

Yearlings have big appetites and are capable of high dry matter intakes. This can be useful to graze on grass in outlying or difficult-to-access fields. More mature grass with higher fibre can help gut development.

Adequate trace element levels are also important and can be a barrier to good fertility. Requirements will vary from farm to farm – the vet team can help identify issues by blood sampling heifers, and can advise with supplementation if required.

#### Health and Parasites while Grazing

A big barrier to the growth of youngstock in both beef and dairy are gut worms and lung worms. It is important to remember that younger animals are more susceptible to parasitic challenge. Ideally the first grazing season for stock should be on 'clean' pasture, but this is difficult to achieve in practice. Lungworm vaccination is a valuable tool along with faecal sampling and targeted worming. The timing of lungworm vaccine is key to get the maximum immunity, and wormers should not be given at the same time as the vaccine as they will reduce vaccine efficacy as the animals need exposure to lungworm to further improve their immunity. Get in touch with the vet team to sort out a treatment protocol for parasites over the grazing period.

*Gus Cassie*

#### Farm Visits and Ordering Drugs During the Coming Weeks

To protect you and our staff, please can you ring all drug orders in to the surgery. This will mean we can ensure we have the products in that you need.

Please wait outside when you come to collect them – just ring to let us know you are waiting and we will bring them out to you.

We have good stocks of all the main farm drugs stored at both sites so there is no need to stockpile. There are some delivery delays with non stocked items such as vaccines due to driver shortages so please order these well in advance of needing them and we would advise ordering your 2nd doses at the same time as the 1st doses for primary courses.

We are currently delivering MOST farm visits, however a vet will ring you to discuss the safest manor in which this can be carried out before arriving on farm. E.g. Where we may normally of worked with you restraining cattle close to us we will now ask the animal is appropriately restrained within a crush or similar to ensure we can observe the 2m social distancing rules wherever possible to protect us and you.

*Thanks in advance,  
The WVG team*

While the hopes that some rain will appear in the near future continue, most folk have at least had a chance to mow something. These are all welcome distractions from the stresses and strains that everyone is feeling in the disruption to normal life- with some much worse off than others. Our condolences go out to families who have lost loved ones and our thoughts are with you as you grieve.

We would like to thank all of our clients for their understanding and thought when it comes to all of us maintaining physical distancing during visits whenever possible. By the very nature of the jobs we are doing, sometimes it is difficult, especially during a complicated cow caesarean for example! That said, we are able to find practical work-arounds for most if not all jobs at the minute. If you're not sure whether a job will be possible or not then please give us a call. Many of the necessary jobs at this time of year, such as castrations and dehorning's, are time sensitive and only become more problematic if delayed.

On a disease front at the moment, we have seen several occurrences of abortion in cows, with a few different suspected causes. The laboratories we use are up and running with a good turnaround on samples, so it often is worthwhile discussing and possibly sampling these cases to ensure that problems are not likely to build and that the appropriate actions, be that vaccines or management changes, are taken.

We would like to welcome Becky Howard to our farm vet team. Becky has just started at the practice after working in Settle for several years, and is another great asset to our practice. You'll all make her feel welcome I'm sure, as it is a strange time to start a new job, with not being able to shake hands and not even being able to go to the pub for a welcome drink!

*Richard Knight*



### Getting Ready for Topping Season

Even though it seems like lambing 2020 has just finished, topping is just around the corner! In order to get your ewes in tip top shape for the next breeding season it may be worth checking the amount of trace minerals in their system before they are topped. This involves taking approximately 6-10 individual blood samples from your breeding ewes and we check the levels of copper, selenium, cobalt and iodine present. All of these minerals are vital for good fertility and if low levels are identified now, there is time to change it to maximize fertility in your flock.

Abortion vaccinations are something else to consider, and these should be administered prior to topping. These vaccines include those that protect against Toxoplasmosis and Enzootic abortion, and are an essential tool to ensure a successful lambing season and maximise the number of lambs produced per ewe.

Another thing to check would be the body condition score (BCS) of your sheep. The correct BCS pre-topping plays a big factor in conception rate, and if you score your ewes now you will have plenty of time should you need to alter it. The ideal score for ewes pre topping is 3.0, and if you aren't quite sure how to score them just give us a shout!

There are a few different things you can do to tighten up your lambing period, and it's time to start thinking of these now.

**Tup effect-** The tups are totally isolated from the ewes until 6 weeks before topping and then introduced. The ewes are then stimulated to ovulate by pheromones produced by the male sheep whether they are entire or vasectomised (teaser tups). This effect results in the ewes ovulating in sync meaning they will conceive and therefore lamb over a shorter period of time making your lambing period tighter.

**Regulin Implants-** These are implants placed at the base of the ewes ear 6-8 weeks before mating. They secrete melatonin which stimulates the ewes to start cycling which can bring your lambing season forward. It can also increase your overall scanning percentage.

If you are planning to buy new breeding tups for this season its worth buying them early so they have plenty of time to settle into the farm, they can be initially isolated and they can adjust to their new diet. It's also really important to check your tups for breeding soundness well in advance before they go out with the sheep. This means checking the three Ts: **T**eeth, **T**oes and **T**esticles. If you would like to book your ram in for an MOT please give the practice a call and we can sort that for you!

*Liz Aubrey*



### Rearing Youngstock at Grass

Good grazing management of youngstock is critical to ensure consistent growth rates – this makes sure that they are at a target size for bulling at 13-15 months, leading to calving at approximately 2 years. Research has shown that heifers calving at 22-24 months have improved fertility, spend a higher proportion of their lives producing milk and have a reduced culling rates compared to heifers calving even at 26 months. Therefore setting the groundwork for heifer growth can have lasting benefits throughout their milking career!

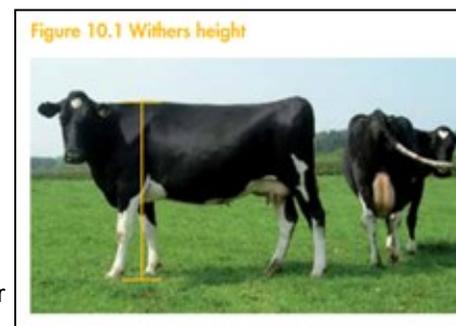
#### Setting Targets

The best way to assess how heifers are growing is to set targets and monitor these.

**Table 2: Heifer Growth Targets**

Age/stage	Proportion of Mature Weight (%)
6 months	30
9 months	40
Mating	55-60
Pre-calving	90
Post-calving	85
Second calving	92

Ideally Holstein Friesians should grow at a rate of 0.7-0.8kg/day to hit breeding targets at the right times, without gaining excessive body condition. This table highlights proportion of bodyweight to hit at these checkpoints.



Two good ways of assessing weight are using weigh bands and withers height measurements. Both are easy to do and can be converted into bodyweights (get in touch for more information on these)

#### Getting Good Growth from Grass

Younger calves should initially be getting high quality grazing, and be moved ahead of cows if in a grazing rotation. For example, spring born calves should be moved through high quality pasture as they are weaned, going into mid-to-late summer. At this stage they should be able to manage tougher grazing conditions, with high growth rates less crucial at this point. Youngstock from turnout to bulling will require supplementary concentrates (approximately 2kg/hd/d) to maintain growth rates if the pasture quality and quantity is not adequate. Monitoring growth rates in the first month after turnout is essential to assessing the need for concentrate supplementation, be critical when looking at heifers after a few weeks at turnout, is there body condition improving are they actually growing?! A bit of extra investment now to ensure they are well grown at bulling will pay dividends in the future.

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