



## 'Stress Free' Disbudding

We realise that disbudding can be a hard and sometimes stressful job.

**Reasons for disbudding** – horns later in life can pose risks to humans and other cattle and themselves as they can be prone to getting trapped and broken. Horns can cause a distinct hierarchy and increase competition for feeding. It is also illegal to transport horned cattle together with unhorned animals. By disbudding at a young age you decrease stress, effort and time.

**Stressful situation for calves** – Disbudding is a stressful event for calves and can have a significant impact on growth rates. Currently you must legally use a local anaesthetic when disbudding at any age. This removes the pain, but unfortunately does not remove the stress of handling and only works for 90 minutes after which the pain returns. As a result the process can still be difficult and very time consuming as well as unpleasant for the calf.

### Benefits

Time taken to disbud is greatly reduced with batches of 20 grouped calves being done within 30 minutes and the same number kept individually in pens within 45 minutes.



If you require information about any of our vet tech services please contact the main office or Vet Tech manager Dave Frecknall on 07500 626566

### Incorporating xylazine into the protocol

Xylazine is a chemical which causes deep sedation, muscle relaxation and pain relief.

Calves will become recumbent approximately 10 minutes after injection with the sedative. Local anaesthetic is then administered easily and much more precisely. Local anaesthetic administration is still very important as it is the primary pain relief and without it the sedation effect will soon wear-off. You then have a good 30 minute window in which we can perform the disbudding before the calves begin to wake up. More calves will be standing by 1-2 hours after the sedative injection.

### Incorporating Meloxicam into protocol

Meloxicam (Metacam) decreases inflammation and acts as pain relief for at least 24 hours. Studies have shown that meloxicam significantly effects the behaviour of the calf with those receiving it showing reduced behaviours that are associated with stress and are quicker to start eating and drinking.

Pain relief induced by the local anaesthetic only works for 90 minutes - meloxicam acts to extend this.

### The process so far

This method of disbudding has been used on large numbers of calves by the Synergy Farm Health team and although sedation always has its potential risks every single calf sedated so far has been disbudded without a problem. Our 'disbudding team' will always include a technician and a vet (and has to by law).

**Gary Harding**



## July 2017

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## REMINDER

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

Please remember that you have a legal obligation to report all bovine abortions for brucellosis surveillance purposes. An abortion in any pregnancy that you observe has been lost up to 10 days before the expected calving date (so even an 8 week pregnancy where you see the discharge or aborted foetus).

The procedure is now to ring the practice. This will avoid those annoying Animal Health calls with all the options....

The good news is you get a free visit (but you do need to report the abortion ASAP!)

## Game Changing Technologies

I attended a conference at Kingston Maurward Agricultural College last month titled "Game changing technologies for Dorset's Agri-Tech". There were various technologies on display which have applications on the farm businesses that we work with and you run. One of the themes was that technologies are getting smaller and smarter and opening up whole new areas where they can be applied. One big leap forward is smaller and longer lasting batteries making, amongst other things, monitoring technologies more available to the animal sector where changing or charging of batteries is not possible (hopefully they are better than my mobile phone!).

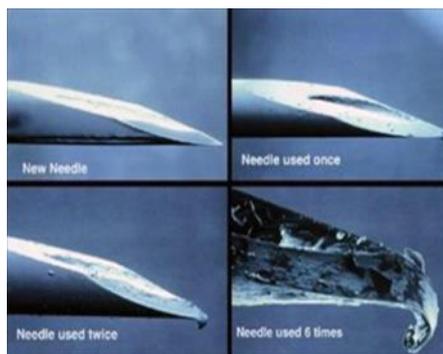
Animal ear tag technology is moving forwards with new sensors previously only available on neck collars now being used for activity (pedometer) giving information on bulling activity but also fitted with software that analyses cow lying, feeding and rumination activity and so will also flag up sick cows.



"Fever tags" were also on display - ear tags fitted to calves that have a thermometer and a red light which flashes when the calf's temperature rises above a certain threshold. This can give a herdsman early indications of disease to isolate animals or treat with non-steroidals (like metacam) to bring down the fever and if caught early enough reduce the need to give antibiotics.

Another interesting technology was a water trough fitted with a weighing station so that whenever animals came to drink they were weighed. This allows regular weight checks on an individual and at group level. This can help identify any poor doing individuals early and also if growth rates were slowing at a group level e.g. feed quality issues or parasites.

There was some interesting "needleless" vaccination gun technology on show as well. These use high pressure air technology to "blast" vaccine in through the skin. It has already been used in the poultry industry and is now moving into the pig sector but they haven't cracked the technology for tough old cow hide yet! (The idea being that those annoying but necessary needle changes would be a thing of the past).



If you went to the doctors you would be horrified to be injected with the same needle as the last person in the surgery but in farming it is common practice to re-use needles when vaccinating. We would advocate no more than 5 cows per needle to ensure the needle is kept sharp and also to minimize the risk of blood born disease (such as mycoplasma) to be spread from cow to cow.

