

Farm Newsletter

June 2018

We are seeing several outbreaks of **Nematodirus** in lambs this year as well as **coccidiosis**. I would like to urge you to bring faecal samples into the practice from scoured lambs, to check what the cause is for effective treatment — ideally from 10 lambs picked at random, not just the scoured ones.

We have enclosed a brief survey on **prolapses in ewes**, that is to be used to gather information for a study by Alastair Macrae at Edinburgh University. The aim of the survey, is to identify the level of prolapses that are seen, this may then lead to some farm trials to gain more of an insight into the causes of prolapses. Please fill the survey in and return them to Claire at Wagonway.

We are looking forward to welcoming **Eilidh Batchelor** to the practice. She starts in July and has spent a lot of time seeing practice with us as a student over the last 10 years. Eilidh will be working out of the Alnwick branch, so no doubt you will all see her about soon. I asked her to introduce herself and this is what she had to say:

"My name is Eilidh and I'll be joining the small animal and farm teams in July after graduating from the University of Glasgow. Being from Upper Coquetdale in Northumberland, I'm really looking forward to moving back and working on my home ground. My interests are in all animals both large and small. Outside of work I love being outdoors and enjoy hill walking and exploring not only the local area, but further afield on my travels. I also enjoy baking and reading".



Luing Cattle Society Farm & Stock Tour

The Luing Cattle Society is hosting a farm and stock tour on the 16th of August at Lanton Estate, Marleyknowe Farm (NE71 6TG) by kind permission of Ian and Tocky McKie starting at 11am. There will be discussion topics with guest speakers, refreshments, lunch and a bar. The beneficial charities are The Teapot Trust and the Glendale Gateway Trust. All are welcome. For more information and to RSVP then email secretary@luingcattlesociety.co.uk, or call 01250 872897.

Calving Course

It is hoped that we will be running a calving course in the autumn. After the success of the lambing courses we have run over the last couple of years, we would like to offer a calving course. It will discuss the nutrition of the cow around calving time, practical tips for calving, when to call the vet and the aftercare of the calf. If anyone is interested in attending then please email: Anna.Bruguera@alnorthumbriavets.co.uk

Red Tractor Farm Assurance Scheme—Pam Brown

I'm sure most of you will have been contacted by post, email or through the farming press about the changes to the beef and sheep Red Tractor Assurance Scheme to tackle antibiotic use. In summary, the changes are:

A written annual livestock health and performance review must be undertaken by your vet – Most of our clients are already doing this as it is included in your plan fee, and we have made a few minor adjustments to the template we use to satisfy the recommendations.

Critically Important Antibiotics (mainly 3rd and 4th generation cephalosporins, fluoroquinolones and colistin) **must only be used as a last resort under veterinary direction** – This is already the case, we do not give these out to clients without examining the animal affected.

It is recommended that at least 1 member of staff has undertaken training in the handling and administration of medicines – This is only a recommendation but we plan to include this training in a farmer meeting (along with other more exciting topics!) in early autumn once silage / shearing / harvest is over.

These changes were supposed to kick in on 1st June 2018 but Pam and Claire attended a meeting 2 weeks ago which showed how unprepared the Red Tractor Assurance team is for these changes, so it is unlikely anyone is going to be reprimanded anytime soon!



Beef Cow Fertility—Henrietta Bowie

Recently I attended a CPD evening on beef cow fertility, it highlighted some interesting points with regards to general beef cattle fertility and the potential to synchronise them for a tighter calving pattern.

The two main factors that determine the time it takes for the cow to return to fertility are the presence of the calf and the cow's body condition score. The suckling calf inhibits the release of hormones in the brain that triggers the ovaries to become active again. As the calf begins to wean itself from the cow and suckles less as it gets older then there is less negative stimulation and so the ovaries become active again. Some studies have shown that removing the calf for a short period of time is effective to allow the cow to regain fertility but this is not really a practical option. Priming the cow with CIDRs containing the hormone progesterone has been shown to overcome the calf's effect of suckling and aid a return to fertility. The second main factor in the cows return to fertility is the body condition score of the cow at calving. Fat tissue releases messengers that positively stimulate the brain to activate the ovaries. Cows with a good body condition at calving will on average return to fertility about 50-60 days after calving compared to 70+ days if they are in a poorer condition before calving.



Another point raised at the meeting was the best breeding age for heifers. Heifers that calve at 2 years of age will produce more calves than those that calve for the first time at 3 years of age by the time the cows are 6.5 years of age on average. The calves born to heifers are lighter but the calves thereafter bear no difference in weight depending if they are 2 or 3 years old when they have their first calf. The third point that supports calving heifers at 2 years old is the fact that the heifers calved at 2 years old weaned 138kg more of live calf weight in their lifetime compared to one that calved at 3 years old.



The lifetime productivity of the beef heifers is dependent on their ability to reach sexual maturity, conceive early in the breeding season and to then calve for the first time at 2 years old. This early conception is positively influenced by the number of oestrus cycles occurring before the onset of the first breeding season. The third heat of a heifer is 21% more fertile than the 1st heat a heifer has. There is of course a genetic influence of the breed on the age and weight at which a heifer will hit puberty. The nutrition of the heifer also influences the age at which the heifer reaches puberty for the same reason the body condition score of the cow influences the return to fertility as the fat releases positive stimulations on the ovaries.

Synchronising cows and heifers can help to create a tighter calving interval over time. Choosing to synchronise heifers is the best way to bring the calving interval closer together, since by having the heifers calving early in the calving period it allows them more time to regain fertility before the bulls are introduced.

There are different synchronisation programmes available depending on the stages of the cycle the cows are in or whether it is to promote fertility in heifers. Just speak to one of the farm team to discuss how the use of hormones to manipulate the cows cycle could be of benefit to you.



Don't Forget to Use...

- Blowfly products—Clik, Ectofly, Dysect etc.
- **Swish or Spotinor** to prevent fly problems in cattle.
- Worming and anti-coccidials for lambs.
- **Ovivac P** vaccinations for lambs.
- Boluses and injections to prevent trace element deficiencies in lambs.