

November 2024

NEWSLETTER



****SAVE THE DATE****

BLUETONGUE VIRUS MEETING

Ahead of the anticipated rise in BTV cases in spring when the weather begins to warm, we are holding a bluetongue client meeting:

Wednesday 8th January 2025

Longframlington Memorial Hall, NE65 8AH

Please arrive from 6:30pm for a 7pm start

As always, refreshment will be provided

Something in the water?

We will be welcoming Jenny back from maternity leave in November after the birth of her daughter, Ellen, back in August.

Kaz and his girlfriend, Hattie, are expecting their first baby this month. So, if you can't reach Kaz, please do give the office, or one of the other vets, a call!

Fluke: Test Don't Guess

It has been a relatively wet and mild year, so it is likely snail habitats, and therefore liver fluke, will be more widespread on farms than in the previous dry summers.

There is potential for the fluke population to build up this autumn into what is the traditional peak fluke season.

Testing remains the best option to cope with the unpredictability of fluke risk on an individual farm, avoiding treatments that are unnecessary or too early, while also making sure animals are treated in time to minimise any production losses.

Electric Fencing Gear

We now sell KiwiKit PEL electric fencing gear and solar fencers. Please get in touch for prices.

Scab Testing Tips

Through tupping time, your tups will have contacted every ewe on the farm, and so, can prove very useful for monitoring for scab within your flock.

Blood testing your tup group for scab antibodies 2 weeks after they have come in from the ewes can tell us if they have been exposed to scab and inform us about whether whole flock scab treatments are required.

Due to concerns about both scab mites and gut worms growing resistant to injectable ivermectins, as well as the environmental effects of ivermectin products, it is important that we use these products only when necessary and we would encourage blood testing to determine if treatment is required.

Borrow Our Scales for Weaning Weights

Weaning weights, as a percentage of cow weight, can be used in suckler herds to quantify how well the cows are rearing beef.

A weaning percentage of 40% should be a minimum target. If weaning percentage is below this, consider:

- Look at individuals producing below average and consider why– is it age, breed, or bull?
- Can fertility be improved? Target is weaning 95 calves for every 100 cows put to the bull, with more than 65% calving in the first 6 weeks.
- Are the calves suffering from a worm burden or other disease challenge?
- Look at above-average cows and use this as part of your selection criteria for breeding replacements, while balancing other traits such as mature cow size.

Preparing for a Smoother Winter

Housed Calves

- Ensure **pneumonia vaccines** have been given in plenty of time before housing.
- Consider **lower stress weaning options** such as fence line weaning or quiet wean nose flaps, allowing continued physical contact between newly weaned calves and their dams. Reducing stress is key as stress reduces an animal's resistance to disease.
- Ensure calves have been introduced to silage preweaning. A change in nutrition is a major stressor as it reduces feed intake and limits the energy available to the animal.
- **Plan protein provision** for weaned calves. Silage analysis is important for being able to plan how to meet their requirements and avoiding a post weaning check in growth.
- Ensure housing is managed to reduce stress and risk of disease, with **dry, fresh bedding and good ventilation without draughts**.

Housed Cows

- Timely PDing to minimise the cost of an empty cow. With costs increasing across the board and poor weather conditions likely to make straw harder to come by, it is important to ensure you are not carrying any passengers through housing.
- Consider the timing of your Johne's disease testing if you have a TB test due this winter; the TB skin test can interfere in Johne's test results for 3 months.
- Identify any lame cows and get them seen to before they are too far in-calf to be turned safely.

Do you know what your cows and sheep are eating?

Annual forage sampling is essential as silage quality varies from year to year, depending on a number of factors including grass quality and weather.

Silage quality dictates what additional supplementation is required in the ration for different stock classes. For example, when formulating a ration for a weaned calf, poor quality silage would need to be supplemented with 4kg of concentrate to provide nutrition equivalent to a good quality silage.

Silage sampling is also essential for calculating the volume of feeding within the pit or bales, and this can be used to budget feed for the winter ahead.

At the practice, we can organise sample collection, testing and, importantly, assist you in utilising this information to the best effect. The silage spear has been sharpened and is ready to go, so please get in touch for more information or to arrange sampling. **For those eligible, the cost of ration planning could be covered by a resilience fund visit.**



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