



Beef Discussion Group and Beef Performance Survey

We recently launched a beef producers' discussion group with our first meeting held courtesy of the Herringston Estate, looking at heifer performance in the suckler herd.

There was a great turnout to the meeting with lots of interactive discussion and food for thought. The use of AI and weaning strategies were hot topics. Producers discussed the relative techniques of weaning i.e. New Zealand style fence separation techniques, Easy Wean Nose Rings or blunt weaning and separation. Although the techniques varied, the general consensus was that maintaining growth rates through this window and minimising stunting was essential for reducing pneumonia at housing and therefore maintaining ongoing performance.

Our sponsors, Zoetis, spoke about a new vaccine strategy, 'SureCalf' aimed at autumn weaned calves hitting the autumn sales. The main aim is pneumonia reduction at sale, but has also been found to add premiums to these calves at auction. If anyone would like more information, speak to your routine vet about 'Surecalf'.

We also launched a new benchmarking

project at the discussion group which is open to all commercial herds in the practice. Following on from the success of the lamb loss survey we have decided to run the same project targeting suckler herds. The survey is simple to complete (and would just need your trusty calving book) and will be used to **anonymously** benchmark our herds. The sheep flocks have found this incredibly useful and we have begun to see improvements in their performance.

The survey is quick and easy; it's necessary information for your farm assurance health plan and will enable benchmarking. Should you wish to be involved in the survey, please let the front office know on 01935 83682.

As an extra 'carrot' any herd completing the form will enter a prize draw where one herd will **WIN** a farm specific Synergy Herd Health plan.



Completed surveys are requested to be forwarded to Ben Barber at the

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practice by **1st November 2016** and will be followed up with farmer meetings, so you can see how you performed relative to other commercial units.

Thank you to all who made it and for those who tried to make it, but were halted by the inevitable flurry of calvings that prevented attendance. We hope to hold two meetings a year on different farms. The focus of the meetings will be split so that the spring meeting focuses on the suckler herd, but the autumn meeting will be applicable to all types of beef unit. Watch this space for further information and any feedback on the format or initial meeting would be very welcome!

Emily Gascoigne



MIA: Missing in Action "Reward"

Emily has lost her trusty stethoscope! A maroon Littmanns stethoscope engraved with Emily C Gascoigne (prizes for guessing the 'C') has been left on a premises in the South West. Said stethoscope was probably last seen on a bale, on a crush or anywhere near a sheep. Said stethoscope is of sentimental value and was used when careless owner heard her first LDA, her first wire in a cow and her first case of laryngeal chondritis in a ram. Owner offers a reward of a leg of Hebridean lamb for anyone with information leading to the successful recovery of said stethoscope.

Point to Points

Synergy Farm Health were pleased to sponsor the recent Cotley, Seavington and Cattistock Hunt Point to Points and lend our support to these long standing fixtures in the local rural calendar. It was good to see a large number of clients off farm! Particular congratulations to Synergy clients Paul and Sally Godfrey of Niddens Farm, Lopen, whose son Ben made the national press at the Seavington meeting by riding his last pony race and winning his debut point-to-point race on the same day, the first time this has been achieved. Well done Ben!

Ed Powell-Jackson



Calving Patterns— Conceiving patterns

How do you measure your herd's fertility?

There is no managing without measuring. So how do we measure fertility of our herds? Fertility is an important issue in Herd Health Planning. Making a plan means to know where you are and to have an idea of where you're going. What parameter tells us where we are? Is it calving interval, calving index, open days, calving to conception, service interval, cows eligible for service served, cows eligible for service conceived, service intervals 18 -24 days, calving to first service interval, conception rate, submission rate, pregnancy rate, pregnancy efficiency, cows pregnant within 100 DIM? Did I forget an important parameter? Do we need all of them, are some more or less important, how do we weight the importance of all these parameters?

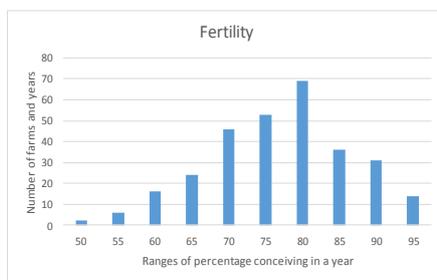
Let's use the 'KIS principle': keep it simple. How do we decide if a herd is fertile? Do you agree with the statement that a herd is fertile if a high percentage of cows are calving every year? Can we agree, that a herd is fertile if a high percentage of cows are conceiving (a condition of calving) every year?

To be able to compare the amounts of conceiving cows between different herds and herd sizes, we look at the number of cows conceiving per one hundred cows in the herd; the percentage is put in to relation. This means, if a farmer has 100 cows and 80 are conceiving within a year his fertility rate is 80%.

What value can a dairy herd reach?

