



Frame, Swift and Partners Newsletter February 2009

CATTLE VACCINATIONS

Spring time is when most farms get set for their routine herd vaccinations against **Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD)** and **Leptospirosis** - both widespread diseases that can cause significant losses in production, especially in relation to herd fertility. This time of the year is firstly a practical time, as the cattle are all housed, but also in the case of Leptospirosis the time of highest risk is at turnout, so vaccination towards the end of the housing period is the ideal time to inject.

To offer the greatest level of protection, for both diseases, all breeding stock should be vaccinated before they are served - and all animals need to have the primary course of two injections in the first year before the follow up single boosters annually afterwards. Practically, it is often easiest to vaccinate all the youngstock likely to be served in the following 12 months at the same time - to avoid missing batches of heifers during the summer months. Then, once in the system, they get their annual boosters each spring. So now is probably the time to start counting up numbers and working out how many doses you're going to need. As we have said before, discounts may be available on these vaccines on



a 'pay-at-the-time' basis - please telephone us at the Practice for further details.

Lungworm- don't forget **Huskvac** for the young stock- it is still the most reliable way to prevent lungworm.

BULK MILK/BLOOD TESTING

For those herds that do not routinely vaccinate against BVD, Leptospirosis and also Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR), it is highly recommended that herds monitor the levels of infection present on a regular basis; bearing in mind outbreaks of these diseases can cause significant problems it makes good sense. For dairy herds, this just involves analysis of a bulk milk sample; in the beef herd this has to be done through blood sampling. From the beginning of this month, these analyses are being sponsored by one of the major drug companies - so there is no reason not to have samples submitted! Of course, in beef herds we would have to charge for the blood samples (approximately 10 cows) - but these could easily be collected while we were on farm for some other reason - TB testing, pregnancy diagnoses etc.

On the subject of bulk milk testing, over the last few years by analysis of bulk milk we have found a number of dairy herds have been exposed to liver fluke. This has even been on drier farms where fluke has never been recognised before, and probably a knock on effect of two very wet summers. This disease is much more prevalent in sheep flocks and suckler herds, but can certainly cause problems in all cattle and sheep. Another good reason for dropping in a sample?

LAMBING TIME

Although only a few (mainly pedigree) clients have really started lambing to date, plenty of you will be getting things ready for the forthcoming season. To most of you this will be all second

nature, but it is always worthwhile reiterating a few points

- Make sure you have a good supply of antiseptic, disposable gloves and lubricant, and antibiotic injection. It is vitally important to keep everything as clean as possible when assisting a ewe lambing, and she will perform much better afterwards
- If you do have a difficult lambing, calling the vet in earlier rather than later always gives a better chance of success. There's nothing worse than going to the trouble of doing a caesarian section, only to find that the lamb(s) have already perished
- Undoubtably, there will be some abortions - there are always a few at the start of lambing. Any ewes that abort **MUST** be kept separate from the rest of the flock for at least 3 weeks, just in case there are any infectious agents that can be transmitted to the other sheep
- It is always worthwhile having laboratory tests carried out on aborted lambs, especially if there are an excessive number of cases. In many situations treatments can be given to the remainder of the flock to reduce the seriousness of the outbreak. Remember that if you are taking samples into the VI Centre at Merrythought, the more material they receive the better (including any afterbirth), and the fresher the better. And give us a call to let us know what you are taking in, so we can let the laboratory what to expect - and we can also chase up the results for you later.
- As we mentioned before, hygiene at lambing time is essential. Cleanliness is vital in the lambing pens to control both infections in the ewes - metritis, mastitis - and in the very susceptible newborn lambs - navel ill, joint ill, watery mouth. A fit healthy ewe that has had a comfortable lambing in a clean environment is going to supply her lambs with the high quality colostrum that they need to get going right from the start - and the rest will be plain sailing!

BLUETONGUE (again ...)



We would advise everyone to vaccinate against Bluetongue this spring - well before the risk period over the summer months. Even

for those people that vaccinated last autumn, the most practical course of action is to give the single shot booster before turnout. This will then

cover them for the following 12 months.

Fortunately there were no cases of BTV-8 in Great Britain in non-imported animals in 2008 - obviously helped by the poor weather - but the risk of it appearing in 2009 is still there, so you want to be protected. As in autumn, the Bovilis BTV8 vaccine works out at 55p per dose for the 50 dose bottle on a 'pay-at-the-time' basis. You must remember that for the primary course sheep just require one injection, but all other species need two doses at a 3 week interval, and ideally all animals over one month of age should be vaccinated - midges don't just bite breeding stock!

When the vaccine was first launched, the manufacturers stressed that it was not to be given in combination with *any* other products, as this could potentially compromise its effectiveness. After further research by the drug company, the situation is now *slightly* more relaxed, so various combinations of drugs can be administered together, although this is officially 'off licence' - ie it is the responsibility of the individual user to take this 'risk'. Please contact us at the surgery for more details.

NB PLEASE don't consider importing cattle or sheep from affected areas in Europe; it is permitted but should not be advised as this was the cause of all the 2008 cases of BTV-8, and indeed the single case of BTV-1 at the end of last year.

FALLEN STOCK

As you will all be well aware, since the middle of last month fallen cattle over 24 months are no longer collected free of charge. Although not applicable in all cases, please be aware that full post mortem examinations at Merrythought cost in the region of £80 (and obviously includes disposal). This has always been exceptionally good value (and is heavily subsidised by DEFRA), bearing in mind how long the examination takes and the number of tests that are automatically included. With no more free collection, this represents an even more cost effective way of investigating serious disease outbreaks.

Please bear in mind however, that any cases of 'sudden death' are still by law required to be Anthrax tested before they leave the farm - even if they are going to be taken directly to the VI Centre.