



New Pilot Scheme for reporting of Bovine Abortions

The Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) and Synergy Farm Health are piloting new arrangements to simplify the reporting of bovine abortions.

Brucellosis is a serious disease of cattle that affects herd fertility, and the UK's ability to trade. It can also affect people. The UK is Officially Free of Brucellosis but there is a continued risk to the cattle population. APHA carries out ongoing surveillance to ensure that we can detect any new introduction of the disease

and the most important component of this surveillance is the investigation of bovine abortions. This is why it is both important, and a legal requirement, to notify APHA of all bovine abortions or premature calvings (less than 271 days) in your herd.

To simplify reporting Synergy Farm Health will now take the notifications of abortions from our clients, and will then decide what further investigation is needed.

February 2017

- New Pilot Scheme
- Survey Results
- Cattle Lameness
- Vet Tech Update
- Meet the team
- Optimising Heifer Performance
- Regional News
- Events

We will keep APHA informed during this process which commences on 13th February.

Report **ALL** Bovine Abortions by ringing Synergy Farm Health on **01932 83682**

Synergy Newsletter Survey Results

Thank you very much to everyone who completed our newsletter survey before Christmas, we were really pleased with the number of responses and have found the feedback really useful.

It is wonderful that most people were very happy with the current format and content, but thank you to those who did provide some constructive criticism. We have

already put some changes in place and will endeavour to do more over the coming months.

If you didn't complete the survey, but wish to provide some feedback, then please still get in touch – either using the survey (www.synergyfarmhealth.com/newsletters) or by emailing office@synergyfarmhealth.com.

Finally, if you're interested in what people had to say, we will be publishing the results on our Facebook page and website shortly.



Congratulations to Jo Shipton of Oaklands who won our prize draw after completing the survey

Esme Moffett



Get yourself organised for lambing with the Synergy Lambing Kit



£30

Including: Synergy guide to lambing, template for flock record book, lambing protocols; 2 x 50ml dosing syringes, stomach tube, lambing snare, 2 x lambing ropes, vet lube, arm length gloves, thermometer, iodine tincture and spray, propylene glycol, all enclosed in a free tool box

What is an 'acceptable' level of Cattle Lameness

Some people would argue that zero tolerance is the only acceptable level, but it is fair to say that all herd owners, whether dairy or beef, should be constantly working towards minimising the incidence of lameness in their cattle.

We often hear that the national average is somewhere around 20 - 25%. This means that one in every four or five cows is lame. Is this acceptable? I think we can, and should, be striving towards a much lower figure, and for a good proportion of well managed herds this is already the case.

The perception of a 'lame cow' can be misconstrued – any animal with impaired mobility can be considered lame, whether that is a slight limp on one leg or struggling to bear weight on any or all four feet! And of course not all lameness will be foot-related.

WHAT'S THE REAL LEVEL OF LAMENESS IN YOUR HERD?

For some herds this is still guesswork, but for an ever-increasing number of farmers, through the use of mobility scoring, there is an actual recorded figure to work from. This started for many by being forced upon them by their milk buyer, but is being recognised more and more as a very useful tool. All cows are observed walking, usually on exit from the parlour in milking herds, and given a score from 0 (sound) to 3 (very lame).

When carried out weekly, fortnightly, monthly or quarterly this can build up a valuable record of the herd lameness level as a percentage, and can be used not only to pick out the 2's and 3's which may need immediate attention, but also to identify any upward or downward trends throughout the year, or any responses to management changes which can easily go unnoticed. You then

have a measurable figure to know whether the actions you are taking to combat lameness are working!

Whether you pay someone who is impartial to do this task, or train an employee who is already on the farm, consistency is the most important factor for meaningful results. Correct ID of the cows and good record keeping are crucial!



Our Vet Tech team can input mobility scores onto the computer to enable further useful analysis and allow easy access for your milk buyer.

Vet Tech Services Update

Our growing team is now up to 10 'Techs' working with and alongside the Vets, delivering high quality services including;

- Preventative and curative **foot trimming, mobility scoring, lame cow services** and advice on issues such as footbath design, all packaged together to help our clients control their lameness challenges. This is all recorded on our software programme which allows clients, vets and milk buyers to analyse data. Weekly, monthly or just occasional visits can be undertaken. Always concentrating on quality, NOT speed!
- **Freeze branding** Quality brands at a competitive rate. One of our fastest growing services.



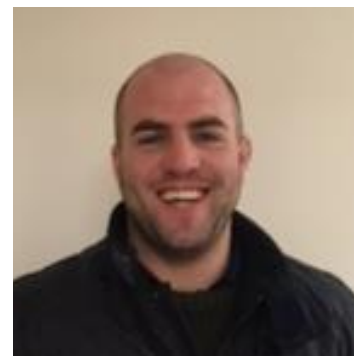
- **Pregnancy scanning**
- Use of the **large handling equipment** for tasks such as; **heifer weighing** (with weigh plate), help with TB tests, general cattle handling for vaccinating, bolusing, inserting magnets etc., blood sampling.
- Disbudding or dehorning calves or older cattle.
- Smallholder tasks such as sheep shearing.

