



Frame, Swift and Partners Newsletter August 2013

GOODBYE MATT



As many of you will have already heard, we are going to lose Matt Colston in the near future to the veterinary pharmaceutical industry. Obviously the last 17 years at Frame, Swift and Partners has just proved too much! We will all be very sorry to see him go - which is likely to be towards the end of October. He will leave a very big gap to fill, with his expertise in sheep medicine and cattle/horse reproduction. Fortunately he is remaining in the Penrith area and will still be working in conjunction with the Practice on a consultancy basis, especially on the sheep side. We are not going to get rid of him that easily ...

We are currently making progress on finding a replacement, but don't worry, we will continue with 'business as usual'!

HEAT STRESS IN CATTLE

As, at the time of writing, we are all basking in the longest heatwave since 2006, and making hay while the sun shines, we must bear in mind the effects that these temperatures have on our livestock. Perhaps the most significant is the effect on dairy cattle; not only are they large animals, but metabolically they are working very hard so are naturally already producing a large amount of heat. If the ambient temperature then rises too high, the cow has to act to keep her temperature controlled - usually with an associated loss of production.



A dairy cow in milk will perform at her best in the temperature range 5 - 25°C; this is known as the thermal comfort zone. Above this, she has to take measures to cool herself down - you may see an increased breathing rate and panting, often with drooling of saliva. She is also likely to reduce her dry matter intake (by up to 30%) to reduce the amount of fermentation (and therefore heat produced) in the rumen. Although keeping her more comfortable, this will obviously have a negative effect on her milk production. The drooling of saliva also has an impact as less saliva reaching the stomach can predispose to ruminal acidosis - further depressing intakes, yields and butterfats. Somatic cell counts will often rise in hot weather, due to a combination of reduced resistance to infection and increased exposure to the infectious agents, as cows spend more time lying down or loafing in shaded areas.

There are many parts of the world where dairying is successfully carried out in temperatures much higher than ours, but farms there are designed with that in mind. Here in the UK, our buildings are designed to cope more with British winters than the odd exceptional summer. So is there anything that can be done in the short term?

Certainly cows will eat less when it is hot, and also the ration itself will spoil more rapidly as temperatures rise. So you may want to consider feeding more at night and less in the morning - especially if this food is likely to heat up anyway. And for those animals being fed only once a day, it is better that this is done in the evening. As the cows actually have to expend energy to keep cool, in prolonged periods of hot weather you may actually need to increase the energy content of the ration to maintain milk production while at the same time keeping it balanced.

The ability of cattle to cope with higher temperatures also depends on the relative humidity of the air. This can be high in poorly ventilated buildings, leading to a greater degree of heat stress. The use of fans can be a great help, as can water sprays or jets. The problem with water sprays is that without suitable ventilation, all that happens is the humidity increases and the problem actually gets worse. Placing them at particular points where cattle congregate, such as the collecting yard, may work best.

As we usually have more dull than sunny days, many modern dairy buildings have lots of roof-lights to maximise the available natural light. In hot weather, these can make cattle sheds more like greenhouses, so in extremely hot weather it may be beneficial to cover some of these over if at all feasible, to reduce the build up of heat, or ensure that as much ventilation as possible is available.

Water consumption will always be high in hot weather, so make sure all the troughs are clean and functioning correctly both in buildings and at pasture. Outside it is best to have the water supply close to shaded areas where the cows are likely to loaf. A thirsty cow is not going to walk all the way across a field in hot weather just for a drink. The ideal is to have 10cm water trough space per cow, and always ensure that these troughs fill quickly enough and never run dry. This is equally important with any natural water courses used.

Hot weather causes its problems ... but surely it has got to be better than last year?

BLOWFLY STRIKE



Be on the lookout for blowfly strike in the warm weather. Even though there might not be many flies out in the open, there will be plenty taking cover in the shade of trees and hedges, exactly the same spots as the sheep and lambs are resting.

The flies will be heading for any moist and dirty areas on the body; not just the classic soiled hindquarters (often secondary to worms or Coccidiosis), but also raw foot lesions (Footrot and CODD), damaged area of skin (such as with Lumpy Wool) and urine scalding.

As always, prevention is better than cure, so dagging out scoured lambs, appropriate shearing and keeping on top of lameness should be priorities. This, alongside either dipping or using a suitable pour-on, should hopefully keep things at bay.

A MESSAGE FROM CUMBRIA CONSTABULARY



Cumbria Constabulary wishes to inform the rural and farming communities of an emerging national trend, which is being repeated in Cumbria.

This message is intended to alert the owners of Land Rover Defender vehicles of the desirability of this vehicle to thieves. Since January 2013, 8 Defenders have been stolen, generally from the Kirkby Lonsdale, Appleby and Sedbergh areas. (Nationally, Land Rover Defenders are presently the fourth most popular vehicle for theft). Defender 90 and 110 models, particularly those manufactured between 1990 and 2005, are being stolen (generally those without an electronic immobiliser fitted) and it would appear they are being dismantled for spare parts. However, any age Defender is at risk.

Police are urging owners to be vigilant with their vehicle security and to undertake the following measures:

- Always remove the ignition keys and lock the vehicle when it is not in use – even for short periods. Remember, your insurance company is likely to refuse your claim, if the vehicle was insecure at the time it was taken.
- If possible, park the vehicle in a garage or secure building overnight, or try to block it in with other vehicles. Remove any valuables
- If a garage is not available, park the vehicle in a well-lit location, that can be easily overlooked
- Set the vehicle alarm, if you have had one fitted. Consider having a Thatcham approved alarm/immobiliser installed
- Consider installing a tracking device. This technology is becoming cheaper and will often attract a discount in your insurance premium
- Do not store the vehicle keys where they can easily be stolen (e.g. in the house hallway, through the letter box)
- Use a property marking product on vehicle parts, e.g. bonnet, tail gate, engine components so that stolen parts can be more easily traced. Cumbria Constabulary FarmWatch members have access to discounted SmartWater for this purpose
- Please report any suspicious activity to your Neighbourhood Policing Team, via 101. If a crime is in progress dial 999
- If you require specific security advice, contact your local Crime Prevention Officer via 101