

Black Sheep Farm Health

December 2022 Newsletter



The Field Report

Mastering Medicines Course

Monday 12th December, 18:00-20:00, @The Dovecote Room, Jubilee Institute Hall, Rothbury. £40 excluding VAT. Certificates and refreshments provided. Lively discussion guaranteed. This course is a requirement for Red Tractor. Either ring the practice on 01669 838 288, or email claire.neillans@bsfh.co.uk, to book your place.

Do you have enough forage for winter?

Due to the drought conditions earlier this year, you may be short of forage this winter. This, combined with high prices for alternative feedstuffs, means that planning to ensure you have adequate stocks to get through winter is more important than ever. Planning includes forage analysis and using this data to calculate how long you can feed your herd or flock this winter. If you are concerned that you may run short, there are some actions to consider:

- **Reducing stock numbers** - PD early in the housing period and remove any empty cows. Also ensuring you are culling hard on teeth, feet and udders so only the most productive animals are kept
- **Consider forage replacers** - use of forage replacers can help to preserve forages stocks for later in the winter, suckler cows in good condition can be fed predominantly on straw until the last three weeks of pregnancy if they have an appropriate protein source
- **Minimise waste** - work pits with shear grabs, only exposing as much of the pit as required
- **Delay housing** to maximise the use of dry matter in the fields if ground conditions allow and cattle are in good condition

Digital Dermatitis

Digital dermatitis is an infectious cause of lameness in cattle. It can have a major impact on cattle welfare and lead to economic losses through infertility, reduced yield and cost of treatment. Digital dermatitis is caused by Treponema species of bacteria. These bacteria most commonly cause lesions on the skin of the heel bulbs, but can also be found between the digits or around the coronary band. These lesions range from superficial round lesions, like ulcers, to large, generalised inflammatory tissue.

The bacteria associated with digital dermatitis survive well in slurry and this is considered the main mechanism of spread. As such, digital dermatitis is a condition most commonly seen in housed cattle, and keeping pens clean and dry can be the most important method of control and prevention. Other important considerations to control and prevent digital dermatitis include early detection and treatment of affected cows, hygiene of cattle handling systems and sheds and disinfection protocols such as foot bathing and disinfecting foot trimming equipment. Affected cows should be treated with metacam and a topical oxytetracycline spray. Systemic antibiotics are not usually necessary for digital dermatitis.

Christmas Opening Hours

- Friday 23rd December - 8.30-4pm
- Monday 26th December - office closed, emergencies only
- Tuesday 27th December - office closed, emergencies only
- 28th-30th December - open as normal (8.30 am—5.30 pm)
- Monday 2nd January - office closed, emergencies only

While the office will be closed, vets will remain on call to meet your needs.



Cancer Eye

Ocular squamous cell carcinomas, or cancer eye, are the most common type of tumour in cattle. They often affect the third eyelid. These tumours are more common in white-headed breeds of cattle such as Herefords, and are occasionally seen in other breeds such as Simmentals and Holstein Friesians. As with most tumours, these are more commonly seen in older cattle, and rarely seen in animals under 5 years old.

The key for successful treatment is addressing these tumours early. Early signs may include congested blood vessels in the eye, and bloody or otherwise abnormal discharge from the eye. These signs can progress to growths appearing adjacent to the eye, potentially causing pain or discomfort.



Smaller tumours often go unnoticed while cows are out grazing through the summer and noticed as they come in for housing. Please don't hesitate to give us a call if you have any concerns about cancer eye. Recognised early, these tumours can be treated effectively. For some of these tumours, the affected tissue can be surgically removed, but for more extensive tumours, removing the entire affected eye may be necessary. The earlier they are treated, the better the prognosis. Cattle that remain untreated can be condemned at slaughter.

Tapeworm

There are many kinds of tapeworm that affect livestock with different consequences for the animal. Adult tapeworm are flat, segmented worms that are found in the intestines. Adult tapeworm do not cause any affect on production/growth rates in cattle or sheep, even with heavy burdens. So if you are seeing tapeworm segments passed in their dung this is **not a reason to treat them**.

The adult tapeworm found in dogs and foxes are however a problem as sheep act as their intermediate host. This causes cysts within the animal which can lead to condemnation of parts of carcasses, making these tapeworms significant for farming. For this reason it is really important to ensure farm dogs are wormed at least every 3 months against tapeworm and are not allowed to eat carcasses on farm.



Cattle abortion

The most commonly diagnosed cause of abortion in cattle in the UK is *Bacillus Licheniformis*.

This is a bacteria that is found in spoiled silage. In order to reduce the risk of these abortions, it is important to make sure that pregnant cows and heifers are not fed spoiled silage.

What does a beef farmer want from their beef vet?

Last Month, Joe Henry and Harry Sordy, Alnham Farm, made the trip to the British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA) Congress. They gave a talk about what beef clients want from their vets and what vets can do to engage beef clients. They also discussed the importance of good collaboration between farmer and vet. Hopefully helping aspire more vets to love the beef sector as much as we do!

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