



Frame, Swift and Partners Newsletter October 2009

CALF PNEUMONIA

As the nights are slowly drawing in, we all know it will not be too long before winter is upon us, with all the disease challenges that it usually brings. And high on the list of problems will as ever be calf pneumonia. We had to deal with some major pneumonia outbreaks last year – leading to the inevitable loss of revenue; not just through the direct costs of time, drugs and casualties, but with the poorer growth and often protracted convalescence of the affected animals.

Although certainly not the ‘cure all’ that some people expect it to be, vaccination against calf pneumonia is certainly an essential tool in the control of this condition –



in addition to good housing, ventilation and husbandry. For vaccination to be the most effective, whichever product you plan to use, the full course of injections needs to be completed at least 2 weeks before the time of challenge. This might be housing, or the mixing of different groups. In this way, the level of immunity will be at its maximum at the time it is required. Please call us at the surgery to discuss which vaccine might be the most suitable for your stock. On that note, please be aware that this autumn we are having difficulty obtaining BOVIPAST RSP due to a manufacturing problem. We have limited stocks at the Practice at the moment, and can only dispense this on a ‘first come, first served’ basis.

WORMS

Although winter is round the corner, September has treated us quite well – and we needed it! It’s no good having a bad start to autumn – it can make the housing period very long indeed. Just be aware that with youngstock still grazing, and reasonable temperatures, there will still be the risk of both gut worms and lungworm, especially if we get a bit of rain. Often, any worming boluses or long-acting treatments given over the summer will have worn off, leaving animals potentially susceptible to picking up the parasites again. And remember the benefit of using an ivermectin-based product after housing, to make sure no heavy worm burden is carried over to next spring.

METABOLIC PROFILES

Certainly most dairy herds are now housed on their winter rations for at least part of the day, with some established on their full winter feeds. Once the dry cows are inside too, it is worthwhile closely monitoring the herd performance at this time of year to make sure the feeding regime is suitable. Certainly studying milk recording data can give you a good idea of how the cows, especially the fresh calvers, are coping with their diet.

Targeted blood sampling can certainly be hugely beneficial in recognising any feeding deficiencies – often before they present as real problems. Identifying such problems early in the winter has the advantage of allowing suitable changes to be made for the rest of the season before clinical issues arise.

We generally submit samples to the University of Edinburgh under their Dairy Herd Health and Productivity Service (DHHPS) which has proved very cost effective and efficient in the past.

PRE-BREEDING RAM EXAMINATIONS

As tugging time is upon us, the rams are being prepared for their year's work. It is always worth having them



fertility tested BEFORE they are put in with the ewes. Any fertility issues can be recognized well before any time is lost. It is

not infrequent that tups are brought in to be tested a month after going out - once a high percentage of females have returned to service. You then count the cost in 5 months time with an extended lambing season; more risk of infection build up in the lambing sheds; more post lambing diseases; more smaller lambs. Is it worth that risk?

And of course, don't forget that we recommend testing bulls in a similar manner at the beginning of each season.

DEFRA/ADAS MEETING

Just to remind dairy farmers about the joint DEFRA/ADAS meeting 'Managing the Dairy Cow at around Calving' on Tuesday 3 November at Catterlen. It all sounds so simple – if you control all the problems at calving time (milk fever, retained cleansings, endometritis, displaced abomasums etc) everything else will fall into place. This meeting aims to address the management of animals at this critical time. For more details contact animalhealth@adas.co.uk, or pick up a copy of the invitation at the surgery.

NWDA Animal Health & Welfare Project

Just to remind you, 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. Matt Colston has been very busy over the last few months with a number of such projects, the majority of which have secured funding for various farm improvements.

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