



Feed more milk!

Feed more milk for healthier, better performing, more cost effective replacement heifers

There are several producers now feeding their calves 1.2kg of milk solids within the first few days of life and getting 1kg per day growth from these animals within the first week.

The benefits of feeding 900-1200g of milk powder to calves per day are numerous:-

The link between growth in the first 2-3 months of life and future performance has been well established. The faster heifers grow at this time the more milk they give in later life and the longer they live.



Faster growing calves are less susceptible to pneumonia as they have plenty of fuel for their immune systems.

The younger a calf is the more efficient it is at converting food into growth. It will never be as cheap to get a kilo of growth on a heifer as in the pre-weaning phase.

Growth at an early age involves mainly muscle and bone deposition. Growth of older animals involves more fat deposition. It follows that heifers that do their growing early on are leaner and bigger framed and have less risk

of calving difficulties than those that have to grow excessively later on.

So why are some producers reluctant to feed calves large amounts of milk as early as possible? Some of the challenges to overcome are:-

Increased cost of milk powder or whole milk. For all the reasons above the extra costs of feeding higher rates will be recouped several times over.

Fear of reducing concentrate intakes. Many people are aware of the vital importance of concentrate intakes pre weaning to stimulate rumen development. Calves fed on high rates of milk powder will eat more than enough concentrate as long as clean fresh water is offered from day one, concentrate is offered from day one and kept fresh.

Fear of causing scours. Depending on the quality of the milk replacer calves fed at higher levels may have more water in their faeces. As long as they are fed hygienically and are not sick this is not necessarily a problem.

Fear of causing bloat. If calves drink large volumes quickly there is a risk that some of the milk will enter the rumen rather than the abomasum and cause bloat. These risks can be minimised by feeding hygienically from a small aperture teat rather than a bucket and feeding consistent concentrations, mixing well and feeding at consistent times and temperatures. Although feeding three times a day can be a logistical challenge, it will further reduce the risk of bloat.

September 2018

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Feeding replacement heifers sufficient milk solids to make them realise their genetic potential is an essential part of sustainable dairy farming. If you need help in making the switch to higher rates of feeding then give us a call. We can offer practical advice on milk powder selection, hygiene protocols, feeding methods and much more.

Tom Shardlow
Veterinary Surgeon



Are you a Progressive Dairy Farmer?

Are you interested in exchanging ideas and expanding your knowledge to enhance your business?

Join our Progressive Dairying Discussion Group to learn and exchange ideas about the dairy topics that are important to YOU!

We want you to choose the topics for discussion and we will facilitate an on farm discussion. This would suit ALL types of dairy farmers with a progressive mindset whether big or small enterprises, and enable exchange of ideas between farmers as well as keeping abreast of the latest knowledge and technology. Please express your interest by email with Gemma at our office: gemma.bowditch@synergyfarmhealth.com or 01935 83682.

First meeting in November

Monitoring Transition Cows

The transition period is defined as the time 3 weeks prior to and 3 weeks preceding calving. During this time the cow undergoes many physical and metabolic changes and as such this period presents numerous challenges to the cow. With changes of housing, social group, feed and pregnancy status amongst other things. It is also the time when the cow's immune competence is lowered, so it is easy to see why some cows succumb to disease. The most common metabolic diseases attributed to the transition period being hypocalcaemia (milk fever), retained foetal membranes (cleansings), ketosis/fatty liver and displaced abomasums (DAs).

Many factors contribute to a successful transition period including (but not limited to) body condition score at calving, quality of available forages, formulation of transition cow rations, stocking density, hygiene and vitamin and mineral provisions.

Monitoring disease incidence is a good starting point for assessing transition cow health. However records need to be accurate to be of any value. If the disease incidence exceeds targets (agreed with your routine vet) an objective, comprehensive investigation of transition cow management is warranted. The levels of "acceptable" disease incidence will vary from farm to farm depending

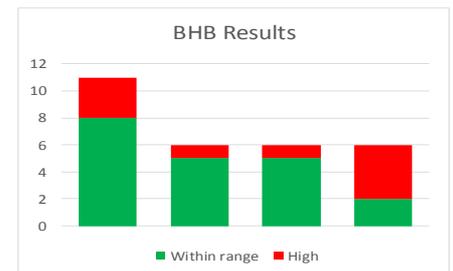
on factors such as expected milk yield, breed, herd size, historical disease incidence and the farmers own ambitions. Nevertheless clinical disease is only the "tip of the iceberg" with respect to underlying health problems and as such tend to be an underestimation of a true problem. For instance whilst 5-10% of cows may suffer from clinical ketosis, the incidence of subclinical disease is reported to be around 40%. In addition disease incidence is historic information.

