



Global Xmas Reflections!

As we are coming to the end of the year (which is ridiculous, where's that gone), I thought I might mull over what we might be confronting in the next year and beyond. The most obvious answer is increased scrutiny of our industry. Global warming, and the statements on the need to reduce the numbers of cattle in the UK, the on-going concern over antibiotic usage, the rise of militant veganism are all areas that are placing what we do, and how we do it, under the gaze of the Government and the consumer. We won't even mention Brexit!

Not a very cheerful prospect it might seem. However, I would argue that the above should not cause you undue concern. The common thread to all these issues is that farms that can generate healthy, productive stock can go a long way to answering the questions being posed by all these pressures, and, this region being one of generally high standards, is well placed to deliver this when compared to many other dairy regions both at home and abroad.

Lay TB Tester Pilot

After public consultation the government has commenced a pilot to evaluate the feasibility of Lay testers -i.e. non veterinary surgeons carrying out TB testing in the UK. These Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) would perform TB testing after training and assessments and under the direct supervision of Approved Veterinary surgeons (AVS) in approved practices.

We are pleased to be part of this pilot and wish to inform you that we have enrolled two ATTs in the practice onto the Training programme for the pilot. As a result we welcome Emily Alford and Rhi Purbrick as ATTs into our TB testing team. Rhi is already a part of our Vet Tech team and will be familiar to some of you, and Emily comes to us with a wide range of

For instance, to take global warming as an example, data from the UK suggests that dairy businesses in the top 25% of performance (measured by cost of production), produce milk with a carbon footprint of well over 300g of CO2 less per litre than farms in the bottom 25%. This is because the biggest factor in reducing emissions, for any given level of production, is improving annual milk yield per cow whilst reducing cow numbers (as less are required to achieve that volume of milk).

Clearly, improvements in health and fertility can have a big impact on achieving this; if we have less disease we discard less milk as a result of withdrawal (and use less antibiotics and improve animal welfare), the animal remains more productive over its lifetime and as we have to cull less we reduce the requirement to rear extra replacement heifers.

It is important to remember that when considering how you can achieve improvements in efficiency in

agricultural experience. We appreciate this may involve an additional person on farm during some TB tests but our ATTs already have considerable animal handling and farming experience and so any disruption will be kept to a minimum and hopefully the long term benefits will make any slight inconvenience bearable.

We thank you for your anticipated cooperation and look forward to making this a successful project which will contribute to helping us to continue to deliver efficient and quality TB testing and play a part in controlling this frustrating disease.

Andrew Davies
Managing Director



production and thereby emissions, significant financial

investments are not always required. Indeed, for most individual units progress can be made year on year with relatively modest changes in management. For example, improving submission rate from 50% to 70% produced improvements in fertility which could reduce emissions of methane by up to 24% and ammonia by about 14%.

So whatever the challenges ahead, they are definitely surmountable and with that, I wish you all the best for the forthcoming year and a very Happy Christmas.

Alastair Hayton -Director



☆☆ Congratulations! ☆☆

Congratulations go to our very own Emily Gascoigne who now holds a European Diploma in Small Ruminant Health Management and was awarded Best Animal Health Adviser of the Year at the 2018 Farming & Food Industry Awards.

Also to Alasdair Moffett for achieving his Masters in International Animal Health.

Fantastic achievements and testimony to a lot of hard work.



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Give yourself the best chance of walking the pneumonia line!



A very well attended meeting about pneumonia was held in the North area of the practice recently—which is no surprise given the winter we had in 2017-18. This year is shaping up similarly in regard to climate! There are many contributing factors to pneumonia but it is my suspicion that extreme fluctuations in temperature and humidity, (as was a constant theme of last winter) is a significant factor.

Pneumonia is nearly always an 'infectious' disease. That is it is caused by bacteria and/or viruses. When thinking about infectious diseases they are always a feature of the relationship between two key factors.

1. There is what I like to call the 'infectious burden'. This is the number of potentially damaging bugs that an animal is exposed to. It is like a measure of the threat to the animal from the bugs that would seek to invade and set up an infection.
2. The second factor is 'host defence'. This is a feature of the animal's inherent ability to fight off a potential infection.

We could represent this relationship as a 'line of disease'.



You can easily see from this graphic that in a robust animal with good host defence, it takes a high level of infection pressure to overcome the animal's immune system and cause disease. But conversely, if the animals defences are low, then it only takes a small infection pressure (or a relatively small number of potentially harmful bugs) to cause disease.

This is helpful when thinking about

controlling pneumonia because we can concentrate our efforts on just two things. We need to ensure that the animals defences are as strong and robust as possible and we need to make sure that the infection pressure is as low as possible. If we can achieve these things, then we can significantly reduce the likelihood of getting pneumonia in our cattle.

