



The Dry Topic ofPractice Ownership

Some of you may be aware of the increasing trend for veterinary practices in the UK to be purchased by venture capitalist firms. City money is invested in veterinary businesses, with the aim of maximising profit for investors. There have been lots of recent acquisitions across the UK, including in the south west, as was witnessed last month in our Somerset area when an adjacent farm animal vet practice was acquired.

This is in marked contrast to the traditional and well tested model of vet practice ownership, where the business is owned and managed by the senior vets in the team, as is the case at Synergy Farm Health. The directors of SFH strongly believe that this structure brings benefits to all parties, most of all our farmer clients and our employees. The identity of the business owners is clear to all. The long standing relationships that we enjoy with our clients, which have in many cases been built up over several generations, are a greatly valued and essential component of a successful farmer-vet relationship. Knowing the bosses, and having access to them, is a vital part of this. We greatly value the opportunity to meet with our clients on a regular basis, and we wish to take this opportunity to reassure you that, in these changing times, this will remain our ethos.

Ed Powell-Jackson



January 2016

- Practice Ownership
- Can you help
- Mozambique Trip
- New Vets
- Ventilating calf sheds
- Pre Turnout Vaccine offer
- News from our Rounds
- Events

Please use 01935 83682 when contacting the practice—this is our priority line.

Please check the number stored in your phone!

Can you help?

RESEARCH TITLE: 'Trees for shelter and other operational benefits in UK livestock farming – an evaluation of economic effects across different regions and systems'

WANTED: Farmers to take part in a research partnership with Harper Adams University and the Woodland Trust

RESEARCH PURPOSE: To identify the economic value of trees to UK livestock systems

Desirable farm characteristics?

- UK livestock farm (sheep and/or beef systems/ mixed farms)
- Upland, Hill or Lowland conditions
- Newly planted or existing (up to 15 years old) trees and woods (including shelter belts) on farm. Also interested in farms that have unmanaged/ unused woodland and how they may look to incorporate these areas with their livestock management.
- Farms need to be happy to discuss and estimate the economic and productivity implications of tree planting

and woodland areas on their farms, through a semi-structured interview format with the research student.

There would be no financial cost implications for the farms involved. For those that take part in the research, the Woodland Trust can offer free advice and support with further tree and hedgerow planting on your farm.

If you are interested in finding out more please contact **Rachel Glover** (Harper Adams Masters of Research student) 10031500@live.harper.ac.uk

Mozambique Trip

In November of last year, I and 2 other vets from the UK disembarked for Mozambique to help with the development of their fledgling dairy industry. I had never previously been anywhere quite like it and so the experience was a huge eye opener. A country of extremes; full of beautiful nature and enthusiastic people, but also scarred by decades of colonisation, civil war and ongoing corruption.

The charity we went to help is donating pedigree Jersey cows from South Africa to the local people in Mozambique, as well as teaching them the skills to manage them. The aim was to create a self sufficient industry to provide employment, income and a source of nutrition. Our role was to teach both the farmers receiving cows as well as the technician, not an easy job when you can't speak Portuguese, Xichangana or languages our translator referred to as 'other'!



A brilliant handmade TMR

Despite the change in surroundings the problems seen were often similar to our own. Nutrition was a huge topic. While it was common for people to know the basics of what to feed, how to feed was a whole other dilemma that needed to be discussed. In a country that has desert like conditions half of the year and then tropical storms the other, sourcing a constant supply of feed could be a challenge. Elephant grass was the main component of most cattle diets. Some though also had access to ground maize and rice, molasses, brewer's grains and basic minerals. Diets were all handmade with some being of a very high standard and

consistency - 18L a day from a forage heavy diet was perhaps the best we saw; no mean feat in their less than ideal conditions.



The correct ingredients but perhaps optimistic presentation

Mastitis was a cause of massive economic losses within the country, with many cows not firing on all 4. Almost all milking was done by hand with all milking routines having good measures of hygiene and cleanliness. A big difficulty though was detecting the mastitis in its early stages, when treatment success would have been higher. Often the first sign detected would be clots and as antibiotics were considered a 'second line' of treatment, everlasting damage had already been done by the time an infection had been cured. As a result the California Milk Test and Swift treatment was being advocated as much as possible. Fertility was generally very good with the majority of cows in good condition getting in calf from first service by AI. AI was done by the local technicians, if technicians weren't available though some villages would have a local Jersey bull. Many of these bulls we saw were still quite young, but were already getting to be a bit of a handful. How long the stick fences were going to hold was a bit of a



worry, especially as no one seemed to know what the plan would be if one escaped. . .