Adequate feed intake is crucial for health and production. Although monitoring an individual cows intake is not practical, measuring the average intake and feed refusals of the transition group is still useful information. If there is less than 5% of feed remaining at the time of the next feed it is unlikely that cows are eating ad lib. With the rapid advances in cow technology automated monitoring of individual feed intakes may become commonplace in the future.

Recording cow body condition scores is a valuable and cheap tool. Ideally the same person should score the cows monthly. This eliminates any discrepancies between people's opinions and the frequency of scoring allows any problems to be picked up quickly. Excessive changes to body condition from the transition period to early and mid-lactation should

be avoided as it indicates the cows are in a state of negative energy balance. Whilst some loss of body condition is expected a loss of no more than half a condition score (on a scale 1-5) between calving peak lactation is the target and should be achievable.

Metabolic profiling is a good confirmatory test of any suspected issues and is able to detect problems at an earlier opportunity than the other measures described.



The tests performed will vary between farms. Where excessive fat mobilisation is suspected blood testing a sample of cows close to calving for NEFAs (fatty acids produced from the breakdown of body fat) and cows in milk for BHBs (ketone bodies) is a good starting point. Where milk fever is an issue measuring blood calcium levels at calving is a way of measuring the extent of the problem in cows that do not show overt clinical signs. The number of animals to be tested will vary with farm size. It is important that cows selected are genuinely representative of the herd and not cows which have known problems.

Sam Cottam
Veterinary Surgeon



Alan Derryman's Charity Shear



We would like to congratulate Alan Derryman from Home Farm, Sidbury on his fantastic achievement of shearing 413 sheep in 9 hours to raise money for the Exeter Leukaemia Fund.

Alan set himself the challenge as a way of marking his 60th birthday. It involved a great deal of help from friends and family, but also extensive training and nutrition planning. As a result of his hard work, dedication and passion Alan has raised over £10,000 – truly remarkable.



White Line Disease

White line disease is a non-infectious claw horn lesion that commonly occurs when the sole horn separates from the horn on the side wall of the hoof, giving opportunity for foreign material to enter and infect the white line area. The white line is easily damaged and is often an entry point for infection which is a common cause of an abscess.

Cattle with a white line lesion will often show a high degree of pain and will go lame relatively quickly depending on the rate of development and the extent of the abscess. A breakout of pus from around the heel or coronary band is always a good indication to suspect a white line lesion and the white line should always be examined very carefully in cases of lameness with these.

Risks factors for white line disease include cows being forced to change direction and turn quickly which can place excessive force on the hoof and result in a spread or break of the white line. This can be from tight turns out of parlours or handling facilities or by cows showing signs of heat and bullying and fighting by dominant cows. Foreign objects can also be a risk factor including stones that can penetrate the white line.

In recent years we have seen an increase in white line disease being infected with digital dermatitis which results in very painful and

hard to treat lesion. Lesions which breakout and are left untreated for any length of time have an increased risk of becoming infected by digital dermatitis if present on farm.

So early treatment will always be the best solution. The white line lesions need to be trimmed carefully by a competent trimmer and will benefit from the weight being taken off the affected claw by a block being applied to the healthy claw. If dermatitis is present treatment with a topical antibiotic and possibly a dressing and bandage should be applied to aid healing. If a bandage is applied it is vital that this is removed after 48 hours.

Severe cases will benefit from the attention of a vet.

Recently in the heat of the summer I have seen the effects of flies laying eggs on this kind of lesion and then resulting in an infestation of maggots in the foot. Many people may think this might be good thing as they would be eating dead and infected tissue but they will actually eat into good live tissue causing great pain to the animal. These pictures show before and after treatment. The treatment was careful trimming to remove all under run horn and release any pus and remove all maggots. Then a block was applied to the healthy claw. The lesion was dressed and bandaged using a topical antibiotic.



The second picture shows the lesion two weeks later. The cow is well on the road to a full recovery but this is not always the case.



