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12th October: Healthy Feet

Back to basics on the foot anatomy and function – the effect of management and cow factors. Lesion recognition and foot trimming demonstration. Role of mobility scoring in keeping feet healthy.

26th October: Feet and the Farm

Expert speaker: Nick Bell
Risk factors for lameness and practical tips for footbathing. Dealing with the lame cow.

Courses are nearly full! Limited places are still available for the first two lameness meetings. The special introductory offer is available at £60 + VAT for both meetings, plus a free mobility scoring session.

What a fine day for the Cheshire Ploughing match! It was great to see many of you at our stand, hopefully you made the most of the hospitality.

Housing

After a mixed grazing season cows are approaching winter housing. This will throw up a mix of challenges for cattle.

Respiratory disease

Traditionally cattle are vaccinated against IBR prior to housing and remember the Bovilis IBR Live marker vaccine has a 6 month licence, so for many this will now be due. If you are experiencing suspect cases or just 'off colour cows' with high temperatures or milk drop, especially in freshly calved cows, get in touch as IBR could be playing a role. Don't forget that purchased stock present an infectious disease risk as their disease and vaccination status may be unknown.

Feeding

There hasn't been a significant amount of grazing available for most this summer. Winter feeding has started for some of you and balancing the winter feed ration now and when there is no grazing available will be key to maintaining good milk production without excessive body condition loss or adverse effects on fertility.

Overfeeding of dietary carbohydrate concentrates without adequate fibre will create a **sub-acute ruminal acidosis** (SARA) risk. Monitor your forage:concentrate ratio. SARA is a disorder of ruminal fermentation that is characterised by extended periods of depressed ruminal pH below 5.5-5.6.

Seen as a herd-wide problem the *primary symptoms* include –

- Irregular feed intake
- Reduced rumination (cudding)
- Irregular faeces consistency with undigested fibre or grain visible
- Varying milk production

The *secondary effects* include negative effects on fertility, weight loss and poorer body condition despite adequate energy intake, increased lameness (laminitis and sole ulceration/white line disease) and abscesses in the liver.

Identification of risk – Are any of the symptoms being seen in the cows? Milk records suggesting decreased volume and fat % production? Monitoring faeces consistency and cow cleanliness will help identify potential SARA cows. Monitor forage:concentrate ratio! Early 1st cut and 2nd grass silage this season have very low effective NDF i.e. fibre, in conjunction with high D values and as a result have seen whole herd outbreaks of ruminal acidosis. This has been quickly corrected by incorporating chopped straw in the diet. Further rumen sampling, rumenocentesis, can be done as a diagnostic tool.

Parasite Questionnaires

Once again many thanks for your replies. Entries for the prize draw have now closed. Winners will be contacted after the draw on the 30th October.

Fascioliasis – Liver fluke

After favourable weather conditions for fluke development the forecast for October in this region is for a **high prevalence of liver fluke disease**.

Farms with a known fluke population should be treating sheep in autumn, traditionally in October. A second dose around 6 weeks later may well be advisable in these areas. Triclabendazole is generally the drug of choice as it is effective against very young immature fluke, although there are increasing reports of suspected resistance. The effectiveness of fluke treatments should be monitored and strategies using alternative products may be needed.

Liver fluke infestation in cattle is harder to identify, acute or sub-acute disease is seen less often. The bulk milk antibody tests carried out this year have shown a wide variety of exposure. Definitive diagnosis is confirmed by the presence of fluke eggs in faeces.

Free bulk milk liver fluke antibody tests are still available

Prevention – Maximising rumen health by feeding a well balanced ration and managing its formulation and delivery to the cows. Seek advice if in doubt.

Mycotoxins

The contamination of feedstuffs with mycotoxins is a very real risk to the health and productivity of cattle. This mainly affects forages (very dry and/or poorly managed clamps) and by products. The mycotoxins can also be carried from the standing crop (seen mainly with whole crop and sometimes maize) into the pit or created during the ensiling process due to overheating.

There are many types of mycotoxin, causing immunosuppression and negative effects on both fertility and the gastro-intestinal system.

Symptoms – Digestive upsets, swollen joints, varied feed intakes.

Highlight on the Impact on Liver function

- The liver is a primary organ in biomechanical processes, such as protein and amino acid production and energy metabolism- and is therefore essential for good health and production.
- Hepatotoxic – refers to liver damage caused by toxins. A combination of different toxins are more toxic than a single mycotoxin.
- Reduced rumen pH, as in SARA, reduces mycotoxin degradation and increases impact of mycotoxins on the liver
- Mycotoxin damage to the liver will inhibit the liver's ability to carry out its normal function resulting in decreased productivity

Testing for mycotoxins is not often carried out due to cost. A positive response to treatment is a sure sign of the presence of mycotoxins.

Treatment - Mycotoxin binders are available as a single product – **Nanobind**, or incorporated with yeast as a rumen buffer – **Mycobind**.

Lameness

The Dairy Co Healthy Feet Programme is in full swing, the initiative has been very well received and the benefits of the mentoring programme are being seen on farm by all farm staff involved and importantly the cows themselves!



Lameness incidence and the causes there of may alter at housing. To help you form an action plan to reduce economic losses from lameness please contact the office or Sara on 07891843573.

Date for your diaries: 16th November 10.30am – 2.30pm at Reaseheath College – “Milking Without Mastitis” speak to Neil Howie for more information

New member of staff – We welcome Becky Thelwell to the office team. She's from a farming background and will be working part time with us, so expect to hear a new voice when you call the practice.

Howie