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We do also have the ability to abandon heat detection in favour of drug regimes which demand fixed-time AI. Our current knowledge, ultrasound ovarian examination and drug armoury allows a routine of drug therapy to achieve a predictable fertile oestrus for fixed time AI. However, whilst this method is reliable for first serves post-calving, heat detection measures must be used to spot returns to service or too much time will be lost in cows reaching a negative pregnancy check. Instead of manipulating the cows' hormone cycle to meet our needs, the future is likely to be a continual in-line milk progesterone analysis which will give us the best heat detection system. Herds have already achieved excellent fertility performance by using daily milk progesterone analysis alone, and we await automation of the technique.

Is there a cost-benefit to investing to improve oestrus detection rates? Yes, there certainly is! High individual lactation yields and all year round calving patterns may have diverted our attention away from the importance of annual milk sales per cow which rely heavily on attention to heat detection and conception rate to minimise calving index. Improving heat detection rates will lower the calving index despite a poor herd conception rate. Indeed, concentration on heat detection is imperative where conception rate improvements are unattainable.

Richard Knight

Up Coming Courses:

Dairy Mastering Medicines Course: *Thursday 6th September 1-3.30pm at Kendal Surgery. £35.00* This course is in line with the new Red Tractor standards aiming to increase trainees understanding about different types of medicine used and how these relate to common diseases relevant to their farm. To book your place please call 01539 722692 or 015242 71221.

DIY AI Course: *Tuesday 13th—Friday 16th November 2018 10am—3pm at Kendal Surgery & on farm. £500pp.* Learn how to successfully & safely AI cows, the legislation around DIY AI, flask safety management and safe & correct semen handling techniques. To book your place please call 01539 722692 or 015242 71221.

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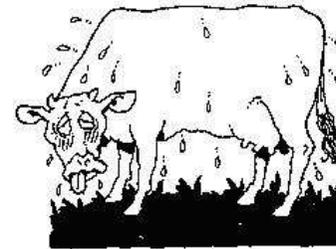
Aug 2018

We trust that you all had a great time at our Farmer's Barbeque the other day. This has become a firm favourite in the calendar now and we hope it will continue for many years to come. A really big thank you to you all for your generous donations, we have raised over £700 for the XL Vets Charity "Send a Cow".

Our newest farm vet, Beth Collins, starts with us in August. She hails from Lincolnshire having just qualified from London Vet School and we're looking forward to her joining the team, as much as she's looking forward to getting stuck into the job!

The most common topic of conversation is still the weather, but the opposite reason as to why we were all talking about it last year! We have seen a multitude of problems caused by the high temperatures, nearly all of them in milking dairy cows. These are many and varied and include FPD (Freezing Point Depression) elevation problems caused possibly by high water consumption in some herds, reduced butterfat caused by low levels of digestible fibre, high Bactoscans, cell counts and mastitis caused by the cows sitting under the same trees in the same fields day-in-day-out to shelter from the sun, displaced abomasum's (twisted stomachs) caused by a dearth of grass to graze on and abscesses and white line disease causing lameness in dried out and cracked hooves.

Heat stress has been discussed to the n'th degree in the media, however it is the effect on fertility that is one of the most long-lasting in a herd when individual cows have recovered from their various ailments. We have seen some re-absorbed calves, or failed pregnancies, during fertility scanning visits, also more cows which are not seen bulling through cystic ovarian disease. The risk of twinning, through the day-to-day energy stress that the cow is under, is also increased. If cows which end up having twins are a particular problem for your herd, then it might be worth flagging this up so that we can take the extra time to check for twins on a rectal ultrasound examination.



Parasitic disease caused by fluke and worms is still about, possibly lessened by the hot weather. If and when we do get a downpour, be vigilant though. A wet spell which is also warm will cause a mass emergence of parasites such as lungworm and gut worms, which could catch folk out just at the time when younger animals are getting sold off-farm.

Richard Knight

Sheep Challenge 2018

Last year it was rain, this year it's drought but how do we deal with the challenges the weather has sent us?

On a positive note, although there may be lots of worm larvae on the pastures they will struggle to get to lambs without some moisture. This has been reflected in the reduced number of worm egg counts being requested and the low counts in the ones we have



done. Watch out for lambs scouring 7-10 days after significant rainfall when we do finally get it. Fluke and snails may be struggling to meet up without some water to help so hopefully this will be an easier autumn and winter on the fluke front. In contrast, Flies are going to be a real nuisance- keep up to date with fly treatment and remember to repeat treatments on time.

The challenge of forage shortages was the subject of a recent QMS monitor

farm meeting and the discussions produced a guidance document available at www.monitorfarms.co.uk - look under latest hub updates

The focus was on trying to reduce mouths to feed and on alternative feed sources.

Suggestions Included—culling less productive ewes as quickly as possible and weaning lambs from 12 weeks of age, getting them onto better pastures and creep feeding them to try and get them finished and away. It will be important that nothing else is holding them back so checking they are not mineral deficient might be more important than ever. Ewes can be weaned onto poorer pastures but be aware of ewe condition and mineral status as getting it right is crucial for next year's lamb crop. Consider supplementary feeding of ewes at pasture if condition is poor and don't forget the rams- the highlight of their year will soon be upon us and they need to be ready for it!

Talking of tupping time, SAC have just reported on the abortion diagnosis they made this spring and again enzootic abortion took the top spot. Remember that if you are vaccinating against abortion it needs to be done 4 weeks pre tupping.

Judith Lee

Oestrus detection, an age old problem.

Is this correct, and if so, why should oestrus (heat) detection in cattle remain a problem? It does remain a problem as industry statistics report a steady decline in heat detection rates from 60% to 35% over the last 20 years (Promar 2007). The heart of the problem is that we are relying on behavioural signs from the cow driven by her internal hormone levels. Many factors, both individual and environmental, influence the strength and expression of oestrus signs, such as:

- High yields reduce levels of circulating hormone, shorter and weaker heat expression
- Bigger herds, less labour and so less observation time
- Feeding, milking, ruminating, scraping-out periods all reduce time for heat expression
- At pasture, out of sight – out of mind!
- All year round calving means fewer cows in the service group for heat behaviour interaction
- Incidence of lameness and confidence in mounting on yard surfaces may reduce activity.
- Overcrowding and inadequate 'loafing' areas.

Heat detection success by watching cows needs a whole-farm team approach with correct training, clear cow identification, adequate lighting and a message board. Computer prediction lists or a simple 3-week calendar can usefully highlight particular cows to observe. Many aids are available to help spot bulling cows from paint to a variety of stick-on markers – you all have your favourites! However, the indication these give can still be missed in a busy day and any pelvic marker should always be accompanied by a stripe of paint on the hock reminding you at milking to look up and check the aid. Diligence and persistence are required from all to achieve good results with these methods.

Many dairy farmers are now moving to heat detection methods which, whilst they still rely on cows' behaviour, can monitor subtle changes over longer periods than is possible by a herdsman. These employ either camera systems to record mounting behaviour or, more commonly, activity meters to identify the extra walking behaviour of cows in oestrus. Their accuracy will be better than that fleeting observation of mounting by a cow you couldn't quite identify. The system employing motion transponders on a leg or the neck are becoming commonplace and will often repay the investment quickly. Thoughtful setting-up of the system can allow flashing lights at the parlour door to identify and 'shed' cows with an increased motion score before the computer is interrogated at the end of milking. The programme can also be modified to identify the cow which has walked very little that day, for example, the sick cow that's been stood under the hedge.

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