



Frame, Swift and Partners Newsletter June 2009

MILKING COW TUBES

Many of you may have heard that two of the most widely used mastitis tubes – *Tetra Delta* and *Ubro Yellow* (formerly *Leo Yellow*) – are currently unavailable, although at the moment we still have a few boxes left in stock at the Practice. We are assured that these tubes will come back on the market – there has been a temporary supply problem with one of the antibiotics used in both tubes – but this may not be for up to 12 months.



‘So what should we use instead?’ is the common question. There are numerous other milking cow tubes on the market, most with a broad spectrum of action, which can all be used effectively in the right situation. Most people are considering using whichever tube was their ‘second line’ treatment now as their ‘first line’, as this will obviously be a product that has worked effectively before. But would this not be an ideal opportunity to re-appraise mastitis control in your herd? A good start is to collect 10 milk samples – as hygienically as possible – and submit them to us at the Practice. These samples should come from either high cell count cows or clinical mastitis cases (before treatment!), or a combination of the two. We can then establish which infections are causing mastitis on your farm – and with the information this provides, we can then give better advice on mastitis control.

Contact us at the Veterinary Centre for further details.

TWISTED STOMACHS?

Twisted stomachs, LDA’s, Displacements - call them what you will, they are all diagnoses that a farmer doesn’t want to hear! As we have mentioned many times before, classically we would see plenty of cases of these in spring

before turnout as perhaps the winter rations were running low and cow nutrition was suffering. And once turnout had arrived, we would put away our surgical kits and wait for next spring.

Those days are gone I’m afraid, highlighted by half a dozen twisted stomach operations being carried out in the last week, even on cows at grass. So what has been going wrong? LDAs usually arise as a result of poor energy balance in the first few weeks after calving along with insufficient fibre intake to encourage good stomach activity.

It is likely that with the hot weather we have been having, the quality and amount of grass available may not have been as good as expected, leading to these nutritional problems. Also, when it has rained, the flush of grass that comes is not necessarily of great nutritional value. So what should you do?

Make sure that there is adequate buffer feeding to supplement the pasture grazing to maximise energy intakes especially in the critical first few weeks post calving. Most people allow the cows access to trough feeding at milking time – just make sure food is always in front of them, and that all the cows get enough time to eat their fair share – even the last ones to come out of the parlour.

Again, as we have previously mentioned, if you have a cow with a displacement, there will be others in the herd that are under the same nutritional stress – so they need to be monitored carefully to make sure they keep their appetites and intakes up. Recent blood sampling on a number of units has revealed the worrying ‘negative energy balance’ in that vital first few weeks post calving.

WORMING SHEEP

The warm weather is certainly putting everybody in a brighter mood, except perhaps those that have to spend days on end in warm sheds clipping thousands of sheep! At clipping time, many farmers will routinely dose the lambs

as they are all brought into the sheds and are to hand. With the gradually increasing resistance to wormers (and indeed fluke drenches) in this country, we urge shepherd to only worm their animals when necessary, rather than as a regular routine. After collecting 10 fresh droppings from a group of lambs and submitting them to the laboratory, we can soon give you the Worm egg Count and advice on whether worming is necessary.

And when the weather is so warm and dry, it is unlikely that there will be that much worm activity – making dosing a waste of time and money. Things however would change if we suddenly got a wet spell ...

HEAT STRESS

One of major problem with rearing livestock in the UK is the massive variation we get in the weather – so the building and facilities we have are usually a compromise to cope with average conditions. Problems can arise when more extreme weather comes our way – such as the current hot spell.



Cattle are in their ‘Thermal Comfort Zone’ up to 25°C (77°F) – this is the upper temperature at which they can function normally. Above this animals need to actively cool down, usually by an increase in evaporation of water from the skin and respiratory tract. They will obviously also seek out shade in order to keep cool.

As far as we can we need to animals the opportunity to cool down if they need to, and not expect them to perform optimally if they cannot. Obviously, a good and freely available supply of fresh water needs to be provided, especially for dairy cattle that may be drinking upwards of 120 litres per day. And remember, cows are herd creatures and all like to drink together ... Cows will also search out shade – and this must be taken into account when cows are turned out during the day. Your feed rationing may be expecting 6 hours of grazing during day – but your cows may be spending this time loafing under the trees to keep cool. This too has potential detrimental effects on Cell Counts; as all the cows group themselves in a relatively small area of shade, the area becomes contaminated with muck, leading to increased incidence of mastitis. If the hot weather continues, will people consider keeping the dairy cows inside during the day and turn them out at night? It would be worth a thought.

NWDA Animal Health & Welfare Project

As many of you are already aware, the North West Development Agency has a substantial amount of funding available for a farm health and welfare project to run over the next 4 years. For each participating farm the project aims to identify areas where changes to existing health and welfare management policies can be made to improve productivity and hence profitability of the business.

Areas where capital investments are identified as necessary to improve health or welfare issues may be eligible for grant funding.

Although there have been delays in the initial set-up process, systems are already in place for Dairy and Sheep enterprises, with the Beef Herd section to follow in the next few weeks.

For more information contact Harry Martin at Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency 01768 891444