

October 2024

NEWSLETTER



Alwinton Show

SATURDAY 12TH OCTOBER 2024

We are looking forward to seeing everyone, please pop by our stand for a drink, slice of cake and a catch up!

Pneumonia Vaccine Planning

With housing not too far away, it is important to begin planning the timing of your pneumonia vaccinations, especially if you use injectable vaccines.

Pneumonia causes significant financial losses as a result of mortality, labour and treatment costs. However, the greatest cost often goes unseen; weight loss and reduced weight gains leading to longer time to finish and therefore greater cost of production.

Improving air quality, limiting stress and maximising health are important alongside vaccination in pneumonia control.

At risk animals should be vaccinated based on farm history of disease and ease of handling prior to housing. Your vaccine protocol should be laid out in your health plan.

Intranasal pneumonia vaccines only require a single dose and provide the fastest protection. For example, Bovalto Intranasal provides full protection 10 days after vaccination, and protection typically lasts for 3 months.

Injectable pneumonia vaccines require more planning, as the first dose should be administered several weeks before planned housing. For example, Bovalto Respi 3 requires 2 doses, given 3 weeks apart, and full protection takes 3 weeks to develop after the second dose of vaccine. Protection last from this injectable vaccine lasts for 6 months.

Please get in touch to discuss pneumonia vaccination further.

Earlier Pregnancy Scanning

There are many benefits to early pregnancy scanning beef cows. It can be used as a tool to improve margins and cut carbon.

Early scanning allows identification of empty cows, avoiding wintering costs for non-productive animals. Carrying empty cows into housing not only increases costs directly, but also increases stocking density and disease risks at the worst time of year.

Empty cows can be managed separately and sold out of the system when most beneficial to the business.

Early scanning also allows for detection of twins, something that is more difficult to do as pregnancy progresses.

Introducing Silage to Calves

Stress reduces an animal's resistance to disease, and a change in nutrition is a major stressor as it reduces feed intake and limits the energy available to the animal.

Housing is an abrupt change from grazing grass to silage:

- Grass has a neutral pH of around 7, whereas silage has an acidic pH of around 4.
- The smell of silage is also a massive change from grass for youngstock.

To reduce stress when calves are housed, and in many cases weaned, starting silage feeding in the field for at least 1 week before housing can be beneficial:

- Allows calves time to learn to eat silage after watching their mothers.
- Allows their rumens time to adjust to a completely different, more acidic feed.

Feeding the Ewe Post-Tupping

Correct nutrition during early pregnancy is essential for embryo implantation and placenta development. Any change in the quantity or quality of feed in the first month of pregnancy can affect the ewes hormone balance and metabolic profile.

Ewes should therefore be kept on sufficient grazing for at least the first month of pregnancy. If 'average' autumn grass provides 10MJ of ME per kilo of dry matter, a 60kg ewe would require 0.72 kg of dry matter a day and an 80kg ewe would require 0.96kg of dry matter a day.

From 30-90d of pregnancy, placental and foetal growth occurs. It is important to maintain the ewes body condition during this period. Winter grazing should be sufficient to meet the ewes requirements. If dry forages such as hay are used, ewes may need to be supplemented with an additional source of energy and protein.

Docility Scoring Heifers at Weaning

With poor temperament an issue for both health and safety on farm, and for production (flighty animals have slower growth rates due to reduced feed intakes and have poorer conception rates due to the impact of stress hormones on reproduction), it is an important consideration when breeding replacements for your herd.

Docility scoring is used by the Aberdeen Angus society in animals aged 60-400 days to calculate docility EBVs, but the same scoring can be applied to any breed of cattle as an assessment of temperament. Weaning or housing can provide an opportunity to docility score heifer calves that may be retained for breeding.

Animals can be scored for temperament using either a yard or crush test:

- Yard Test: calves are individually put into a small square yard and the handler attempts to hold the animal in one corner for ~30 seconds.
- Crush Test: calves are put up a race and individually held in the crush for ~30 seconds.

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
1– DOCILE	Mild disposition, gentle and easily handled, stands and moves slowly during handling, undisturbed, settled, somewhat dull, exits crush calmly.
2– RESTLESS	Quieter than average but slightly restless, may be stubborn during handling, may try to back out of crush, some flicking of tail, exits crush promptly.
3– NERVOUS	Manageable but nervous and impatient, a moderate amount of struggling, movement and tail flicking, exits crush briskly.
4– FLIGHTY	Jumpy and out of control, quivers and struggles violently, may bellow and froth at mouth, continuous tail flicking, defecates and urinates during handling, frantically runs the fence line and may jump when penned individually, exhibits long flight distance and exits crush wildly.
5– AGGRESSIVE	May be similar to score 4 but with added aggressive behaviour, fearful, extreme agitation, continuous movement which may include jumping and bellowing while in crush, exits crush frantically and may exhibit attack behaviour when handled alone.

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