

Black Sheep Farm Health

May 2020 Newsletter



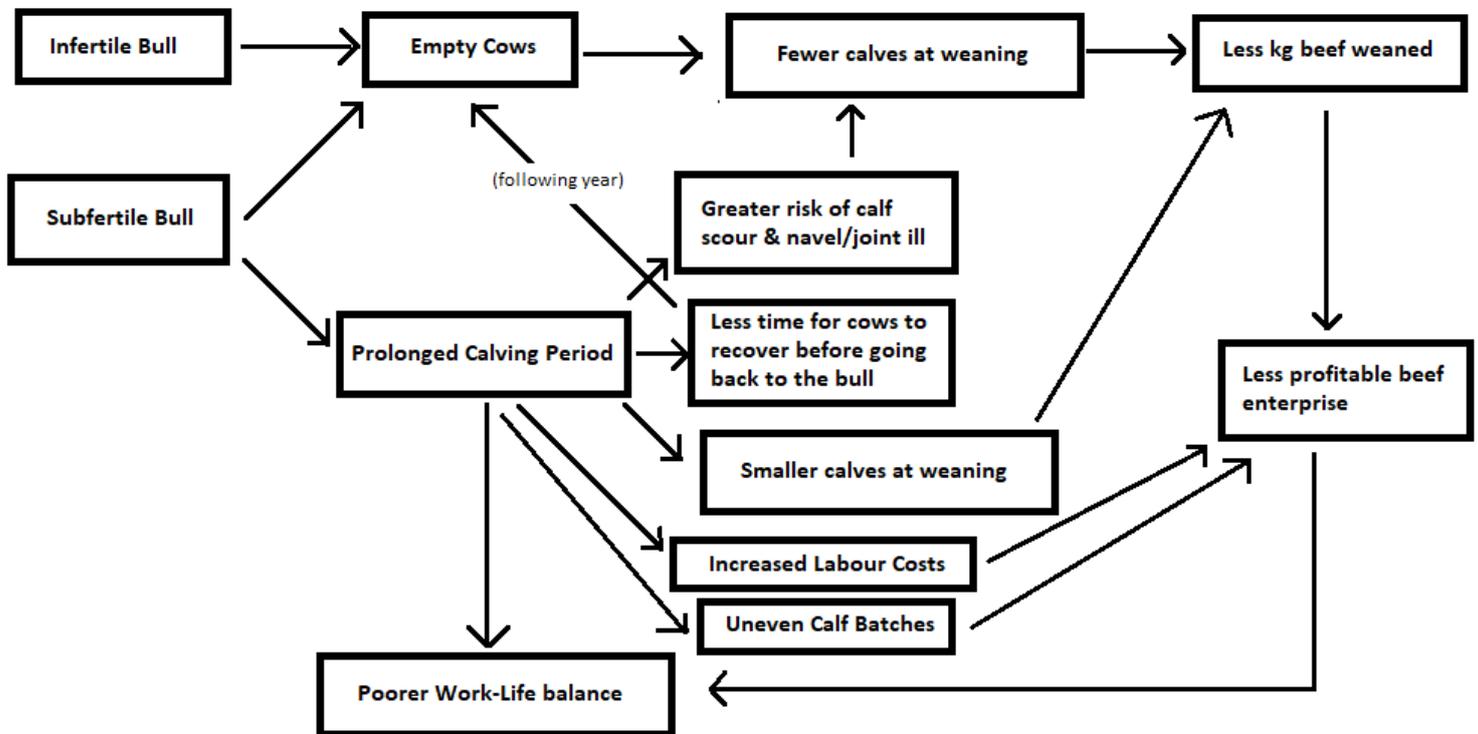
The Field Report

A cattle-heavy month but keep an eye out for cocci and Nematodirus in lambs! Stay safe...

Breeding Soundness Examination of Bulls: Is it necessary?

