



Open Day Friday 6th June We are pleased to invite you to the Open Day that we are holding, along with the other businesses on the site at the Bryn. As well as having a look around our new premises, there will be refreshments on offer and competitions to take part in. The event will take place from 3pm to 8 pm. So please come along to join in and have a look at our new surgery.

Culling Rates in the Dairy Herd Are high or low replacement rates the ideal for your herd? There is always a lot of debate about the issue of culling dairy cows. The European viewpoint is that low culling rates are good news: it means that cows live longer, have greater productive lifetimes, produce more milk per cow per day of life, and are a positive indicator of cow welfare. However the American viewpoint is more hardline: low culling rates are a sign of herds "standing still". Higher replacement rates mean that genetic progress and herd improvement is faster. If the cost of culling a cow is similar to the cost of a replacement (which they currently are in 2014 in the US) and there are lots of heifers available, then surely it makes economic sense to swap an older cow with a fresh calved heifer?

Knowledge is key to understanding and managing replacement rates in dairy herds. In the US, the main driver for herd replacement policy is the number of heifer replacements available to enter the herd. However in the UK, maintaining or even expanding herd size is often the main driver. So working out a plan of where the herd size should be is the first question to ask. The next question is why cows are leaving the herd- are the culls voluntary or involuntary culls that leave the farm with no cull cow revenue (ie. Fallen Stock). A study by Orpin and Esslemont in 2010 found that 5.3% of dairy cows were culled due to sickness, death, recumbency or casualty, with 2.5% due to deaths alone. Comparable figures from the USA show a 10% death rate. Another way of looking at this is the number of cows culled in the first 30 or 60 days of lactation, and the aim is to keep this figure below 2%. Values higher than this would suggest issues with transition cow management and diseases in early lactation such as milk fevers and LDAs. NMR figures would suggest that the UK average culling rate in the first 100 DiM is closer to 5%..... Key aspects to consider in managing replacement rates in UK dairy herds:

- Is the herd at the correct size in terms of numbers? ie. is the shed full to capacity? (Note that this does NOT mean over-stocked!). Economic analyses show that it is more profitable to have an occupied space compared to an empty space, due to the fixed costs involved.
- Are cows being lost from the herd without receiving any income? (ie. those cull cows with No Economic Value). If so, why?
- How many cows are being lost from the herd for involuntary reasons (ie. forced culls)? Identify why cows are "breaking" in the herd, and fix these issues first.
- Then ask if it is more economical to keep a cow in the herd, or replace her with a new cow/heifer? This will depend on current milk price, feed cost, is she back in calf, cull cow price, disease status etc.

Worm Control in Suckler Beef Cattle at Grass As the grazing season progresses, the risk of parasite infection typically increases because of the accumulation of the infective stages of gut worms and liver fluke on pasture, and weather conditions that favour the rapid development of lungworm larvae. Generally, older cattle that have grazed previously for at least two full grazing seasons (>4 months) will have acquired immunity to gut worms and lungworms (although immunity to lungworms is dependent on exposure and is of short duration). Therefore, in general, healthy adult beef cows do not need worming for gut worms and lungworms, so the focus for parasite control falls mainly on youngstock in their first and

second grazing seasons. However, there is no effective age-related immunity to liver fluke, so it is important to realise that cattle of all ages can be infected and suffer losses from this parasite.

In a typical spring-calving beef suckler herd, while calves are at foot, there is little need to treat for worms as the relatively low herbage (and hence larval) intake, and the protective effect of cow's milk mean that the parasites have little impact on calves. The cattle should nevertheless be inspected daily as lungworm can sometimes affect suckler calves before weaning. They will need to be wormed and possibly treated for fluke when they are weaned/housed later on in the year.

During its second grazing season, a spring-born calf will be being prepared for breeding if it is a replacement heifer, or you will be looking for growth rates that will get beef animals to their target weight for selling on. The susceptibility of yearlings to parasites depends to some extent on the exposure that they experienced the previous year. As a rule of thumb, calves that were late-born or that were weaned late (less than a month before housing) will have incomplete immunity to stomach worms and may grow faster if they are given one or two anthelmintic doses at the start of their second grazing season e.g. dosing at 0 and 8 weeks post turnout with a wormer with some persistency. Monitoring of liveweight gain (ideally with regular monthly weighing) is a good way of monitoring for the effects of gut parasites.

Finally, liver fluke should be controlled if yearlings are grazing on high risk infected pastures. If cattle start the grazing season free of liver fluke, then the first flukicide treatment can be delayed until around eight to twelve weeks after turn-out, as this is when the juvenile fluke get into the bile ducts and start to cause liver damage. Treatment at this time or a bit later will also prevent fluke eggs being passed in the dung, hence keeping the level of pasture contamination down. If liver fluke is present at high levels on a farm, treatment of adult cows at this time is also useful in controlling pasture contamination. Monitoring of growth rates of youngstock, backed up with dung samples to check for fluke eggs, will help determine if any further treatments are needed over the remainder of the grazing season.

This is obviously a basic overview of the principles of parasite control. If you require any further information or advice please contact me or one of the other vets at the practice.

Sheep Abortion If your flock experienced abortions this year the cause of the problem was not diagnosed, there is still time to get the ewes blood tested under the Flock Check Scheme. This involves taking blood samples from 6-8 aborted ewes and the cost of testing the samples for the two most common causes of abortion is covered by the scheme. Please contact us if you wish to take advantage of this before the scheme closes at the end of July.

Sheep Meeting We are holding a meeting for sheep clients on Tuesday 17th June at 7.30 pm at the King of Prussia. The subject for discussion is "Getting the most out of this Season's Lambs". This meeting is sponsored by Novartis and a buffet will be served. To reserve your place please ring the practice on 01873 840167.

Dairy Meeting. There will be a meeting for dairy farmers on Dry Cow Decision Making and Mastitis Prevention at the King of Prussia at 12 pm on Thursday 17th July. The meeting is sponsored by Hipra and a buffet will be served. To reserve your place please ring the practice on 01873 840167.

"Abergavenny Cattle Market : A Retrospective" - New Exhibition by Jantien Powell
Some of you may be interested in visiting this exhibition which is running throughout June , It by appointment at Chapel Cottage Studio, Llanddewi Rhydderch, Abergavenny, NP7 9TT.
01873 840282 / 07935 934898

A Joke for June

Interviewer: "Congratulations on winning the £7 million lottery jackpot.

"Farmer: "Thank you."

Interviewer: "Do you have any special plans for spending all of that money?"

Farmer: "Nope. Not really. I'm just gonna keep farming until the lottery money is all gone."