Some problems we saw were specific to the region. Strange and exotic diseases were in abundance many of them being spread by ticks. There were often reports of cattle being moved to new pasture and resulting in the startling site of cows rapidly dropping down dead with swellings, raging temperatures and frothing at the mouth - think redwater but 10 times worse!

Brucella and TB were also rampant, a major problem for both animals and wildlife alike. Many of the people we met had been affected by diseases passed on from their own livestock or from food they had purchased. It made me very conscious of how lucky we are to have such a safe and secure food chain in comparison.



It was all a great adventure and definitely something I would love to repeat. If interested in hearing more about my trip there's a talk to be held on the 12th of January at the Eagle Tavern Inn, Buckland St. Mary - if interested, please do come along!

Ben Barber

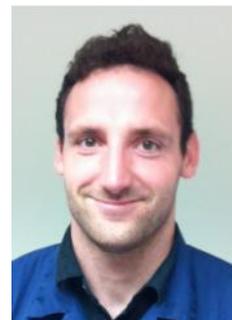


Welcome to our New Vets

Erich Leitgeb has joined us on the North team and brings with him a wealth of veterinary experience from his time working both in his native Austria, Germany as well as in the UK. He is looking forward to meeting you all and has settled with his family in the Taunton area.



Tim Cameron is with us as a locum working primarily with the South Team based in Chard. Tim has joined us from New Zealand where he has been working in a large Farm Animal practice and is experienced with treating dairy and beef cattle, sheep, deer and goats. Tim has also taken post graduate study in Ruminant Nutrition. We welcome Tim to the UK and he is looking forward to meeting you all.



Ventilating Calf Sheds—Are fans the answer?

Traditionally, passive ventilation (where heat given off by the stock drives the air changes) has been relied on for replacing stale air in calf housing. This can be very effective if there are sufficient holes in the sides of the building and the roof, and enough heat given off by the stock to create a decent “stack effect”.

The probability that these requirements will be met in large calf sheds is very low. This is because small calves just don’t give off the heat required to drive warm air out of the roof and draw fresh air in through holes in the walls.



Sometimes the only effective ventilation of a calf building comes when there is a significant breeze from the outside e.g. on a windy day. In fact, people often comment

that a shed is well ventilated because it gets a nice breeze going through. This may well be true, but can mean that on a still day there are insufficient air changes and on a windy day there are drafts which can chill small calves.

Active ventilation systems involving fans can overcome these problems by creating consistent air flow in a building

without creating strong drafts.

When considering installing fan-based ventilation systems into any livestock building, it is important to get professional advice to make sure that you are investing in a system of appropriate power and location to alleviate your problem. A fan that is sited incorrectly may just re-circulate stale air and be of little benefit. A fan that is too weak will not replace stale air quickly enough. A fan that is too powerful may not distribute air evenly and has the potential to chill calves.

Hutches can provide a fantastic environment for calves when sited correctly and they are disinfected between animals. However, on many large dairies in the USA there has been a move away from housing calves in hutches as they are less time-efficient and can create an unpleasant environment for stockpeople to work in (especially when it’s cold and wet!).

The move to individual pens within larger air spaces has meant that producers have turned to fan and duct systems (where air is blown into a shed and dispersed by means of a cylindrical duct with holes at regular intervals) to drive the ventilation.

The University of Wisconsin has developed a set of guidelines to ensure that appropriately sized fans and ducts



are purchased based on the shed’s dimensions. These ensure that the total volume of air in the shed is changed 4-6 times every hour and that air is spread evenly over the stock at a speed that will not chill them.

This method of ventilation has been very successful in reducing the incidence of respiratory disease in calves.

We are now able to design ventilation systems for calf housing based on the Wisconsin guidelines, and can recommend suppliers of fans and ducts to meet these recommendations.

If you have a calf shed that could benefit from an active ventilation system, please call the practice so we can visit to take measurements and calculate the most appropriate fan and duct combination.



Tom Shardlow

Plan your Pre-Turnout Vaccinations

Turnout time will soon be upon us, so now is the time to start planning prevention of a few problems including Leptospirosis and Lungworm. We are pleased to be able to offer a 5% discount on combined purchases of Leptavoid H and Bovilis BVD.

	Price per dose	Combi Price per dose
Leptavoid H (25 dose pack)	1.80	1.71
Bovilis BVD	2.00	1.90

News from our Rounds

Clare Eames



Pneumonia has been a recurring theme over the last month.

