

# Black Sheep Farm Health

November 2019 Newsletter



## The Field Report

With the autumn of 2019 looking to be a wet one, cattle are likely to be housed shortly, if not already inside - earlier than the mercifully mild and dry backend of 2018. Housing is a key intervention point for tasks such as PD'ing, weaning and weighing calves, vaccinations, and testing for Johne's are all jobs for this time of year. Remember empty cows are expensive ornaments to house over the winter.

For those with a competitive streak, see overleaf for our inaugural Weaning Weights competition - open to any BSFH client. Prizes just in time for Christmas...

## Dates for your Diary

### Mastering Medicines Course

**11th November 6pm - 8pm £40 ex.VAT @ BSFH Rothbury**

### Farmer Meeting: TB in Northumberland, Johne's in Sheep and BVD Stamp It Out

**11th December @ Coquetvale Hotel. Beef and tatties from 7pm.**

RSVP on 01669 838 288 so we can make sure we've got plenty of dinner!

## Bull nose rings - needed or not?

We often get asked whether it is still a legal requirement to ring bulls as it was in the past. Although it is no longer a legal requirement, it is included in the Health and Safety Executive's guidance, which advises that all bulls from 10 months of age are ringed. Though not legally binding, HSE guidance is considered 'standard'; i.e. farmers need to have excellent justification for not ringing bulls. When we're coming out to do your PDing this autumn, let us know if any young bulls need ringing and we can do it whilst we're on farm.



## Myth busting – antibiotics and tup fertility

There is a common myth that gets banded around regarding antibiotics causing infertility in tups. No research, data or evidence exists to support this. In fact, research in Canada shows that commonly used antibiotics such as oxytetracycline (e.g. Alamylin) and tilmicosin (e.g. Micotil) has no effect on fertility in bulls even when used at a double dose. An exception to this rule is florfenicol (in preparation such as Resflor and Zeleris.)

What is much more likely is that the disease being treated reduces fertility as a result of the associated fever. In fact, prompt treatment with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories of a sick tup is key to reducing a high temperature and therefore protecting sperm production. Any tup that has been ill in the run up to tugging should be semen tested to make sure his fertility hasn't been affected.



### REMINDER: BVD testing calves this winter

As we start weaning and housing calves this autumn, just a reminder that BVD testing of spring calves will be due soon. Five to ten calves from each batch that are 9 to 18 months old. BVD control and eradication is a recommendation under the Red Tractor Farm Assurance Scheme.



## Weaning Competition

How do you rate your performance up to weaning? At BSFH we know that Northumberland has plenty of fantastic suckler herds that produce quality beef and cattle. We also know a bit of competition never hurt anybody...

To showcase this, we are launching the inaugural 'BSFH Weaning Weight Competition'.

There are three categories:

- a) Highest average weight
- b) Best calf weight:cow weight ratio (individual)
- c) Best total calf weight: total cow weight ratio (herd)

Prize for each category: A bottle of Hepple Gin (or similar if gin isn't your thing)

### *Ground rules*

1. Calves must be weighed with electronic weigh scales: we have a set at the practice you can use FOC if needed. The only conditions is that they are returned on time and clean!
2. Only calves born in Spring 2019 are eligible.
3. Calves should be weighed at, or very close to, weaning.
4. We need cow weights as well as calf weight for b) and c), and to know which cows reared which calves.

*We were going to include a message on being honest with results, but then we remembered that none of our clients would ever consider foul play.*

As an optional extra, you can submit result for an anonymous leaderboard - your herd will be allocated a random number so only you will know which is yours. This will allow you to compare your herd's performance with other participating farms.

Contact Kaz on 07557 092760 or [kaz.strycharczyk@bsfh.co.uk](mailto:kaz.strycharczyk@bsfh.co.uk) for more details or to organise using the weigh scales.

The first results are already coming in, with some strong contenders already apparent... Get weighing!

## Waterproof Weather: Kaiwaka Stormforce in stock



Dark, wet days are upon us. If you haven't already, now is the time to invest in probably the world's best waterproofs on the market. Kaiwaka Stormforce waterproofs – warm, breathable, double waterproof lined and reinforced crotch for quad bike riding. Now in stock at the surgery.

## Lead poisoning - the most common cause of cattle poisoning

*Katie Fox, final year student, University of Cambridge*

### *Sources*

Cattle ingest materials that contain lead, such as vehicle batteries, used engine oil, lead-based paints, lead shot or lead piping.

### *Signs*

Lead poisoning causes sudden behavioural changes and cattle become isolated and depressed as well as being over-reactive to touch and sound. Cattle can also become blind and may press their head into corners or against walls. Later on in the disease process, cattle become frantic and stagger around, often bellowing and crashing into objects. They may also grind their teeth and kick at their painful abdomen. Cattle may die suddenly or within days.



*Cattle licking an abandoned tractor battery containing lead.*

### *Treatment*

Cattle can be treated with Calcium-EDTA and Vitamin B1 injections, as well as drenching with magnesium sulphate. However once the cow has had severe symptoms for several days the brain damage caused by the lead may be too great to respond to treatment. In these cases of significant brain damage, euthanasia may be the only course of action. If the cow does respond to treatment it may still need to be withheld from the food chain for a time to ensure all the lead has been removed before human consumption.

### *Preventive Measures*

Prevent lead poisoning in cattle by removing access to lead based materials. Cattle are at most risk of lead poisoning because they are inquisitive and often 'taste test' new finds - unfortunately it only takes a small amount of lead to do a lot of damage!