** This is a new product that we will be stocking as an alternative to Cephaguard Dry Cow as it has identical active ingredients, length of action and withhold times. We are making this change as we are able to offer it to you at a more competitive price. Please note that Cefimam is available as Dry Cow and Milking Cow tubes. **DO NOT** get them mixed up. The dry cow tubes are foil wrapped which should help.

**Vasectomised Rams** are a useful way of shortening the lambing period and encouraging ewes to mate one or two weeks earlier than they would normally do. A ratio of 1 teaser to approx. 100 ewes is advised. Cross bred/"mongrel" rams are usually best as pure-bred rams tend to get lazy. The best teasers are those with high libido and ideally they should have had some mating experience. Teaser rams should be left after the operation for at least 6 weeks before being used as a teaser.

Ewes which have been deprived of the sight, sound and smell of rams for 4 to 6 weeks prior to breeding season should be mixed with the teaser ram. After 14 days the teaser should be removed and the fertile rams introduced. The ewes will usually be served over an 8 to 10 day period, starting about 4 or 5 days after the fertile ram is introduced. Lambing can be reduced to 4 or 5 weeks with the bulk of lambing occurring over 2 to 3 weeks. Although some people leave the teaser ram in for fewer than 14 days, the period of ewes' exposure to the teaser should always start 14 days before mating. The teaser ram should not be left in for more than 14 days

Remember the spread of oestrus will be more compact in a teased flock, so a higher than normal ram to ewe ratio should be used to achieve optimum results e.g. 1 ram to 30 ewes. Farmers should also ensure their system will cope with a more compacted lambing .e.g. sufficient number of lambing pens etc.

If you would like any rams vasectomised or would like to discuss their use, please contact us to make an appointment. The surgery costs £70 +vat, including drugs. Significant discounts are available for multiple rams done on the same day.

**Toxovax** We are now able to order Toxovax for use this summer. Please ring the office if you require some. The vaccine has a short shelf life once delivered and needs to be given at least 4 weeks before tupping.

**Charity Challenge** This year is the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of XLVets to celebrate the organisation has come up with a charity challenge of "going round the world" together - a total of **23,605.63 miles**. The distance is being shared out between the practices which means that the staff of Farm First will need to achieve a distance of **453.95 miles** (without using an engine!) so swimming, horse riding, walking, running etc.

The money raised nationally will go to the charity "Send a Cow" and the money raised by Farm First will also go to BEAT a charity supporting people with eating disorders and St David's Hospice Care.

So far we have decided to cover a marathon distance on horseback, cycle from Brecon to Abergavenny and canoe down the Wye. We are still short of a few miles, so if anyone can persuade Rob and Andrew to ride a horse, we would be very grateful.

Please take a look at the enclosed leaflet and give to these worthwhile causes.

**"Scenes you never see"**-A farmer with a spade in his hand.

Picture courtesy of Ed Evans Bourne Farm (who for reasons best known to himself thought we were going to pay him if the picture appeared in the newsletter?!?)



With milk prices on the floor Ed tells us he has applied for a job with Monmouthshire County Council. Good luck with that Ed!