Unfortunately the weather doesn't look as though it is going to help us out with a nice cold dry spell in the imminent future, so as the last of the beef animals start to be housed we are likely to keep seeing pneumonia cases. With the price of treatment of calves being relative to their weight, now may be a good time for the spring calving beef herds wishing to house their weaned calves, to look into pneumonia vaccines. It is not too late to use some of the intranasal vaccines such as Rispoval Intranasal PI3 + RSV which provides immunity against RSV within 5 days of administration and for PI3 within 10 days and so is still an option for those housing in January. Please make contact with us if you would like any further information on pneumonia treatment or vaccines.

Also keep an eye on lameness in those animals that are still outside as the wet underfoot conditions are a good start for foul in cattle and scald in sheep. Most of the animals that I have seen are still doing surprisingly well outside despite the conditions but the ground is starting to struggle even in the dryer places. Brief discussions on duck and fish farming have been taking place at home, but as we live on a hill we may have to leave that to others to trial initially. Best wishes to you all for 2016.

Jon Reader



As I write this we seem to be having one of the few frosts of the winter so far! Daffodils have been blooming in Yeovil since early December and there is still grass in the fields – sadly no one can utilise it, although we saw many people successfully adding cut grass to Total Mixed Rations into late November.

We have had several farms in the area suffering with the problems of winter dysentery. This is a very frustrating problem for these farms especially as it will knock the herd for six when things have been going along so nicely. It is caused by corona virus so sadly, as with a human winter cold, there is very little we can do to treat affected cows. However it is important that it is not exacerbated by or used as an excuse for inappropriate feeding. Acidosis can cause very similar signs and with forage quality being good in most cases we have also seen cows with unstable ruminal fermentation.

The other disease we see that can cause this scouring is Salmonella, although this tends to be seen in individual animals around calving and we have seen this in one well run closed herd with no apparent history of where it has come from. Sadly birds and other wildlife are often the culprits so the onset of 'starling season' can also cause issues.

I have been involved with several lameness discussions on farms over the autumn, with clients really beginning to get to grips with some lameness issues. Often these have been fairly straight forward solutions especially centred around 'Early, Effective' treatment. The newly formed Cattle Lameness Academy held a successful footbathing workshop in December (Thanks to Malcolm and James W) and we have already seen clients making effective and cheap modifications to enhance dermatitis control. Watch this space for other upcoming workshops and lameness courses in the future.

Mark Burnell



I suppose at least we haven't had our houses flooded but still the rain hasn't been much fun; I certainly feel for any of you who are having to trudge around feeding stock outside as well as those (and our vets) doing jobs like TB testing in the elements.

The back end of last year was full of the usual things, as ever often related to calving and/or the transition in to the milking herd. Understandably all producers are looking carefully at their costs but please do be careful not to delay making a correct diagnosis so that the correct treatment can be instigated and (more) importantly so that preventive measures can be put in place. Feed costs are the biggest variable cost if you are a milk producer, and reducing concentrates is tempting (and maybe appropriate), but for example this could increase the risk of ketosis; you may not see this (subclinical) but it can have major implications, so it may be prudent to get a 'feel' for how 'safe' your early lactation cows are and this can now easily be done with a milk dip stick test.

Peter Siviter is currently holding a number of 'calving courses' around the practice and Tom Shardlow and Esme Moffett are running workshops on recognising sick calves early. We have also been carrying out a study on calf pneumonia vaccination and gathering more useful growth data. I like the underlying theme here which is perhaps very pertinent at the present time i.e. thinking about the future. I believe milk prices will recover and replacements will be more valuable than ever; in the meantime keeping your herd turning over so that you do not accumulate expensive 'problem' cows has got to be a good thing.

On the sheep front; sheep scab and dog worrying have been issues and it won't be long before the early lambers get going – let's hope the rain stops for them!

EVENTS

Lameness First Aid Workshop—Wed 20th Jan
1 Day Grinder Course—Thurs 4th Feb



4 Day Foot Trimming
22nd—25th February

Please visit www.cattl lamenessacademy.co.uk for more information or call Rhi on 07792 726338/
info@cattl lamenessacademy.com to book your place

DIY AI - Wednesday 13th January (3 Day Course) with Andre Northey

Practical Calving Workshop—Comprehensive guide to Calving the Cow with Pete Siviter
Wednesday 20th January—at Evershot

Smallholder—Worm Egg Counting Course with Emily Gascoigne
Tuesday 16th February or Thursday 18th February—at Evershot

Practical Lambing with Emily Gascoigne
Wednesday 17th February—at Evershot

For further information or to book your place on any of these events please contact 01935 83682
or email courses@synergyfarmhealth.com

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