

Farm news

Over the summer we have been joined by two new graduate farm vets, Jordan and Hannah! You will likely see them out and about on farm so please say hello!

Congratulations to Jess who has now qualified as an ATT so will be out as part of the TB testing team two days each week. Thank you to all those who allowed Jess to complete some of her training at your herd test!

Sally has been busy calf rearing in New Zealand for a couple of months now. She has a few weeks left working on farm before heading off to explore Australia! We look forward to welcoming her back in January.



Calweton farm team



Bovine Lungworm

Lungworm (*Dictyocaulus Viviparus*) causes parasitic bronchitis or husk in cattle. It is mainly seen in temperate areas as the larvae require a cool moist environment to survive, with heavy rainfall and *Pilobolus* fungi facilitating the spread in severe outbreaks.

Clinical disease usually occurs after an animals first season at pasture. Young animals are more susceptible, as once infected, individuals usually become immune to further disease. Although some maintain subclinical infections acting as a source of pasture contamination.

Clinical signs to look out for include increased respiratory rate and effort, coughing which can vary from infrequent to persistent, reduced weight gain, reduced milk production and weight loss.

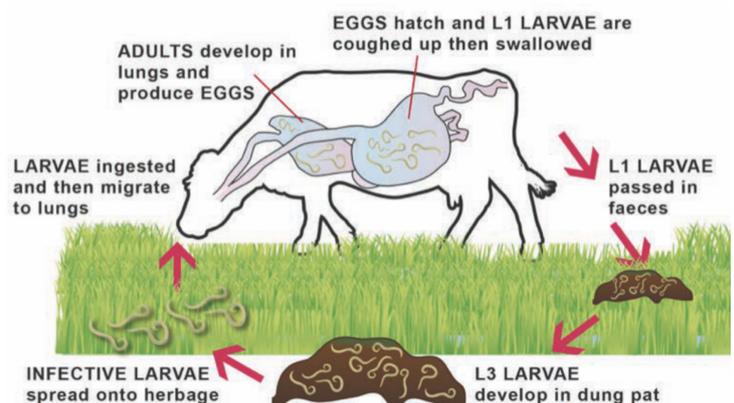
Lungworm infection is usually diagnosed based off clinical signs and grazing history, but larvae can be detected in faeces using the Baermann technique.

Although vaccination is strongly advised to prevent outbreaks, infections can be treated with various

anthelmintics (Benzimidazoles or Macrocytic Lactones), anti-inflammatories and antimicrobials for secondary infections. Any animals on infected pasture should be moved off.

Prevention of lungworm is achieved with use of vaccination. Huskvac is given in two doses, 4 weeks apart, with the 2nd dose given 2 weeks before the start of grazing, but animals must be older than 8 weeks before receiving their first dose of vaccine.

If you would like more information on lungworm or use of the lungworm vaccine, please ring the farm office or speak to your vet.



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Beef Five Point Plan / Outwintering Cattle

Efficiency of suckler herds is critical for financial success. Here's our 5 point plan for success.

At the simplest level we are trying to achieve the maximum number of kilos of 'calf' sold from each cow per year. To achieve this, in a 9-week breeding period we are aiming for -

- 65% of cows calving in the first 3 weeks of the calving period.
- 95% of cows mated, calving within those 9 weeks.
- A calf crop sold greater than 90%.

To achieve these fertility targets, the top areas to concentrate on are -

1. Cow Nutrition

A normal, healthy suckler cow which has a calf at foot is unlikely to be cycling and fertile for at least 50 days after calving. The biggest influence as to when these cows start cycling is their body condition score, especially heifers. Thin cows will invariably start cycling much later, leading to an extended calving period and smaller calves at sale.

Boosting nutrition to thin cow's post calving will have very little effect on this return to cyclicity. The key is to achieve BCS of 3 to 3.5 mid pregnancy and 2.5 to 3 at point of calving.

The 'quick fix' for infertility is often to buy expensive mineral/vitamin supplements or question some obscure dietary deficiency. The fact is that most cows on a properly planned winter diet with general purpose mineral/vitamin supplement will be unlikely to have any deficiencies severe enough to influence fertility. If a farm has a history of severe deficiency in copper, selenium, or iodine in grazing animals then it is clearly sensible to address this especially in bulling heifers which are most likely to be affected.

So, when it comes to nutrition, maintaining cows in the correct body condition score throughout pregnancy will have a much greater influence on next years calving pattern.



2. Bull Fertility

Up to 25% of bulls in the UK are sub-fertile. This means that whilst they are fertile they may struggle to achieve the figures mentioned above. This can be for a variety of reasons which can be picked up at a pre-breeding

exam. As well as semen assessment, other parameters such as mobility, body condition score and eyesight are all essential for a bull to work effectively.

Its best to do this several weeks before the breeding season to ensure time is available to take action if required.

3. Calving Difficulties

Difficult calvings have a significant effect on how quickly a cow will return to cyclicity and achieve pregnancy.

Ensuring appropriate nutrition to avoid excess calf weights is key. Heavy feeding in late pregnancy should be avoided. Similarly limiting nutrition to reduce over-conditioned cows can be just as dangerous to cow health.

Once again monitoring body condition score throughout pregnancy and making gradual changes is key.

Calving ease of bulls can be assessed though EBV's. These are available for most pedigree bulls and give a vast amount of information on likely bull performance. To reduce difficult calvings, choose bulls with

- Lower birthweight of calves
- Shorter gestations
- Good EBV's for direct calving ease.