If you require information about any of the above services or quotes please contact the main office or myself on 07500 626566

Dave Frecknall



Welcome to our newest member, Deen Taylor



Deen originates from Gillingham, Dorset, but has been recently working as a herdsman in Cumbria. He is experienced with dairy cattle and is looking forward to the challenges of his new role.

Meet the team



Yvonne (Viv) Critchell

Yvonne (aka Viv) is the Data Manager for the practice and as the name suggests spends most of her time collecting and analysing data. This data is then used in many different

ways throughout the practice, providing data analysis for both the business and farmers alike.

Viv is the Data guru providing the vets with reports on general herd health and lameness, processing laboratory results and benchmarking data such as antibiotic usage. If you have had a herd health monitoring report or a herd

health plan chances are it has been prepared by Viv!

Viv is also involved in the design and creation of the practice marketing materials ranging from leaflets and brochures to our fabulous stand at the Dairy Event - as well as this very newsletter itself!

Optimising Heifer Performance

Calf management and the targets of good heifer rearing are well documented in veterinary and farming press these days and although getting it right from a young age sets them up well for a healthy and productive life – remembering to set targets for later in the rearing phase is also important.

Age at First Calving (AFC)

I recently asked a group of farmers 'who wants big, strong heifers to join their milking herd?' and unsurprisingly there was a large show of hands. I then asked 'who wants big, strong heifers to join their herd at 2 years old?' and I was pleased that the majority of hands stayed up.

It has been proven both in trial work and anecdotally that calving your heifers at or around 24 months old makes economic sense and ensures good longevity. The most obvious reason is because the sooner they join the milking herd, the sooner they start paying you back for their rearing costs. But they are also much more productive the younger they join the herd; a heifer that calves in around 21-23 months will give about 8000 litres in her first lactation, compared to an animal that calves in over 30 months old and only gives 6000 litres. Another important factor is the number of heifers needed for replacements. This not only relates to AFC, but also disease and growth management – the longer they take to join the herd, the more you need on the farm each year.

Bulling Weight and Fertility

When addressing issues of delayed age at first calving it is easy to jump in and think there must be problems in their first few months of life, but for some it is simply that they are not serving their heifers early enough – even though they could.

On average, Holstein Friesian heifers

reach puberty at about 9 months old, but they should certainly be cycling well by 12 months old. Puberty is determined by age, but also body weight and they should be 40-50% of their adult weight by puberty. This allows time for several cycles to happen, before conception is required which will improve conception rates.

Heifers should be 60% of adult weight at first service. Although heifer conception rates are generally better than cows', it is important to remember that on average only 60% will get pregnant the first time round – so you need to plan for this when you start mating. If you are targeting calving at 24 months, then it would be good to start serving at 13 months, to allow the majority to be pregnant by 15 months.

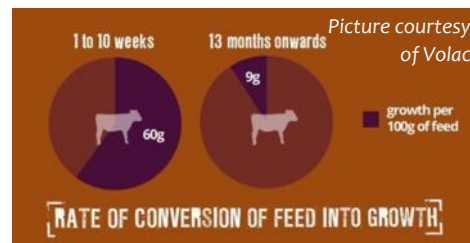
For the above to work, you must have a good knowledge of what the average adult cow weight is for your herd. An adult cow is considered to be in at least her 3rd lactation. You can do this by just looking at cull cow weights, or you could weigh some cows on farm for example at a TB test or you could just take a load to the local weigh bridge and calculate it from there. If you have a herd of mixed breeds, it would be good to know averages for each breed.

Growth Rates

This will depend on your adult cow weight and also your average calf birth weight, but for Holstein-Friesian heifers they should grow on average 800g per day for the whole of their rearing phase in order to calve in at 24 months.

Achieving this is certainly possible, but it does require attention to detail and low levels of disease. You may also find that you choose to push for better growth rates earlier on and let them grow a bit slower once they are pregnant and this makes good economic sense. Calves are

much more efficient at turning food into growth than older animals; in the first 10 weeks of life for every 100g of food they will gain 60g in weight, from 13 months onwards this reduces to just 9g. Therefore, although the feed is more expensive for younger animals, it is only for a short period and you get more back from your investment.



Remember also that we want tall, lean heifers, not short, fat ones. Using a withers height guide will help you know if you're achieving this as well as just hitting weight targets – look on the AHDB Dairy website for a guide on this. It is particularly important to remember this once they are in-calf as this is when they can lay down a lot of unused energy as fat, causing fatty liver and calving issues further down the line.

Second Lactation

Finally, it is good to pay attention to how many of your heifers make it to their second lactation. Remember, most heifers won't start paying you back for their rearing costs until they are well into their second lactation, so if they drop out of the system before then they have only cost you money! At least 90% of your heifers should be making it to second lactation, but unfortunately the national average is about 80%. Losses mainly occur due to fertility issues (remember fertility problems tend to be there for life) and disease, such as chronic pneumonia.

