



## Swollen Faces

A fairly common call out for a vet is to examine a cow with a swollen face, there are a few different causes and I will touch on a few. Colleagues have mentioned they have seen a few cases of lumpy jaw lately. Lumpy jaw is a bacterial infection which is very difficult to treat and often leads to early culling or wasting of an animal. The bacteria (*Actinomyces bovis*) lives normally within the mouth and gains access to the facial bones through trauma within the mouth or tooth roots. The bacterium continues to form abscesses within the bones, which is difficult for the antibiotics to penetrate making it hard to treat this condition. One such case I saw was a cow who had a very overgrown tooth with a root abscess. The swelling in the jaw settled after the tooth came out and a long course of antibiotics,



but this was likely more to luck than the treatment. Another option, but rarely attempted, is surgery – to drain the infection from within the bone.

Another condition which occurs in a similar way but due to a different bacteria (*Actinobacillus lignieresii*) is wooden tongue. This is an infection of the softer tissues of the mouth and gains access through small traumas to the cavity such as cuts from fibrous straw or thistles. There is a ridge at the back of a cow's tongue which is a common location for such penetration. In most cases the chewing may be abnormal and drooling may be observed. Confirmation is usually based on the stiffness of the tongue. If treated with antibiotics early this condition can be resolved.

A bacterial condition seen in calves is Calf Diphtheria (*Fusobacterium necrophorum*) which yet again is another normal inhabitant of the mouth. Severe cases can be caused by stomach tube/bolusing injuries, but more commonly we see solid lumps within the cheeks. These are believed to be commonly associated with fibrous straw or

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tooth abrasions. I have often found a very small amount of pus compared to the size of the lesion and have now taken to monitoring the lumps. Some will respond to antibiotics and some will rupture and drain naturally. If these are a frequent occurrence, attention may need to be focused on hygiene or other fibre being made available.



If the incidence of these conditions is high on your farm it would be good to provide more palatable feed and reduce grazing rough pastures. With calves; clean and disinfect equipment to minimise spread of infections.



**Gareth Foden**

## Social Grouping - A tool for keeping heifers happy?

With the summer holidays over for many kids, the stress of starting a new school is as good an analogy as any for what heifers have to face joining the milking herd. Most of us are well aware of the turmoil that ensues when groups of cows are mixed and probably know that heifers receive more than their fair share of unwanted attention. Like the newbies off the school bus, heifers are the smallest in the herd and are quick to be pushed to the bottom of the pack as hierarchies are established. As if being the newest in the herd wasn't enough, our poor heifers are thrown into the deep end as first time fresh cows; exhausted from calving, low on energy and all whilst adjusting to the milking routine. They are in no fit state to defend themselves.



The underlying issue around calving for all cows is a suppression of appetite. Eating is the most important job for any cow and feed intake is a key driver of milk production. She will spend up to five hours per day eating, followed by 10 hours ruminating to digest all that feed, leaving little time for other activities such as milking and resting and even less time if being shoved around. Furthermore a drop in feed intake is a known risk factor for all peri-parturient disease including DAs, ketosis and metritis therefore it's vital that

it's kept in check. However we tend to make matters worse as we change diet and switch groups, with moving cows alone shown to account for a 2.5-5% reduction in yield lasting between 5-15 days post movement

### *But what can we do to help?*

One way is to create a heifer only group. Research has shown that first lactation heifers kept separate from older cows, spent between 10-15% longer eating, with an increased feed intake of 17-18%. They made more visits to the feed face, spent longer lying and subsequently saw an increase in yield of 4-16%.

Keeping group changes to a minimum can help keep all cows happy. However it's impractical to eliminate group changes completely as grouping by yield and pregnancy allows us to tailor nutritional requirements to production, minimising waste and maximising efficiency. But we can take steps to reduce the impact of changes.

For example:

- ◆ House sequential groups adjacent to one another (e.g. dry cows near fresh cows) to allow some contact prior to movement
- ◆ Introduce new cattle in small subgroups. Studies show cattle moved in groups of 8 or more experienced fewer negative social interactions than those moved in smaller groups.
- ◆ Move cows following afternoon or early evening milking. One study showed moving cows in the night was

beneficial (however it only followed a small number of cows).

