



**Fog Fever Risk** Several of our clients have reported a flush of grass growth in recent weeks. This raises the risk of an uncommon, but serious disease known as Fog Fever. Classically this condition is an acute pneumonia which affects mainly adult beef cattle at grass in the late summer and autumn. Lush aftermath which grows after a cut of hay or silage is the most high-risk pasture, although cases have been seen in cattle grazing on permanent pasture after warm, wet weather has caused a growth spurt in the grass. Anecdotally, Hereford or Hereford-cross cattle seem to be more at risk of the disease than continental cattle, but we have seen cases in limousin-cross cattle.

The condition is usually seen 4-10 days after moving cattle on to lush pasture from bare grazing. The clinical signs range from mild to severe and animals often present with normal temperature, dullness, tranquil behaviour, varying degrees of breathing difficulties and little or no coughing. Up to half the group can be affected, although only 5-10% are likely to show severe respiratory distress. Air bubbles can often be palpated under the skin on the back. Movement and unnecessary stressing of affected individuals at this point can cause animals to drop dead. If the disease is suspected it is important to differentiate it from other causes of respiratory disease such as lungworm (also common at this time of year), IBR and pasteurella.

There is no specific treatment, but cases are usually treated with anti-inflammatory drugs. Access to the lush pasture should be immediately restricted by either removing the animals or strip grazing and the cattle should be offered conserved forage such as hay or silage to dilute the grass in the rumen

Prevention of the disease can be achieved by strip grazing when turning cattle onto lush pasture, or allowing access for 2 hours a day and then slowly building up, while providing hay or silage as an alternative source of forage.

**Calf Pneumonia Prevention.** A helpful mantra to simplify calf health plans has been devised by animal health company Zoetis. The five-point action plan is:

**Improve building function** – now is the time to repair gutters, improve air flow, prevent draughts. If you need advice on any of this please contact us.

**Manage grouping and group size**- don't mix ages in the same air space and don't overstock.

**Vaccination and parasite protection**- treat for lungworm if necessary. Please ask us for advice on vaccination programmes suitable for your farm.

**Monitor growth rates** - both scales and weigh tape provide useful information

**Involve your vet** – we can provide advice on all aspects of pneumonia control.

Research shows that a pneumonia-free rearing period can be worth £243/head in suckler calves and over £1,000/head in dairy heifers. In suckler calves, the £243/head at stake arises from treatment costs, delayed finish and carcass downgrade. In dairy heifers, treatment costs, later age at first calving, reduced first and second lactation yields and shorter lifetimes compared with healthy ones amount to £1,008/head over the animal's lifetime. However, the impact of respiratory disease can extend beyond animals with clinical pneumonia as shown in a 15-month, 500-calf study from birth in which lung damage was assessed at slaughter. While 35 per cent of calves had been diagnosed and treated for pneumonia, 72 per cent were found to have lung damage. Among the apparently healthy calves that had shown no signs of disease, just over two-thirds (68 per cent) had damaged lungs. The study also found an association between lung condition and growth rates, calves with undamaged lungs gaining 21kg more than those with damage over a nine-month finishing period.

**Meetings** The Welsh Government is holding two meetings to consider the removal of split holdings. The meetings are specifically for dairy farmers and those who work with them – there will be information sessions, seminars and a panel of experts to discuss these changes with. The meetings will be held on **Wednesday 15 October**, the first session at the college farm at **Gelli Aur, Carmarthen (09:00 – 11:00)** and then the second session at the **Welsh**

**Government Pavilion, Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells (13:00 – 15:00).** If you wish to attend please contact *E-Mail : [Patrick.Kitson@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK](mailto:Patrick.Kitson@Wales.GSI.Gov.UK) Direct Line: 029 20 801187 .*

### **Farming Connect Meetings**

1. Thursday, 9th October at 1pm “Balancing the dairy ration to deliver an optimum feed rate” with Ben Hembrow, Kite Consulting at **Ifton Hill Farm**, Portskewett, Chepstow NP26 5TU.
2. Tuesday 21st October 2014 at 7.30 pm “Improving the farm building environment to optimise animal health and performance.” with Jamie Robertson at Monmouthshire Livestock Centre.
3. On Saturday 18th October 2014 at 14:00 - 16:30 “Farm Diversification for a profitable future: Investigating alternative Income streams”with Jeremy Bowen Rees at Great House Farm, Llansoy.

### **Rob test driving his new Farm First Practice Vehicle**



**Rob after Jane found out....**