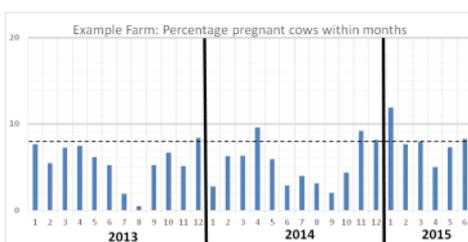
Let's have a look at the graph of annual conception percentages of 60 synergy dairy farms over 5 years (this totals 300 results):

The values in the x-axis describe the ranges: 80 means >75 % and <=80 %.



We can see that our best dairy farms are achieving over 80%.

We are also interested to review fertility in shorter periods, so we can put fertility events in relation to other events. Please see below the number of cows conceiving (percentage of herd) for each month of the year.



For 80% of cows to conceive within a year we need 6.7% conceiving within a month.

Block calving herds that breed within 3 months need 27% conception each month.

What are the conditions of getting a cow pregnant? The first is the cow must be inseminated (artificial or natural). The other factor is the conception. If we have a look at these factors over different time periods we can calculate the **submission rate**; percentage of cows inseminated and the **conception rate**; percentage of cows inseminated that actually conceive. The conception rate has dropped in dairy herds over the last few decades from an average of 70% to 35%. This means you need nearly 3 inseminations for one pregnancy. For 80 conceiving cows out of one hundred cows you need about 240 services to make them pregnant!

It is useful to point out that the served cows that make up the submission rate are usually put in relation to the 'cows eligible to conceive'. Eligible cows are those that are out of their voluntary wait period and not served or pregnant. A cow being eligible for 21 days in a period (e.g. one month) counts as one eligible cow within the concerning period.

The product of submission rate and conception rate is called the pregnancy rate. This is the basic equation of fertility:

$$\text{submission rate} \times \text{conception rate} = \text{pregnancy rate}$$

This tells us how many cows are being served and how many cows out of those served got pregnant, within a certain period.

Below is a summary of fertility parameters which can give you an overview of herd performance:

Conception rate: Cows conceiving out of served cows within a certain period. (Average 35%, ideal 40%)

Submission rate: Cows served out of eligible cows within a certain period. (Average 50%, ideal 70%).

Pregnancy rate: cows conceived out of *eligible cows* within a certain period. (Average 15%, ideal 20 %).

Pregnancy rate (whole herd): cows conceived out of *whole herd* within a period (ideal over 80% a year).

Different software packages may calculate parameters in different ways. There is a possibility to calculate the fertility rates exactly as I have described from raw (NMR) data. If you are interested, please let me know.

MEASURING IS THE FIRST STEP OF IMPROVING.

Erich Leitgeb



Marathon Success

As many of you will be aware, I ran the London Marathon on Sunday 24th April and managed to achieve a new PB of 3hr 20min 50 secs. I am extremely pleased with my new time and had a brilliant race. For those of you who have never witnessed it, the crowds of support along

the route are second to none and I was lucky to have lots of family and friends giving me personal support along the way. A great day was had by all. I have also managed to raise over £1500 for the Farming Community Network – massively exceeding my original target of £500. I would therefore like to take this

opportunity to thank all of you who have generously sponsored me and for your well wishes before and after the race, it is massively appreciated and I feel very lucky to have such support. Thank you.

Esme Moffett



Interesting Case

A few cases of note this Spring; in the last 6 weeks we have had three confirmed cases of Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF) on 3 different farms, diagnosed by three different vets. These have all been verified by lab samples and have all been on the West of the practice. This sporadic disease affects individual cattle, is usually



fatal for the unfortunate cow, and is caused by a sheep herpes virus which does not cause any disease in sheep. Not a lot is known regarding how the cattle pick the virus up, but there is usually a history of contact with either deer or sheep around lambing. (All mammals' natural immunity can drop in late pregnancy and soon after giving birth, and this probably leads to the virus being spread by sheep).

All three of the cases have presented with very high

temperatures, lack of appetite, painful red eyes which develop a blueish colour across the cornea and likely blindness. There is likely also pus coming from the eyes and nose. All of the three animals either died or were put down.



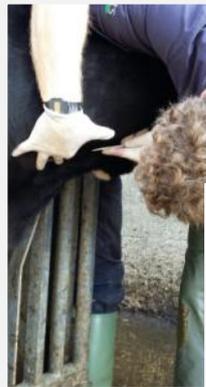
Other possible diagnoses would be severe BVD, severe IBR or listeria. The treatments for these differ, so please phone us.

Another phone call I had recently was a cow bleeding severely from her uterus 7 days post calving. The cow had calved herself, and had been milking well until the night before. As she urinated, clots of blood were seen coming from her vulva. On clinical exam her temperature was low, her uterus was full of blood (as if it was still full

with a calf), and the cow was wobbly on her feet. The decision was made to try and save her; firstly we packed her uterus with no less than 8 towels, (It was reported the farmer couldn't have a bath that night), and secondly we carried out a blood transfusion. An old barren cow was selected and 5 litres of blood were taken from her and put into the

patient. By the next day her colour had improved, she was eating well, and her temperature was normal. 5 days later we were able to take the towels out, and the cow has since done well. I am uncertain however, whether the towels have made it back into the household's circulation.

