

Farm First Newsletter July 2017

Recent Research in Dairy Cattle

Evaluation of Claw Treatments 183 acutely lame cows on 5 East Midland farms were assessed after 4 different types of randomly assigned treatments. All cows received a therapeutic trim. The best recovery (56%) was in cows which received a 3day course of an NSAID drug ketofen, in addition to a trim and a block. 36% of cows which had a trim and a block recovered, compared to 24% of those which had a trim only and 29 % of those which had a trim + NSAID. This study highlights the importance of giving NSAIDS to cows which have a block applied. The better results be due to reduction of pain in the blocked foot, and reduction of inflammation in the damaged tissue, which aids healing.

Minimising Bacteria in Colostrum Calves were fed colostrum with low or high bacterial loads. Samples of each type of colostrum were heat treated before being fed to some of the calves. IgG levels and total protein levels were measured in the calves, and the results showed that calves fed low bacterial loads had higher total protein and IgG levels, and a reduced incidence of scour. It was not the heat treating that affected the improved absorption, but the lower bacterial load, so **clean harvesting of colostrum** is important and pasteurisation will also help.

First Lactation Performance in Cows affected by Digital Dermatitis Digital dermatitis can have a dramatic effect on a herd, and whilst losses can be large, they are not always quantifiable. 719 pregnant heifers were followed for 6 months until calving, after which information was recorded during their 1st lactation, including both production and clinical disease data. Cows which had DD during rearing demonstrated lower production and health outcomes during 1st lactation, although not all results were significantly different. There were a higher number of assisted calving's, stillbirths, and culls before 60 days in milk, and diseases during the fresh period were all numerically higher, although none of these were significantly different. In terms of fertility effects multiple episodes of DD resulted in a lower conception rate at first service, and increased days open compared with cows which did not experience DD. There was also an increased risk of DD during first lactation if there was any DD at all during rearing. There was a dramatic drop in milk yield for animals affected with DD during rearing, with animals affected once seeing a 199kg decrease in 305d yield, and cows with multiple episodes of DD demonstrating a 335kg decrease compared with DD free cows. The outcome of this trial clearly demonstrates that **digital dermatitis control should start in the rearing period**, and we would advise that **pregnant heifers should be treated using the same regimes as for cows** in the main herd.

Suckler Herds – Is your bull working properly?

If you have any doubts about whether your bull is working as he should be, don't hesitate to get an investigation carried out. If you leave it and your suspicions are proved to be correct, then the effect in the short term can be considerable, with no calves born next spring, and in the long term the effect on calving pattern can take years to sort out. If the bull has been in for a few weeks then pregnancy scanning the cows can give a quick answer as to whether he is fertile, although cow factors will also affect these results. We can also test the bull and examine his semen under the microscope to evaluate the quality and motility of his semen. Please ring us if you want information on any issues affecting the fertility of your herd.

Keep enzootic abortion out of your flock

Every year we still see new flocks affected with Enzootic Abortion, caused by a bacterium called *Chlamydophila abortus*. Enzootic abortion causes abortion of dead or very weak lambs in late pregnancy. Ewes exposed to the infection for the first time during this year's lambing are highly likely to abort next year and any ewe lambs exposed at birth will abort at their first lambing.

Prevention is by far the most effective way to control this problem. Enzootic abortion vaccines are widely available. They are usually given 1-2 months before tupping, but can be given to lambs as young as 5 months and immunity lasts for 3 years. The cost of vaccination with live vaccines is offset by the protection. **Saving just 14 abortions in 500 ewes can make vaccination economically viable.** Over the lifetime of a ewe, vaccination will work out cheaper than annual injections of long acting oxytetracycline, with the added benefits of reduced abortions, less risk to human health and reduced use of antibiotics.

Even if there are no signs of abortion in your flock you could still be at risk. Ceva Animal Health manufacturers of Cevac Chlamydia, the no 1 vaccine for enzootic abortion, are running **Assure Ewe, a subsidised enzootic abortion blood testing programme** which allows you to monitor and prevent enzootic abortion in your flock whether you've experienced abortions or not. At Farm First Vets we would like to support you in controlling abortion in your farm. Please contact us for further information on 01873 840167.

Scratch out Scab Sheep Meeting

We are aware that many of you have recently struggled with control of sheep scab and lice in your flocks. We are holding a meeting at Raglan Park Golf Club on 18th July at 7 pm to look at this issue and discuss different ways to control these ectoparasites. There will be a couple of speakers including our vet Vicky Fisher and a mobile sheep dipper will be in attendance. If you would like to attend please ring the office on 01873 840167.

Farm Apprentice Award

Congratulations to Tom Bailey, an apprentice at Paul Price's farm at Gelliargwellt. He has been attending Gelli Aur College as part of this apprenticeship and won the Student of the Year Award.

July's Rugby Themed Joke (with apologies to Vicky).

A bloke walks into a bar at the Millennium Stadium on international match day with a dachshund under his arm. The dog is wearing a Scotland rugby jersey and is festooned with Scotland pom-poms.

The bartender says, "Hey! No pets are allowed! You'll have to leave."

The guy begs him, "Look, I'm desperate! We're both big fans, the TV's broken at home, and this is the only place around where we can see the game."

After securing a promise that the dog will behave, and warning him that he and the dog will be thrown out if there's any trouble, the bartender relents and allows them to stay in the bar and watch the game. The big game begins with the Scots receiving the kick-off. They march down field, get stopped at the 22, and kick a penalty goal.

Suddenly, the dog jumps up on the bar and begins walking up and down the bar giving high-fives to everyone.

The bartender says, "Wow, that is the most amazing thing I've seen! What does the dog do if they score a try?"

The owner replies, "I don't know, I've only had him for three years."