On top of this, why not attend one of our calving courses planned for winter 23/24. Using our calving simulator you can learn the top tips for successful calving interventions.



4. Heifer Management

Heifers which calve at 2 years old will have more calves per lifetime and be more productive. This can be extremely efficient but does require good management and bull choice.

It's vital that nutrition maintains growth rates of

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0.85 Kg per day up to the point of breeding at 15 months. Heifers will be approximately 65% of mature weight at this point. Heifers should always go to the bull slightly earlier and for a shorter breeding period to ensure they stay within the calving block in subsequent years.

Choosing the correct heifers by measuring the pelvic area can help significantly. This is a relatively simple and straightforward task before going to bull and allows removal of those with small or abnormal pelvises which are likely to have difficulty at calving.

5. Infectious Disease Management

To try to achieve the most efficient fertility and final calf crop it is vital that all diseases are under control.

For the cows, understanding the herd status for BVD, Leptospirosis, Johnes disease and IBR can help plan a programme to limit the effect on health and fertility. Sampling at critical points of the year will allow the creation of successful vaccination or

eradication plans.

Vaccination plans can also be created to reduce the impact of scour and pneumonia in youngstock.

Although the testing and vaccines involve some cost, there's no doubt it's better to invest in health than pay for disease.

As a final note, early pregnancy diagnosis of cows and heifers allows prompt decision's on non-productive cows to reduce over wintering costs.



Faecal Worm Egg Counts - Sampling Procedure

The dry early summer followed by recent rainfall has led to heavily infected pasture, meaning lamb growth rates can start to stall at this time of year. Faecal worm egg counts (FWEC) are a useful tool which help to guide our worming strategies and reduce the risk of resistant worm build up on farm. FWECs count the number of eggs in faeces and the results give us an indication of the egg-producing adult worm burden in our animals. Ideally these should be carried out at 2-4 week intervals throughout the grazing season.

A BAD sample is worse than NO sample!

Inappropriate sampling procedures produce unreliable and unhelpful results.

How we can use FWEC

- Aid us in determining the group/ individuals that need worming
- Test whether the treatment we are using has been effective. See 'Drench Check'
- Give us information on the amount of contamination going on to pasture. If carried out regularly we can begin to build a picture of what is happening on the grazing and identify heavily burdened pastures. This aids us in decisions to treat and when / where to place groups.

Pooled Samples

This is the technique we will use in most cases excluding small flocks/herds and individual investigations.

Ideally sample 15 animals, of a similar age, from one group. If the group comprises of more than 100 animals, sample approximately 10% of the group.

The more individuals sampled, the more representative the result and therefore the more useful the results.

Samples should be:

- RANDOM - collect from random individuals in the group. Not just the thin/ scouring animals.
- SAME - from the same group & same AGE group. Avoid including ewe samples when testing lambs, this can skew the results.
- FRESH - Ideally less than 1 hour old. The fresher the sample the more accurate the egg count. Eggs will hatch from dung left on pasture falsely reducing our egg counts.
- EQUAL - the amount collected from each individual should be roughly the same. This prevents any individual being overrepresented when the faeces are pooled. E.g. if a larger sample is collected from a heavily burdened individual, the results of the pooled sample will

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be artificially higher suggesting a higher flock burden than is accurate. The opposite is also true. A larger sample from a low shedding animal will artificially lower our results.

These four steps ensure a REPRESENTATIVE sample is collected.

The more representative the sample, the more useful the result.

The best time to sample is first thing in the morning. As you disturb the stock, they will usually get up, stretch, and pass faeces. Alternatively, lambs can be run up the lane and fresh samples collected from here.

Collection method

- Equipment: deep measuring spoon, or glove and plastic bag
- Use spoon to collect equal amounts (2.5 – 5 grams) from each dung pat. FRESH pats please!
- Deposit the sample into the bag and repeat until enough individuals have been sampled (10-15 or 10% of a group >100)
- Once all samples have been collected, squeeze as much air out as possible, seal bag & bring it straight to the practice

You will be asked the following details for our submission form:

age, approximate number sampled, when last wormed and name of product used (if relevant), any other information e.g. any concerns about the group, vet name if you have discussed the case.



Individual Samples

Individual samples are useful for small flocks/ herds or for specific individual investigations. Sample 3-5 randomly selected individuals from the groups

- Using a gloved hand, take a 3-finger pinch from 3 spots in the fresh faecal pat.
- Place these in the bag (only sample one animal per bag) and label with animal identity and further information as above. Bring straight to the practice.

Drench Check

These give us a quick indication of whether our recent worming dose has been fully effective.

Take a pooled sample of 15 treated animals (see 'Collection Method'). The timing of sample depends on the group of anthelmintic used.

- 14 days after treatment for White (1-BZ), Clear (3-ML) and Orange (4-AD)
- 7 days after treatment for Yellow (2-LV)

An Enhanced Drench Check can be carried out by sampling and performing a FWEC on the treatment day as well as post treatment as above.

IMPORTANT: If a proportion of the group has not been treated, make sure you only sample animals that HAVE been drenched!

Please note that if you require samples to be tested for Liver Fluke or Coccidiosis, samples will have to be sent to an external lab. Please make this clear when you bring in the sample.

AHW Pathway

Following a high result in a pooled sample, Pre and Post treatment samples must be INDIVIDUALLY sampled.

If you would like more information on what we've discussed in this month's newsletter, please speak to any of our farm veterinary team.

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