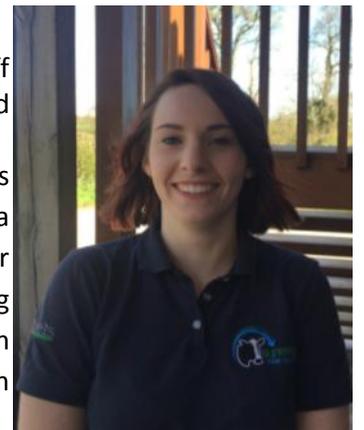
Alasdair Moffett



Introducing our two Annas !

You could be forgiven for thinking that all the Evershot staff are called 'Anna' as we now have an Anna in reception and an Anna in dispensary !

Anna Brown (Left) joined the practice in September and is already an invaluable member of our reception team. Anna lives on a farm in Hinton St George and is an active member of Ilminster YFC. Anna Walters (right) is from a farming family near Tintinhull and joined our dispensary team in January. She is about to start training as an Animal Health Advisor with us.



News from our Rounds

Rachel Hayton



Our house has become a hotbed of study as GCSEs approach (or at least that's what we keep being told!) I have always associated exam season with a heat wave, but as I write that seems a long way off; we have just managed snow, sleet, hail and thunder all in the space of a couple of hours. Let's hope May brings some warmer weather and serious grass growth.

The LDA season is starting to settle down and we are now in the swing of bull fertility testing and goat disbudding, my personal favourite. Once a fortnight I also teach our final year students about mastitis and take them onto a farm for a potted investigation. This is a potential route to some free preventive veterinary advice, if you would like to reduce your mastitis but are trying to keep the bills down. So if you think you might be interested, have good records and a high tolerance level for those who are still learning then get in touch!

Esme Moffett



As Alastair Hayton said last month; displaced abomasum season seems to be upon us. I think I have done more DA ops in the last few weeks than I have in the last 6 months! No one knows why we see the peak, but avoiding over fat dry cows and ensuring good intakes post calving are good ways to try and avoid these issues.

It's also been the month for tricky calvings! I have had to do a couple of foetotomies (where you cut the dead calf up inside); one took six cuts to get out! And on my last weekend on call I did 4 calvings in 24 hours – it wasn't the restful post-marathon weekend I had in mind. They mostly seem to be calves getting in silly positions rather than oversized, so not much anyone can do about it – but finding the problem early will bring the best success for both cow and calf.

I heard last night that we're heading for a heat wave – that will make short wearing more bearable and hopefully some grass will soon be ready to cut and maize can go in too.

Tom Clarke



The month started off traumatically when a ding dong during a heifer caesarean left me with a bit of a "trout pout", but on the bright side there is now a calf named "Big Tom" running around the hills of mid Dorset!

The sun is finally out, so hopefully the grass will eventually move upwards and silage madness can begin. Some first cut has already been made near the coast and a fair bit of maize under plastic is already drilled.

The last month has seen a number of new TB breakdowns which has unfortunately caused real difficulties for some farming operations. Biosecurity and TB was the focus of our recent talk at the Kings Arms, Stoborough which highlighted the importance of cattle movements as well as minimising badger-cow and badger-feed interactions in the fight against TB.

The start of the hatching season for game birds is now under way and I know a number of you are busy incubating batches now, so fingers crossed for a good year.

Crewkerne Farmers' Skittle League

The annual dinner and presentation night for the Crewkerne Farmers' Skittle League was held at the Shrubbery Hotel, Ilminster on 14th April. The league, which is sponsored by Synergy and run by Regional Director Ed Powell-Jackson, celebrates its 70th anniversary this season. A record 188 friends and members of the league enjoyed the traditional menu (unchanged in over 30 years I am told), with after dinner entertainment provided by our very own Hunter Studley, as well as a professional Cornish comedian. The league was won by Paul Frampton's team, whilst Nick Wakely's were popular runners up. The charity draw raised over £500 which will be split between the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance and the Farming Community Network. Thank you to all captains and players for their continued support.



NSA South Sheep 7th June 2016

Tisbury, Salisbury
Emily looks forward to seeing you there!

EVENTS

Visit our new website for further details on these events
www.synergyfarmhealth.com

Sheep Lameness Meetings

Tues 10th May 7.30pm - The Royal Oak, Bere Regis
OR Mon 23rd May 7.30pm—Eagle Tavern, Chard

Safe Use of Veterinary Medicines

Weds 11th May
at Evershot

Organic Sheep Discussion Group

Weds 25th May 2-4pm
at Rempstone Farm, Wareham

Complete with
Organic Cheeseburger!

Mastitis Control Workshop

Basic skills for milkers and farm workers
(including foreign workers)

Mon 23rd May
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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