Early treatment always delivers the best results

Dave Phillips
Vet Tech



Courses

Cattle Lameness
ACADEMY

Practical Calving

13th Sept at Evershot

Foot Trimming Grinder Course

25th September at Lower Coombe

Coming in October

Mobility Scoring

8th October

2 Day Foot Trimming
15th & 16th October

Pneumonia meetings

Coming Soon

BEEF SUCKLER NUTRITION

A discussion on suckler cow nutrition led by Dr. Alex Corbishley from Edinburgh University looking at practical aspects and its importance for calf health.

The Fox Inn at Ansty
Tues 6th November 7pm

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

News from our Rounds

East

Sam Cottam

A common theme on farm has been the realisation of how tight winter forages are going to be. Many people have been feeding their already limited winter rations for some time, as the unprecedented dry weather has made grazing difficult. The last few weeks has seen some much welcome rainfall and things have started to green up around and about (including the garden) Whether this will cause enough grass growth for further cuts will have to be seen.

Looking ahead it would seem the winter housing period is not going to be cheap. Indeed the UK is not alone in its abnormal weather patterns this year with much of the Northern hemisphere suffering droughts putting more stress on world feed stocks. This is highlighted as wheat being at its 5 year high. As others have eluded to, now is the time to calculate the amount of forage and other feeds you have available to plan for the discrepancy between available and required feed, after all failure to plan is a plan to fail. Strategies may well include selling some stock, overwintering animals on, for example turnips, or securing a source of bought in feeds.

Meet the Team—

Sheila Snell

I joined Synergy at the outset, having worked at Kingfisher Vets in Crewkerne as a farm receptionist from early 2009.

Primarily responsible for clients in the South of the practice, my job involves taking clients' calls and booking vet visits.



North

Graeme McPherson

It has been an interesting Summer on the North. Very little rain and most people having to use winter stores of feed when they would normally be grazing. It won't be long before winter is upon us. Last winter was the worst I have known for pneumonia in cattle. It is time now to start planning ahead to reduce the incidence of pneumonia next winter. In anticipation of this we are planning a series of meetings across the practice to discuss pneumonia. We will look at building design and what can be done in the way of pneumonia prevention. Look out for the meeting near you towards the end of October. Look out for dates and locations in the next news letter.

An interesting case occurred during the summer. There seems to be a small pocket of Redwater just north of Curry Rivel. Redwater (Babesiosis) has not really been seen anywhere else in the northern part of our practice area, but it could spread further. Babesiosis is a tick borne parasite that causes red blood cell destruction. This leads to anaemia and characteristically blood red urine. Often the first symptom is fever and separation from the herd. If you graze the Moors to the north of Curry Rivel, then be on the look-out. It might be worth getting any unexplained deaths investigated.

Pneumonia Meetings for Beef and Dairy Farmers, Mid-late October near you.

Check next newsletter for details of dates and locations.



South

Ed Powell-Jackson

I have greatly enjoyed our busy summer show season and caught up with a large number of clients at Honiton and Melplash. It was also a pleasure to introduce my young family who enjoyed the attention and cake! These are long and tiring days for us but provide a great opportunity for socialising off farm, as well as the chance to provide some hospitality to reciprocate that offered to us on farm! A big thank you to our office staff who have worked very hard to assemble literally 100s of ploughmans lunches over the last few weeks!

With the sudden and welcome rainfall there has been a sudden greening up, but also the mass awakening of numerous parasite larvae that have been dormant over the dry spell. Last week I saw my first lungworm outbreak of 2018 (husk) in growing cattle. These cattle were being rounded up for TB testing, and on exercise were coughing with tongues hanging out. Wormer was applied but any delay in treatment would be extremely costly in terms of reduced growth rates and pneumonia/lung damage. We need to be vigilant since these cattle will have developed very little immunity earlier in the grazing season and so are vulnerable to a mass hatching event brought on by a change in weather conditions. It was also a timely remind of how tedious TB testing is at grass – visiting multiple venues to set up races and catching pens and chase animals around is not a good use of any of our time! The arrival of 6 monthly TB testing in 2020 is going to be a real headache and I would urge you all to consider joining the TB ChECs accreditation scheme to help reduce the need for this. This was recently discussed at our excellent and well attended series of TB meetings – if you missed these further details are available from your regular vet.



I also help to co-ordinate the vets' weekly clinical meeting and deal with export administration.

In my spare time I am kept busy running my holiday let on the family farm in West Dorset, and by daughter Izzy, who is a keen member of Marshwood Vale YFC. This all leaves a few hours filled with riding and walking!



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