Dalehead Veterinary Group Ltd

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RCVS ACCREDITED PRACTICE FARM ANIMAL PRACTICE

24 hour dedicated farm cover

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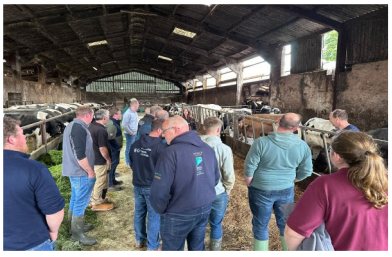
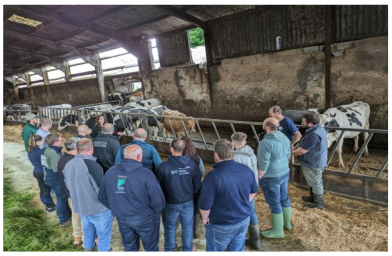
GISBURN AUCTION MART, GISBURN BB7 4ES

FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER - AUGUST 2024

COW SIGNALS AT KIRKBY BECK FARM

On 2nd July we held an on farm 'Cow Signals' meeting at Kirkby Beck Farm, Kirkby Malham hosted by Ian Wellock with discussions led by independent nutritionist Dr Emma Redfearn. 'Cow Signals' encourages us to view the environment from the cow's perspective and to demonstrate how we can improve cow comfort and optimise production and profitability.





We discussed that in an ideal and comfortable environment cows will spend 12-14 hours lying down and consume 12—14 small meals at the feed barrier per day. To achieve this there should be at least 1 metre of trough space per cow with feed available all the time with chop length/physical quality of the feed and frequency of pushing up all of importance. Fresh, clean palatable water should be permanently available with a guide of 10cm of trough frontage per cow. The access to feed and water should not be limited and troughs should be kept clean.

Building design should prevent opportunities for bully cows to stop free movement of other cows. We showed how to score the rumen fill of dry cows and showed trial results demonstrating that dry cows with a rumen fill of less than 4 were over twice as likely to have milk fever or retained cleansings and over 4 times as likely to get a displaced abomasum after calving.

When cows are housed they should have a living space allowance of at least 10m² per cow (12m² per cow for a herd averaging 12,000 litres) and it was also mentioned that dry cow cubicles should be larger (at least 4 feet wide) to take account that dry cows are larger than milking cows. It was thought that it may be better to routinely trim cow's feet 60 days before drying off rather than at dry off to allow more time for feet to fully recover before calving. It was considered better to position calving pens next to the close up dry cows (preferably just through a gate and still within sight of the close up dry cows) so that it was less stressful for the cows being moved and not to move them into the calving pens until labour had started. This prevents any delay in the cows giving birth due to stress and will reduce the number of stillborn calves.

All of the mentioned figures for stocking densities, trough space, mobility scoring, rumen fill, cow comfort and body condition scoring can be assessed by our vet techs.

For more information about 'Cow Signals' speak to one of the farm vets or vet techs.

CowSIGNALS®

MILK REPLACERS FOR DAIRY CALVES

In July Dalehead hosted a meeting of vets from local practices to discuss milk powder feeding protocols for calves. A summary of some of the main points are included below.

Traditionally dairy heifer replacements were reared to calve at 30 months of age and were fed 2 litres of milk twice daily as young calves. However, research has shown that heifers calving at 2 years of age have better fertility, improved lifetime milk yields per day, better longevity and are more profitable than those which calve older. In addition, it is estimated to cost an extra £3 per additional day to rear a heifer for every day over 2 years of age that she calves.

To achieve calving at 2 years of age with the heifer calving at 90% of its mature cow weight we need to aim for a daily weight gain of 0.8kg per day every day of life from birth. It is important to achieve these daily weight gains in calves pre-weaning due to the fact that a calf's immune system develops over the first month of life and lower weight gains during this period can lead to the immune system being compromised for the rest of the animal's life. Daily liveweight gains of calves are influenced by:

Environment

- Cold calves use up more energy to keep warm hence the use of calf jackets in cold weather.

Disease

- Rotavirus, Crypto, pneumonia will all affect growth rates.

Nutrition

- What milk, milk powder is fed, and how much is fed, and how often it is fed, will all affect calf performance.

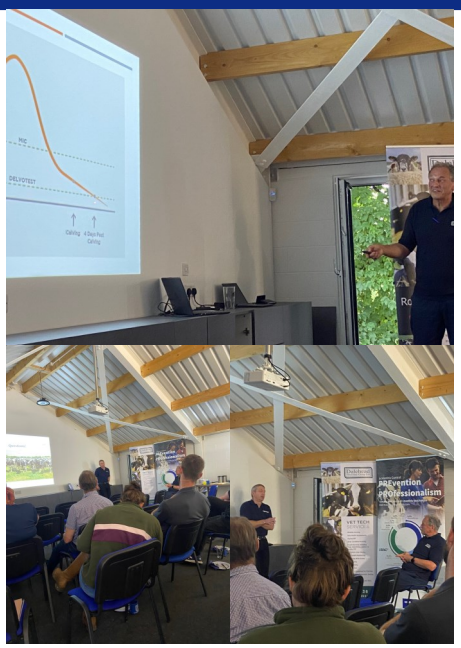
A suckler calf suckling naturally will feed 8-12 times daily (up to 10 minutes each feed) and will consume in excess of 10 litres of whole milk per day. Our heifer replacements, unless on an automatic feeder, are usually fed twice daily on a skim or whey based powder often containing additional vegetable protein. The challenge is to achieve the desired weight goals while not feeding as frequently as calves with their mothers.

