



Frame, Swift and Partners Newsletter January 2013

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year
from all at Frame Swift & Partners.**

2012 has not been an easy year for most people in farming, and will be remembered as one of the wettest years on record. This has led to many health issues as autumn has given way to winter, and the weather has stayed mild and wet.

One of the biggest concerns for all has been the variable quality (and in some cases quantity) of conserved forage available to be fed through the winter. Poor energy levels and variable palatability are leaving many cows in energy deficit, depressing milk yields in dairy cows and having an adverse effect on fertility on both beef and dairy units.

Liver Fluke and Schmallenberg Virus (SBV) have been the two diseases generating most queries this back end:

SCHMALLEMBERG VIRUS

We have not identified any illness in adult animals known to be caused by SBV. However, bulk milk tank analysis has shown that SBV has been present in the Penrith area at some time during the summer or autumn. In the absence of clinical disease in the adult animals, the exact timing of when the virus was present has to be a bit of a guess. The most common (and worrying) outcome of infection with SBV is limb deformities in calves and lambs. The animals most at risk of producing deformed calves or lambs are those that are 28-56 days pregnant at the time of infection.

Assuming that the virus was present in this area in September would put the January/February lambers, and May/June calvers at most risk of producing some deformed lambs or calves.

Animals infected before they are pregnant appear to suffer only very mild or asymptomatic infections, rapidly clear the virus and develop a strong immunity. These animals do not produce deformed lambs or calves, even if they are re-infected during pregnancy.

What can we do? At the moment, it is to keep a close eye on calving/lambing animals that were in the high risk period (28-56 days pregnant) at the most likely time of exposure (late summer). Be aware that if a ewe/cow is not getting on with lambing/calving, there is a chance that there may be a deformed lamb/calf causing the problem. Early intervention with these is likely to give a better outcome.

A vaccine for SBV is in development, and may be ready as early as next spring. If so this will give us another option for managing the risk next year.

More information is available at:

http://vla.defra.gov.uk/science/sci_schmallenberg.htm



LIVER FLUKE

Liver fluke has already caused serious losses on many farms this autumn. The liver fluke has a two host lifecycle, with the intermediate host being a small mud snail. The recent series of cool wet summers has provided ideal conditions for the snail and all stages of the fluke lifecycle to survive. This has allowed fluke to spread to areas that were traditionally too dry for fluke to survive, and for many more of the infective stages of the fluke (metacercaria) to be present over a longer period in areas that traditionally have had liver fluke.



Dairy cows in winter may be carrying fluke infection that is affecting their body condition, milk yield, general health and fertility

The farming press carried warnings of the increased fluke risk in the late summer, and many farms responded by treating livestock for fluke earlier than they normally would have. Despite effective early season treatment, animals grazing “fluke risk” pasture through the autumn will have continued to pick up more liver fluke, with deaths in sheep from acute fluke damage (where large numbers of immature flukes destroy the liver) continuing through December. With the mild wet winter, it is likely that there will still be metacercaria available on pasture for grazing animals to pick up well into January.

For housed cattle this is not a problem; provided they were treated at the appropriate time after housing with a product that is effective against the age of fluke likely to be present (ie 2+ weeks for triclabendazole ('Fasinex'), 8+ weeks for nitroxynil ('Trodax') or 10+ weeks for Albendazole ('Albenil')) there should be no adult fluke remaining to produce eggs and continue the fluke lifecycle.



High-risk fluke pastures that have been wet through the summer may still be dangerous to grazing stock through the winter

For outwintered cattle and sheep, especially those grazing known “fluke risk” pasture, we would recommend another fluke treatment towards the end of January with a product that will be effective against immature fluke (e.g. Triclabendazole is effective against 2wk old immature fluke, Closantel 6-8 week old immature fluke).

Fluke resistant to some of these chemicals have been found, so follow up testing to make sure treatments have been effective is always a good idea. Collecting 10 separate samples from the group, 3 weeks after treatment, allows the lab to do a group test for fluke eggs. If positive, this proves the presence of adult fluke in the liver, which would suggest treatment had not been 100% effective. Even a few adult fluke left behind can produce a large number of eggs to contaminate the pasture for the following season and continue the fluke life cycle.

Testing cattle before turnout (10 separate samples from each group) and ewes at or after lambing (mid - late April) will detect any adult fluke left behind in the livers. If fluke eggs are detected, treatment with a product effective against adult fluke is required to reduce the pasture contamination, and the fluke risk for next autumn. Again, follow up samples, 3weeks after treatment will show if your treatment has been effective.

2012 certainly hasn't been the easiest; but it is now over and perhaps we can look forward to a more productive 2013 ...

**All the best for a
Happy New Year!**