- ◆ Ensure housing has plenty of space especially in cubicle sheds, so that subordinate cows can avoid confrontation.
- ◆ Most importantly reduce competition for resources, especially feed, water and lying space. A minimum of 5% extra cubicles should be available and there should be enough feed space for the entire group to feed together, with additional spaces so cows can avoid feeding next to dominant cows.

Finally it's important to consider when and whether a group change is necessary, especially around calving. A study by Wisconsin University found an increased risk of ketosis and DAs when cows were moved 3-7 days pre-calving. To overcome this the researchers adopted a 'just in time' approach to calving with movement to a calving pen at the start of second stage labour (when strong contractions start and the allanto-chorion (water bag) ruptures). If using this approach close observation is essential and it's important not to move cows too early as this is associated with an increased risk of dystocia.

By ensuring plentiful feed space and comfortable beds, especially around the transition period, and avoiding regrouping in the last 7 days pre-calving you can provide the best start to lactation for your girls.



Josh Swain

## Dynamic Parlour Testing Service

All of you will be undertaking a static test on your parlour at least once a year. This is a vital job, undertaken between milkings, as it will pick up mechanical faults in the system and perishable parts will be replaced. This is akin to a service or MOT on a car.

Another type of assessment called a “dynamic” test can be undertaken on the milking machine whilst the cows are actually being milked to assess how the machine is actually performing and interacting with the cows. It measures some of the same parameters as a static test, such as vacuum, but under milking conditions. Using the car analogy it would be more like going for a test drive with a mechanic where different things will be picked up than during a simple MOT.

As some of you may be aware, certain milk buyers are now requesting a dynamic parlour test to be carried out once a year in addition to the static test.



We are now offering a Dynamic Parlour Testing service, which will be carried out by Sarah Wilton our Dairy Hygiene Specialist, using the latest

technology in testing equipment and the results assessed in conjunction with vets Rachel Hayton and Tom Clarke who have a special interest in mastitis.

As well as the actual dynamic machine test a number of other important interactions in the parlour are recorded during a milking observation, including teat end scoring, assessment of pre and post dipping/spraying, cluster alignment and the work flow of the milking routine. There are several key areas a dynamic test can evaluate that a static test cannot measure:

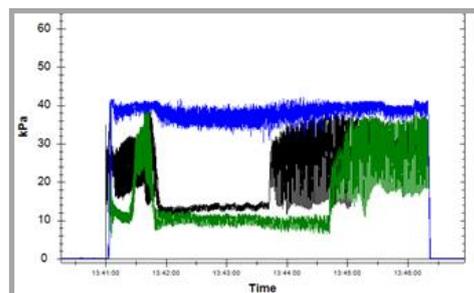
**Pre milking teat preparation** – poor udder stimulation and delayed milk let down are highlighted by vacuum readings from different points in the cluster.

**Over milking** – commonly a cause of teat end damage and caused by a number of reasons including incorrect ACR takeoff settings.

**Liner slippage** – picked up on read outs from the testing equipment and can point to cluster alignment, vacuum or liner design issues.

**The vacuum applied at the level of the teat end** – assesses if vacuum is set too high/low

Figure 1: Dynamic test read out for a single cow milking; demonstrating poor milk let down as well as over milking.



If you are having mastitis or high SCC issues, a dynamic assessment can help detect problems in the parlour and milking routine and should be undertaken as part of a mastitis control plan. A report will be produced from the visit and Sarah and one of the mastitis advisors will come back and discuss the points highlighted from the visit. They will make practical suggestions to help reduce the risk of mastitis from the parlour. If you are interested in more information please phone Sarah Wilton on: 07795 574088.



Rachel Hayton  
Tom Clarke



## Competition Winners



**Honiton Show - Bewley Down**  
Won by Liz Tucker



**Melplash Show — won by Paula Johnson**  
Looking towards Charmouth from Fishponds

Our guess the photo competition was a great success at this years agricultural shows.

Congratulations to the lucky winners.



**Gillingham and Shaftesbury - Hambleton Hill**  
Won by John Virgin



**Dorset County Show — North Holworth**  
Won by Terry Watkins

# News from our Rounds

## Esme Moffett



Despite being on holiday for 2 weeks, I still feel like September was a busy month. Autumn seems to be approaching rapidly, the nights are definitely drawing in and the mornings are certainly colder, but the lovely sunny days that we have seen recently have made maize harvesting much easier I'm sure and allowed some people to sneak in an extra cut of silage.