A few practical tips include:

- Are you feeding enough milk powder?
- *Aim to feed at least 900 grams of milk powder per day.*
- Calves under 3 weeks of age cannot digest vegetable proteins in milk powders.
- Measure the amount of powder accurately. *Ensure that the concentration of the milk powder is as manufacturers instructions, for example 125 grams of powder made up to 1 litre is different to 125 grams powder added to 1 litre water.*
- If feeding twice daily try to get the 2 feeds at as close to 12 hours apart as possible. If fed after morning milking and before afternoon milking there may only be a 7 hour gap.
- Ensure mixing and feeding is carried out at the correct temperature and feed calves at 38-40°C. If mixed at a high temperature and then cold water added this can denature proteins in the milk powder.
- Undermixing allows clumping of milk powder.
- Ensure strict hygiene of buckets, mixing and feeding utensils.
- Calves should always have access to clean water (this helps to encourage rumen development) and to offer chopped forage (ideally 3-4 cm chop length) and starter ration/pellets.
- As a target aim to wean calves at 10 weeks of age with a 3 week tailing off period of reducing the amount of milk feed to allow time for the intake of solids to increase so that there is no growth setback at weaning.

To discuss in more detail or to have your calf rearing systems MOT'd, please contact the surgery.

MASTITIS MEETING



On 18th July we held an evening mastitis meeting to discuss what we can learn from examining patterns of when mastitis cases are occurring, the roles of antibiotic dry cow tubes and sealants in mastitis prevention (including summer mastitis) and the possible role for mastitis vaccination with either of the 2 licensed mastitis vaccines, *Startvac* (E Coli and Staph Aureus) and *Ubac* (Strep Uberis). The meeting was kindly sponsored by Hipra Animal Health.

In the last 40 years the UK average bulk milk somatic cell count has fallen from over 400,000 cells/ml to less than 200,000 cells/ml, and over the same period of time the origin of the cases changed from being 80% contagious causes (spread cow to cow in the parlour by milking equipment e.g. *Staph Aureus* and *Strep Agalactiae*) to 80% environmental in origin (e.g. *E Coli*, *Strep Uberis*).

By analysis of when cases are occurring by month of lactation, month of year, number of repeat cases and looking at cell count patterns of individual cows, we can tell a lot about whether the mastitis is likely to be contagious or environmental and if environmental, whether the cows are becoming infected during the dry period (high numbers of new cases in the first 2 months of lactation) or lactation period origin. Bacteriology, which we carry out in our in house laboratory, on individual mastitis cases can tell us exactly which bacteria are involved and our new Mastigram test can give a result before the next milking as to whether a case is gram negative (*E Coli*) or gram positive (*Strep Uberis*, *Staph Aureus*) so that treatments ca be tailored accordingly.

Antibiotic dry cow tubes are a very useful aid in clearing up existing subclinical infection during the dry period, although there will be chronically infected quarters that will not be cured by any therapies. Antibiotic dry cow therapies are of limited value in preventing new infections from being picked up during the dry period, especially the second half of that dry period. Teat sealants on the other hand will not help to clear up infections in quarters that are already sub clinically infected (high cell count) at drying off, but do help to prevent new infections from being picked up throughout the dry period.

Protocols for selective dry cow treatments (sealants for all cows and antibiotic dry cow tubes only for cows with sub clinically infected quarters and for high risk cows) were discussed even for herds which weren't carrying out individual cow cell counting. Hygiene in the environment (dry cow housing, calving accommodation and cubicle sheds) was discussed, as was vaccination, but stressing that we needed to know which organism were the main cause of mastitis and that vaccination was only part of a control programme.

For more information please speak to one of the farm vets.

CEVAC CHLAMYDIA & ENZOVAX

Both of the above enzootic abortion vaccines for sheep are licensed to be administered at least 4 weeks prior to tupping. Both vaccines are currently unavailable although we are hoping that Cevac Chlamydia will become available early September in both 20 and 50 dose bottles.

If you require enzootic abortion vaccine please contact the surgery and place your order, we will then put you on our waiting list. Once the product is back in, we will be in touch.

Toxovax

At present there are no supply issues. If you need the vaccine and you know how many doses you require and for what date, please contact the surgery to place your order.

PLEASE NOTE: TOXOVAX HAS AN APPROXIMATE EXPIRY OF 9 DAYS WHEN DELIVERED TO THE SURGERY—THIS IS DUE TO IT BEING A LIVE VACCINE.

ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE REVIEW – ENDEMIC DISEASE FOLLOW UP

Over 150 Dalehead clients have now completed the original Animal Health and Welfare Review – claiming **£436** for sheep, **£522** for beef cattle and **£372** for dairy cattle.

These reviews can be completed every 10 months to take advantage of each species present. Cattle reviews focus on BVD and sheep reviews focus on wormer efficacy, you also get:

A Flock or Herd Health Plan including:

- Animal Health and Welfare advice
- Animal Productivity advice
- A Veterinary Attestation number if needed

You can do a new review every 10 months – up to 3 reviews in total.

AFTER you have completed a review you can now do an endemic disease follow up where you will continue to look at BVD for cattle but on sheep you can look into a whole host of other diseases and conditions – this is also funded as follows:

- **£639** for sheep,
- **£837** for BVD positive farms,
- **£215** for BVD negative farms,
- **£1,714** for dairy BVD positive farms (not yet released).

You can do up to 3 follow-ups on the same herd or flock and the follow-up has to be within 10 months of the review.

The scheme ends on 19 June 2027 and all reviews and follow-ups need to be completed by that date.

Join us for our summer social on:

Thursday 8th August from 11.30am at **Settle Country Store**

for a catch up and a burger!! Kindly sponsored by Elanco Animal Health UK.

AUGUST 24 Dalehead Veterinary Group Ltd **WWW.DALEHEADVETGROUP.CO.UK** LIKE US ON facebook