TARGETS

- **AFC:** 24 months
 - **Growth rate:** 800g/day
 - **Puberty:** 50% adult body weight
 - **Service:** 60% adult body weight
 - **Survival to 2nd lactation:** 90%
- NB you must calculate adult cow body weight for your herd.



Esme Moffett



News from our Rounds

Ed Powell-Jackson South



I have recently PD'd batches of heifers for some autumn calving dairy herds. Results varied from outstanding to dreadful with mediocre in between! Exceptional results were achieved on one family run unit where attention to detail is always good and veterinary advice is carefully followed: Heifers were synchronised and received a double AI, animals were housed 6 weeks prior to this and moved on to a decent ration (vs poor quality autumn grass), primary vaccination courses for BVD and Lepto were completed well in advance and all heifers received mineral boluses (to correct an underlying iodine issue) and given magnets and appropriate parasite treatments. Service was performed by an AI technician and a 70% conception rate achieved. This contrasts with another unit where a young bull was turned out with 50+ heifers and only one pregnancy was achieved after an eight week period. This bull was swiftly culled and this farm is now back to using AI in heifers, having not enjoyed their experiment with natural service. Two take home messages; preparing heifers well for service pays dividends and a bull breeding soundness test is always sensible! It is surprising how often one, the other or both are overlooked. This can be very costly indeed.

To this end we held a very informative Ham Hill Discussion group meeting, led by Esme, at the end of January to discuss heifer management. A group benchmarking exercise to identify age at first calving (based on milk recording data) identified considerable variation between units, with some achieving a 24 month average vs others over 3 years. Maximising growth rates through disease control and good nutrition was identified as pivotal in achieving optimal performance and hitting targets for service and calving.

Graeme McPherson North



This winter has been really tough for producers from a pneumonia point of view. I am struggling to remember a winter when temperatures varied so much, so quickly. Calves are having to cope with damp 12-14°C temperatures, followed by a number of days of freezing, still weather, followed again by 12°C damp, which has led to us having to treat some severe pneumonia outbreaks. Variable temperatures can be a significant stress factor for young animals. However, though the climate is against us, there are things we can do to mitigate against the impact.

Calf accommodation can have a big impact on the incidence and severity of calf pneumonia. Our sheds must be well ventilated. Well ventilated doesn't just mean open sides. Our sheds must encourage stale, damp air to escape and be replaced by fresh air from the sides. We also need to keep our sheds as dry as possible. That means channelling rain water away from the accommodation to prevent bedding getting damp. Bugs love moisture, dark and carbon dioxide. Often, improving ventilation and drainage will serve to reduce moisture and carbon dioxide and will often bring more light into our sheds. Together these factors lead to a much more hostile environment for bacteria and viruses. This will serve to reduce infection pressure on our animals. Variable air temperatures will still be an issue, but we can reduce the impact by reducing drafts at animal level.

Vaccination can reduce the severity of pneumonia and reduce the number of cases, however it is not the golden bullet that will stop pneumonia altogether. Pneumonia control is multi-faceted and needs to account for environment, nutrition, animal stress, mixing of animals and potential vaccination. Talk to your vet about things that may be done to your sheds to help prevent this damaging and expensive disease.

Pete Siviter East



As in Somerset, there's been a bit of a change in the weather recently in Dorset and as such we're seeing a great deal of coughing calves – remember that pneumonia requires *prompt* treatment if there is to be a successful outcome, and if a large proportion of animals are affected then whole-group medication may be indicated. Graeme has covered a few important points in the Somerset news. If you are struggling with high levels of infection – please speak to your vet.

With a lot of calvings on the horizon for many, this might be a good time to mention that we'll be having another calving course later in the year - watch out for adverts and details in future newsletters. I've been assisting a few lately and some large calves have resulted in caesareans - do speak to us if you're having a run of large calves as we should be able to induce the mothers to calve a bit earlier and come up with a preventative plan for the next breeding season.

In skittles news, my stick-ups are still few and far between but the South Dorset Hunt League is well underway. Having played most of the other league teams now, we're nearing the frantic final fortnight when the last minute cup games will all get crammed in... I hope the captains are organised! See you at the dinner.

Medicines News

Following price increases from manufacturers Zoetis and Boehringer Ingelheim we would like to inform you that there will be some product price increases as from 1st February 2017. We have endeavoured to minimise increases as much as we can possibly control.

Spring Vaccination Deal

Reduced Prices

LEPTAVOID-H		Offer available on 25 dose packs only and must end 31st March 2017
1- 7 packs (25-175 doses)		£1.70 per dose
8+ packs (200 doses +)		£1.62 per dose
8+ packs (200 doses +) & commit to purchasing Bovilis BVD		£1.53 per dose
		All prices ex VAT

EVENTS

Practical Lambing
14th Feb or 28th Feb



Practical Colostrum management Workshop
Fri 17th Feb

Beef Production Survey
27th Feb at Winfrith Newburgh
or 28th Feb at Buckland St Mary

DIY AI - 8th March

Visit our website for further details or email courses@synergyfarmhealth.com

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