There is also lots more work on cow side diagnostic technologies for farmers and vets to be able to make a quicker and more accurate diagnosis of disease. There was discussion of "pit side" silage analysis as well to help ensure rations are formulated correctly and the all important dry matter content can be monitored quickly and rations adjusted accordingly.



The final talk from a group at the University of Bristol was about a microbial fuel cell that they have been developing. Basically instead of lithium or nickel in the fuel cell there were special bacteria that pushed hydrogen ions through the cathode to create a charge. These bacteria it seems can feed on most organic things. They had tested a number of things such as human waste, grass clippings, crushed up dead flies, algae and urine to see if the bugs could use it to work the battery cell and they all worked! They have set up a toilet station at the Glastonbury Festival for the last couple of years which runs the lights for the toilets powered only on the urine from the Glastonbury revelers! It got me to thinking about using waste milk from dairy farms and the possibility of feeding it to the fuel cell to utilize the energy in it and to neutralize the antibiotic residues.

Tom Clarke



Congratulations to two of our clients for reaching the shortlist for the 2017 Farmers Weekly Awards.

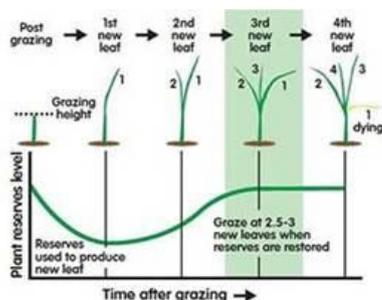
Scott Bagwell from Field Barn Farm, Blandford in the Farm Manager of the Year Category and Gary Hawker from Finding Farms, Dorchester in the Farmworker of the Year Category. Good luck in the finals!

## Improving Grassland Management to improve production from grass.

Well managed grazed grass is the cheapest feed for Cattle and Sheep and when managed well it can provide >11.5 MJ ME/kgDM.

The key to good grassland management is understanding the plant and how it grows. Each grass tiller will grow three leaves in 21 days in optimum conditions, when the fourth leaf grows the first will die resulting in loss of yield and quality, once a seed head is put up this suppresses leaf growth and is less nutritious than the leaves. Putting stock into grass at the correct height pre-grazing (8-10cm) ensures grass is at the right stage, stock should graze the grass tight (4-5cm) and quickly (ideally 1-2 days) before moving to the next patch, any uneaten grass will not be eaten when they return as they will prefer the new growth. When the grass is grazed it will start growing immediately and must be protected from stock as nibbling the first leaf will reduce the production of the grass.

Measuring growth rates with a rising platemeter will give you a picture of the whole farm today and regular measuring will allow you to look into the future and predict what grass you will have in 2-3 weeks. A rotation can be set up with animals returning to the grass after 21 days in optimal conditions when the grass will have regrown (this may be up to 60 days at the shoulders of the grazing season or in dry conditions). Grass will grow at a different rate every week of the year but demand (stock numbers) will be relatively stable and grass growth will need to be controlled by either silage making when growth exceeds demand to maintain quality or building grass volume ahead of a time of shortage e.g. removing stock correctly in the autumn will allow a sufficient amount of grass in the early spring when growth rates are low allowing an early turnout.



With improved grassland management you will be able to improve the amount and quality of grass grown and the amount that the animal uses and converts into milk or meat. This will allow increased stocking density or increased animal performance from grass and reduced need for supplementation. **Tom Cook**



## EVENTS

**2 Day Foot Trimming**  
11th & 12th July

**Humane Dispatch and Sheep Welfare Course**  
13th July  
At Evershot

**Antibiotics—Making the Most of your Medicines**  
25th July 11am—2pm  
Frampton Arms,  
Moreton, Dorchester

**2 Day Foot Trimming**  
July/August  
Date to be confirmed

**Mobility Scoring Course**

**DIY AI**  
3rd—5th October

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

## Meet the Team



**Emma Platt** works 3 days a week in the administration department with her workload split between generating herd health reports, sending out lab results, covering TB enquiries and processing tests, organising any non-bovine TB Defra tests, compiling monthly outbreak and post mortem data information, ensuring all TB tests are booked within time frames, dealing with brucellosis/ anthrax enquiries and ordering staff uniform.

Emma has been working for Synergy for two years after moving to the area from Berkshire with her horse and dog!

## Medicines News

**Special Offer**

**Spotinor**

**FLY CONTROL**

<b>2.5 Litres</b>	<b>£165</b> + VAT	<b>Plus FREE Gun</b>
<b>2 x 2.5 Litres</b>	<b>£305</b> + VAT	<b>61p per cattle dose</b>
<b>4 x 2.5 Litres</b>	<b>£595</b> + VAT	<b>60p per cattle dose</b>
<b>Enovex Pour On 2.5 L</b>	<b>£35</b> + VAT	<b>(Ivermectin 0.5%)</b>
<b>Eprecis 2.5 L</b>	<b>£165</b> + VAT	<b>Nil Milk Withhold Wormer</b>

**LIMITED STOCK**

Place your orders with the Dispensary now

Prices correct 03/07/2017 Offers end 30/09/2017

# News from our Rounds

## North Alastair Hayton



Well it's been a tad hot recently - though I note it didn't rain on Glastonbury weekend - very strange. Heat stress was in plentiful evidence during our mini heat wave, not only in the cows, but also in the humans and especially for those dressed in waterproofs.

