

Black Sheep Farm Health

March 2020 Newsletter



The Field Report

2020 is turning into a memorable year.

At least the weather has been good! See you all on the other side...

COVID-19: Not quite business as usual

Even with the busy spring time well underway, the ongoing pandemic has given everyone pause for thought. We have modified our working patterns to reduce the risk to our team and our clients—as vets we thought we ought to set an example on biosecurity!

- The practice will be manned by Hazel or Carole during the normal hours
- **Emergency work and routine essential work will still go ahead as normal.** Vets are working from their vehicles and using home as base rather than the practice.
- If you need a **vet for an emergency call out**, ring the practice landline as normal.
- If you need **advice**, contact the vets directly on their mobile.
- If you need **medicines or other products**, ring the practice landline to order rather than dropping in. If passing we can organise a drop off, if not come to the surgery but do not enter—just knock or ring and we will leave it out.
- **Please pay by BACS wherever possible** to reduce visits to the practice and also handling cheques for Hazel and Carole.

For visits:

- Please make us aware of anyone (i) especially vulnerable to COVID-19, and (ii) displaying symptoms (fever and/or cough).
- Keep a distance of 2 metres (one cow length) whenever possible. Where this is impractical we have masks and gloves for you to wear.
- Minimise the number of people coming to assist—most of the time just one person should be required.

Jenny back to work!



We're very happy to have Jenny back - she's been raring to go for some time! She's even got her lambing done early to focus on you all.

Like everyone else she is working remotely so if you need her advice try her on 07734 432 212.

Thanks also to Sedona who was a great help for the start of this year - best of luck to her at her next practice!



Salmonella in Beef Herds: an update from SAC

Although only 10% of our diagnoses of *Salmonella dublin* come from beef herds, on farms which experience an outbreak, it can have a significant impact on health and mortality rates during a calving season.

In dairy herds, the clinical presentation is often confined to one age group within a herd, i.e. some herds experience predominantly abortions, others calf health issues and others diarrhoea in adult cattle. We have tended to find that in beef herds it can present within one herd with a range of presentations in a range of age groups. This likely reflects that beef herds are often more naïve and there is increased contact between different ages of cattle.

In beef suckler herds,

- 28% of the diagnoses were in adult cattle, of which 40% were abortions
- The abortion rate in affected herds ranged from 2% to 5% at the time of submission
- The only other clinical sign noted in adult cattle was diarrhoea. 80% of cattle with diarrhoea were affected in the fortnight after calving
- 72% of the diagnoses were in calves less than six months of age, with no diagnoses in animals between 6 months of age and pregnant heifers in their last trimester
- The peak age of diagnosis was between one and four weeks of age, with 60% of calf diagnoses in this age group.
- Mortality rates were high in calves, with up to 18% mortality at the time of submission!

The clinical presentation in calves was more varied, as shown in the table below

Primary Clinical Presentation	Percentage of calves affected
Scour	64%
Pneumonia	20%
Neurological signs	16%

Control in dairy herds is aided by snatch calving, so control in beef herds can be more challenging. With 50% of calves and 80% of cows affected within a month of calving this period is critical for control. Some pointers are below:

- Hygiene of the calving pen becomes critical in beef herds to limit transmission from cow to calf, and also between cows.
- Carrier cows are more likely to shed around calving, and cows which become infected around calving have an increased risk of becoming a carrier, therefore maintaining infection within the herd.
- Infection in beef herds tends to build up in the environment towards the end of the calving period, so either grouping cows by expected calving date if known, frequent bedding or using a separate area for the second half of the calving period will limit contamination. Avoid overstocking.
- Minimising the age spread of calves in a group will reduce spread from older, recovered calves. In the face of an outbreak, splitting the herd into smaller groups will reduce transmission.
- Weather permitting, getting cattle outside as quickly as possible will help to limit transmission, assuming the grazing is clean.
- If calving outside, avoid using the same pasture for the whole of the calving period.
- If calf mortality or scour, respiratory or neurological problems are an issue for your beef herds this year, consider Salmonella Dublin as a possible cause. Diagnosis can be made at the time of the outbreak by culturing faeces, or post-mortem samples, or retrospectively using serology.
- The levels of calf mortality seen in beef herds will have a significant influence on the profitability of the enterprise for that year, and if carrier cows are created, may impact the herd in further years.

Many of the control measures are sound general advice which will help with the control of many neonatal calf diseases in the suckler herd. Given the poor weather this spring so far, holding cows and calves inside for longer will present a greater risk.