



alnorthumbria
veterinary group

Newsletter

September 2019

With the days starting to get shorter, and harvest almost over, preparations are in full swing for the start of another breeding year for sheep — ewes are being vaccinated with Toxovax and Cevac, tups are being bought and sold, with fertility testing helping with the process. Autumn calvings have started and so far, seem to be going well despite the worry of overfit cows. Let's hope this continues!

Make sure you get us to sign your forms for Kelso tup sales if you are eligible for export to NI (MV accredited flocks only).

All in a Weekend's Work...

This year's August bank holiday weekend could not have been more different to last year's - blue skies, sun shining, harvest going full steam ahead and whilst this was happening a select team of staff members from our practice were cycling the length and breadth of Northumberland, to raise money for charity.

Starting at Wooler on Saturday, the team made fantastic time, reaching their end destination for that day, our Ponteland branch, an hour ahead of schedule. Day two, our numbers doubled. Twelve cyclists set off from Ponteland for the longest stretch of the cycle heading back up North to Seahouses via Morpeth, Ashington, Amble and Alnwick. The final day saw our cyclists making the 25 mile journey from Seahouses to Wooler, with a final hurrah at Glendale show. With plenty of food,

encouragement from supporters, two punctures, a broken chain and just a few pints in the sun to rehydrate, our cyclists managed the 140 mile trip. They have raised at least £1000 for our charities Streetvet and R.A.B.I. The cyclists would like to thank everyone for their support, however big or small. If anyone has any last minute donations, pop into your nearest branch or you can donate online, with full details on our Facebook page.



Our cycle team on Day Two at Rigg & Furrow, after a quick stop for pizza refreshments



Dallas Allen, Winner of Lilburn Estate Perpetual

Show Day dawned on Bank Holiday Monday and what a brilliant day it was, for our clients and the public alike! With fantastic weather, we had plenty of visitors to the showground. We would like to say well done to all our clients who were showing and competing and massive congratulations to Dallas and Ruth Allan of Humbleheugh on winning the Lilburn Estate Perpetual Challenge Trophy with their Aberdeen Angus cow with calf at foot. Our Alnorthumbria stand was well visited by both farm and small animal clients who enjoyed snacks and drinks whilst catching up with our staff members. We hand-selected arguably some of the shortest members of our team at the show, to take part in the prestigious Sumo Suit relay race — an extremely close first

heat against the boys from Ad Gefrin distillery left us on the podium at a respectable third place. Our cyclists took one last lap of honour around the main ring, as the day started to draw to a close.

All round, not too bad for weekend's work in our own little county of Northumberland.

Dates for the Diary!

We are proud to sponsor and support many events across the county over the summer months, so here are some date to add to the diary.

Ingram Show

Saturday 14th September

Farmer Meeting

(Minerals in Ewes and Red Tractor Medicine Training)

Monday 23rd September

Breamish Hall, Powburn

This is our final medicines training meeting, and will also include a talk on achieving good mineral balance in ewes, sponsored by Bimeda.

Refreshments will be provided, and the meeting is free of charge to all. Please RSVP to your local branch if interested.



Alwinton Show

Saturday 12th October

As always, the practice will have a stand at Alwinton show, providing refreshments.



Dystocia in Cattle

We have all been there, the 2am calving with a stubborn leg back or presented with a single front leg and a nose. Problems calving, also known as dystocia, seem to come part and parcel of keeping cattle but the prolonged effect that this initial experience can place on a calf's health and on its future can be dramatic. Studies show that animals needing assistance during the calving process are more likely to have respiratory or digestive issues later in life.

Dystocia comes in three forms: maternal-calf size mismatch; abnormal presentation in birth canal; and maternal factors such as hypocalcaemia. Of the three, the first and last are most readily preventable, by using appropriate bulls in heifers, pelvic measuring and ensuring good body condition at bulling and calving.

During a dystocia, or bad calving, the calf may be starved of oxygen, leading to the blood becoming more acidic. This in turn can lead to a depression in the central nervous system, which would normally stimulate breathing rhythm. Occasionally, in cases where we believe there has been a prolonged period of reduced oxygen, we may administer bicarbonate directly into a calf's vein, to try and rebalance the blood.

Other ways in which you can reduce the risk after a dystocia include stimulating a normal breathing rhythm and clearing airways of fluid, stimulating the nostrils with clean straw or bedding and sitting the calf on its chest. It is also important to ensure any calf, not only those born weak and requiring assistance, are kept warm in period immediately after birth.

We are always emphasising the importance of colostrum, and these cases are no exception. These animals should receive 50ml/kg, ideally within 2 hours of birth of good quality colostrum. This will provide essential nutrients and antibodies to the calf.

There are multiple ways to reduce the risk of issues, following a bad calving and we should aim to give these animals a little more attention, and not forget about them once they hit the ground.

Don't Forget to Use!

- **Cevac Chlamydia and Toxovax** abortion vaccines
 - **Rispoval 4** pneumonia vaccine
 - **Trace element boluses**
- **Endofluke or Fasinex** fluke drench for cattle and sheep
- **Rotavec** to prevent scour in autumn calves

Surveillance Study: Improving weaning percentages By Sophie Evans 5th Year Vet Student

A 2018 study conducted by the Livestock Health Scotland and Aberdeen Disease Surveillance Centre has provided information regarding the most important causes for reduced weaning percentage. 14 herds with a total of 1822 cows were included, all of which were running with the bull. Of this total, 11.6% were found not in calf and 3.6% were aborted due to presence of twins.

Throughout the study, all calf deaths were investigated, and a diagnosis reached where possible. For abortion cases, the most common diagnosis was a feed or environmental borne pathogen, followed by a specific herd infection. Stillbirth cases were most commonly due to suffocation or trauma during calving and secondly feed or environmental borne pathogens. Deaths in the first week of life were most commonly attributed to colostrum failure and a subsequent infection and less commonly following on from trauma at calving. Older calf deaths were most commonly diagnosed as pneumonia followed by a naval infection.

The study highlighted that the most important causes varied between farms and in order to maximise improvements, it is crucial to assess each farm individually. However, these common causes can be a good place to start where improvement in colostrum management, calving management and food storage can be implemented.

Five 'Herd Health' themes were presented, again with emphasis that not all apply to all herds

- Improving fertility performance
- Reducing feed/ environmental challenge to pregnant cows
- Reducing calving related stillbirths
- Control of specific endemic herd infections
- Improving colostrum uptake and early calf health