Autumn DA season seems to be kicking off already; I have done 3 in the last few weeks. Remember to keep buffer feeding your transition cows, look out for over fat cows and encourage early intakes.

Despite the cooler mornings and evenings the flies have come out in abundance in the last few weeks – maggots have been an issue in several places, so please keep your animals topped up with fly repellent.

Last week, as part of our 0-6 Youngstock Advisory Service we held two really successful meetings on Calf Housing with Jamie Robertson, from Livestock Management Systems and Sarah Bolt from AHDB Dairy. Housing calves is not an easy task, but we learnt how to avoid some of the common pitfalls and how best to maximise the space we have available.

Finally, on the running front Moff has been doing great things. At the beginning of September he competed in a 58 mile race around Snowdonia, the Eryri 50, and he won in a time of 12 hours 28 minutes. I was there as chief supporter and provider of snacks and really enjoyed driving around the beautiful countryside. Then this weekend he took part in the Bournemouth Marathon where he achieved a fantastic time of 3hrs 20 mins on a very sunny day.

## Tom Cook



The weather has been kind to most of us with dry conditions allowing for a trouble free harvest and good conditions for grazing stock into September and October. On my dry farm in Taunton we have been very short of grass during this time and have been supplementing heavily. Autumn grass, if well managed, can provide good nutrition and keeping animals out longer will save on housing costs.

Groups of coughing animals at pasture may indicate lungworm infestation. This usually is seen in the first season at grass, but could include older animals if sufficient immunity has not developed. Please speak to one of the team if you have any concerns.

When cattle are housed we need to be thinking about other internal parasites that may have been picked up at grazing; gutworms and liver fluke. We can take samples and analyse them back in our lab to decide the best course of action.

It is good to see that milk prices are starting to rise bringing much needed good news to families and businesses who have been suffering for the past couple of years.

## Andy Adler



At the beginning of September I spent the weekend at the Dorset County Show which was very busy and it was really good to catch up with so many farmers and their families.

I was invited to the CLA breakfast by our accountants Old Mill and got to listen to a couple of contrasting and interesting speakers. Brexit stimulated a long discussion about the risks and opportunities and I have to say the CLA seemed to really understand the issues and were communicating some of the pitfalls of free trade. Apparently Argentinian beef has a 70% tariff which with free trade could disappear causing serious pain for our beef industry. Also Andy Fussel gave a really energised talk about entrepreneurialism and making the most out of problems and turning them into opportunities.

On a more positive front it was great to speak to many dairy farmers who are seeing glimmers of hope with the milk price. It looks to be going up, however whether it goes up quick enough and high enough before Christmas to help everyone out we will wait and see.

It was also interesting to speak to some arable farmers about the value and need for mixed farming. It seems that where there is muck there is money and the muck our livestock enterprises are producing is really valuable to the arable farmers who are desperate for organic matter in their fields.

All of these conversations leave one with a real view of a changing agricultural sector. We are here for the long term to help make your business more efficient and effective, whilst supporting your livestock to be happy and healthy, so please feel free to contact us and discuss your potential requirements if you are thinking of changing systems or looking at your options.

## EVENTS

### Autumn Beef Meeting Buying and Selling Cattle: Savvy Shopping Tuesday 18th October 11am—1pm

Horn Farm, Horn Lane, Forton, TA20 4DP  
courtesy of M & J Mouland & Sons and  
their beef enterprise

What are we looking for?, Are we asking  
the right questions?, Is there such a  
thing as a 'bargain'?  
We will be discussing the potential pitfalls  
when trading cattle

Visit our website for further details or email [courses@synergyfarmhealth.com](mailto:courses@synergyfarmhealth.com)

### Protect Your Herd



Don't be immune to how  
technology can boost herd health

**Monday 17th October  
7.30pm at**

Monks Yard, Horton Cross Farm  
TA19 9PT

RSVP: Mike Huskins 07909 545426

### BOVINE DIY AI 2nd—4th November

### FARMER ADVERT—WANTED

Autumn Calving Beef Suckler Cows  
Please contact the office  
for further details