The breeding soundness examination (BSE) should be part of calendar for *any* suckler herd. Although few bulls are totally infertile, practice data from Northumberland and the United Kingdom consistently shows that **about one in four bulls are subfertile** i.e. are not as fertile as they should or could be. Bulls pushed excessively for sales are notorious offenders.

The consequences of using a subfertile bull are set out below. The effects of a prolonged calving period are just as severe as empty cows with regards to calf health, cow fertility and ultimately your bottom line and quality of life!



Common objections we hear include:

Our bull(s) worked fine last year so have proven they can work: Just like tups, former success is no guarantee of future fertility. There is certainly a normal natural decline with age. Recent injury or infection, which is often minor and goes unnoticed, also impacts fertility.

I'm concerned that bulls will be reluctant to walk into the crush following testing: This is certainly not our experience and the procedure is generally not distressing for anyone involved. We use the most recently developed electroejaculator probe which even has breed specific circuits (!).

I've heard that bulls given the all-clear on fertility testing have failed to perform (and vice versa): The BSE encompasses as much as we can physically evaluate on the day, but it is still a snapshot. You must watch bulls for issues such as lameness and poor libido as well! Bulls rated subfertile will still get some cows in calf, and subfertile bulls may improve if they recover from an injury or infection. The BSE is a tool in your arsenal and has averted many a disaster - as with anything in farming we must combine it with common sense and sound stockmanship and use this collected information in context.



Pre-turnout jobs: don't miss the chance!

The spring may not have been warm but it has been mercifully dry. There are some jobs that are much more easily done before turnout which are easily missed.

Cows

- Post-calving checks for cows which had difficult calvings, milk fever, twins, caesareans or retained cleansings to check they are suitable to breed from again. Cows with endometritis can be treated with an intrauterine antibiotic to significantly improve their chances of re-conception.
- PD autumn calvers.
- Vaccination boosters: BVD, Lepto, IBR.
- Freezebranding any groups not done over the winter.
- Trim long feet and examine lame cows.

Bulling heifers

- Pelvic measure and pre-breeding checks for heifers to avoid abnormally narrow pelvises causing you calving issues next year, and to avoid sending non-breeders to the bull.
- Consider preparing for (synchronised) AI.
- Primary vaccination courses before going to the bull: BVD, Lepto, IBR, lungworm.

Bulls

- Breeding Soundness Examination including feet check and semen evaluation (see front page).
- Vaccination boosters: BVD, Lepto, IBR (don't forget the bull)
- Trace element bolus if not done pre-calving with the cows.

Youngstock

- BVD check tests
- Dehorning or castration before the flies come out

Seeking participants for a sheep and beef research project

The University of Liverpool is running a project to investigate Johne's disease on UK sheep and beef farms. Johne's disease in sheep is much more common than most people realise. This project will investigate the risk factors and effect of the disease on the productive lifespan of ewes and farm economics. Furthermore little research has been done on cross-species transmission and a major aim of this project is to better understand the risk from sheep to cattle of Johne's infection and vice versa.

We would like to invite sheep only, beef only and mixed beef and sheep farms to participate in this practical research, whether you think you have Johne's on your farm or not. If you wish to take part, please complete the short questionnaire which can be found here: www.liverpool.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/johnes-disease-copy along with further information about the project and a consent form.

A follow-up, free of charge visit for flock and/or herd level sampling and further data collection will be arranged for later in the year approximately 100 suitable farms. Each enrolled farm will receive a detailed diagnostic report from the samples collected, free of charge. Please feel free to email Laura Taylor at L.taylor11@liverpool.ac.uk for further information.

Jenny's new Advanced Practitioner status

She certainly had a busy year in 2019! After completing further training and examinations, she is now an 'Advanced Practitioner in Sheep Health and Production'.

Along with Joe, she now joins just seven other Advanced Practitioners in the UK with this status. That means that Black Sheep Farm Health has 25% of the Advanced Practitioners(SHP) in the county under one roof! Not bad...