The sight of tongues hanging out and excessive panting whilst waiting for a drink, it seems, is not just limited to agricultural and vet students, as the appearance of heat stress in cows does look for all the world like they have pneumonia. An appearance not helped, when one of my client's managers asked me what a normal rectal temperature should be on a day like this. This was because he had just taken the temperatures of his freshly calved cows during his routine checks and found that they were all registering close to 40°C (or 104.5°F in old money)!

I guess this is all not that surprising when you think about it, given the energy outputs these cows are achieving to produce the amount of milk they do. They far outperform anything an Olympic athlete will reach at the peak of their performance - consequently hot work on a hot day.

Heat stress is a result of both heat and humidity, which is why cows struggle frequently with the heat in the UK because it is often associated with high humidity levels. Bizarrely, the chief vet for the main Saudi dairy producer, who had 70,000 cows under his care, once told me their cows did not suffer too much as the heat is so dry and cooling them is therefore relatively simple.

Its impact is very serious, it has direct physiological effects on rumen function, gut motility, appetite, and reproductive function and we underestimate its importance too frequently. Cows will start to feel stressed when the humidity is at 90% at around 72°F/22°C and will be severely stressed at 90°F/32°C.

If we are going to house cows in such weather, there are opportunities to mitigate some of the worst effects both in terms of environmental and dietary interventions. If we find ourselves, going forward, experiencing prolonged similar conditions these measures we will be worthwhile adopting.

In the meantime, I might just concentrate on myself and eat a bit more of that ice cream I so thoughtfully bought to help my family to cool down!!!

## South

### Ed Powell-Jackson



The weather has certainly dominated conversations on farm of late. As might be expected of an English summer, it has come full circle in just a few days from scorching hot to a deluge last night. It certainly wasn't the night to be on call, and again as might be expected the phone didn't stop ringing! Two uterine prolapses in one night is quite unusual for us. Both were in Holstein cows on well run, large scale progressive dairies. Cows had calved unassisted indoors with no oversized calves or force used at calving, or complicated by milk fever. Who knows why they happened? Earlier in the week I had replaced another in a pedigree Longhorn cow (this time in a very hot and fly infested orchard). Rather like buses (and cow caesareans), it seems prolapses can come in threes.

I have also seen a number of parasite related problems. A June outbreak of lungworm (husk) in organic replacement heifers occurred earlier in the summer than is normal (typically mid summer to autumn for this disease). Husk must always be considered likely when growing (or indeed adult cattle) are coughing at grass. I have also seen a large number of ticks on cattle, as well as my own dogs and indeed myself! One unit in particular has been suffering with numerous cases of Tick Fever (main symptoms = high temperature and dramatic milk drop). These have responded very well to injections of oxytetracycline (Alamycin/Engemycin), but tick control via permethrin based fly treatments has been increased to try to keep the tick challenge to a minimum.

The show season is nearly upon us, and we are organising our stands in preparation. I look forward to seeing many of you at these - please do come and join us for some light refreshment. For me the show days are always some of the most enjoyable (if tiring) days of the working year.

## East

### Emily Gascoigne



I am writing this having returned from a long weekend in Jersey surrounded by Jersey cows. An island on four yearly testing, will no imports of liquid milk an absence of BVD, IBR, Lepto and where up until recently no other breed other than the Jersey could be found on the island. There is evidently real pride in their dairy cow, with a statue in one of the main squares in St Helier and their own Jersey seal of approval for home grown products with the famous Jersey Royal the best example.

Jersey's location places it in an ideal position to benefit from both the UK and French markets and farmers I spoke to were relaxed about Brexit, not something everyone here shares. As I write this I have just had an email reminding me to access EU funded training and seize opportunities whilst I can.

This may be a pertinent time to remind you of Leader Funding - we held a meeting at HQ last year for our commercial sheep flocks but this applies to all enterprises- these are part funded grants available to promote efficiency and innovation in practice for example installing technology on farm. Anyone thinking about improving monitoring using daily live weight gains for example (across all species) such a scheme might help. See the below links for more information and if you need any help integrating your health plan, get in touch.

Dorset <https://dorsetleader.org.uk/>

Devon <http://makingitlocal.org/>

Somerset

<http://www.somersetleader.org.uk/>

Wiltshire

<http://www.northwessexleader.org.uk/>

Happy weaning for our sheep flocks and remember.... Post drench checks (7 days after a yellow drench, 14 days after all other drench classes).