But how do we do it??

To maximise host defence, we have to think of the first things first. When it comes to calf health **the first thing is colostrum**. Calves need 10% of their body weight of high quality colostrum in the first 6 hours of life. This will serve as a great start to building defences against infection.

Secondly, we need to ensure ongoing good nourishment. Nothing depletes the immune system's ability to fight infection more than inappropriate nutrition. Calves are at their most robust when growing at biologically normal rates - over 1 kg per day! When growing at a slower rate than that they will necessarily have weakened host defence. Therefore milk fed calves need 6 litres of milk replacer per day minimum with ad lib cake and clean water!

Thirdly we need to prevent cold stress. This is a challenge in UK conditions, however, there is much we can do to help. Moisture leads to evaporation which is cooling so keeping calves dry is a must. Draughts are also chilling—providing calves with accommodation where they can escape wind is also a must. If a calf is cold, its immune system will be struggling. Talk to your vet about ways you can help reduce draughts in your shed.

When thinking about infection pressure we need to do things that reduce the number of bugs the animals are challenged by. Bugs love moisture, dark and carbon dioxide. Conversely they hate light, oxygen and dry conditions. Therefore, keeping the environment dry helps the animal out by improving host defence (preventing

cold stress) and by reducing infection pressure. (The bedding must be dry enough such that you can kneel on it and not get damp knees). Moisture is produced by the calves to the tune of 5-6 litres per day through urine, faeces and water in their breath. This moisture needs to be able to escape through good ventilation. Drainage is essential also. Calves produce enough moisture on their own without poor drainage enabling water to run into calf housing or pool there. There is usually lots that can be done without considerable expense to aid ventilation. Discuss with your vet about getting one of our young stock team to assess your buildings! Lastly, good hygiene is imperative for reducing infection pressure. Investment in facilities to properly clean calf equipment will offer a return!

Finally if all basics are covered but we cannot address all issues, consider vaccination. Vaccination improves host defence against pneumonia bugs but it also reduces infection pressure because bugs have less opportunity to multiply in vaccinated animals. However, vaccination is not a golden bullet. There is no one vaccine that covers all the pneumonia bugs so accurate diagnosis is important for making the right vaccine decisions. New technology means that accurate diagnosis is far more likely now than it has been in the past so in the face of an outbreak, give us a call and we will endeavour to find the culprit so your vaccine can be hitting the target.

Next time you get a pneumonia outbreak, have a think and a talk with your vet about prevention going forward!



Graeme McPherson
Regional Vet Lead

Roy Gray



The practice was very saddened to pass on the news that Roy Gray passed away at the beginning of November.

Roy had been without doubt the longest serving member of the business. Not many people can say they have worked for the same business for 45 years but Roy started working for Wilkins and Partners in Crewkerne back in February 1973!

Back then Roy was employed as a paraprofessional, one of the first of his kind and he assisted the small animal vets in operations as well as being a very welcome assistant to farm vets when operating out on farm. In fact Roy became so good at assisting it became a standing joke that during a caesarean it was the vet would always be holding up Roy! If you were to ask any vet of that time they would say that they would only allow Roy to be the

assistant and certainly not another vet!!

Roy also became heavily involved in Brucellosis blood sampling. Many clients will remember the annual PBT or periodic blood test that Roy would carry out. In his time he blood sampled thousands of cows across the practice.

In 1990, Roy and Geoff Singleton travelled to Holland to be trained in the Dutch five step foot trimming method. On their return, a very basic WOPA crush was purchased and Roy became one of the first professional foot trimmers in the South West.

Since that time as Wilkins and Partners became Kingfisher Veterinary Practice and subsequently Synergy Farm Health, Roy has almost solely trimmed cows' feet. We believe he trimmed 257,000 feet of 122,000 cows, 1400 bulls and applied nearly 14,000 blocks.

The success that Roy brought to this role gave the practice confidence to invest further in

foot trimming and allow the team to build to our current level of 10 foot trimmers in the practice. The benefit he brought to cows and farmers was copied across the country with more and more vets employing foot trimmers and Vet Techs.

Roy continued to trim feet well past the time when many others may have retired, performing a very demanding physical job while setting the standard to his colleagues in terms of cleanliness and attention to detail.

Many of you will have known that Roy had been battling illness for the last 12 months and he was an example to us all in his last few months as he continued to always show good humour in his fight. He spent the last few months doing what he loved most and that was spending time with his devoted family. We send all our best wishes to Zoe, Liam and the rest of his family. He will be sorely missed by us all.

Jon Reader
Director



Vet Rachel Hayton and farmer Dan Macey presenting a case study on controlling mastitis at the British Mastitis Conference at Worcester Sixways rugby stadium in November. Dan runs a 300 cow dairy in the west of the practice.

Infectious Disease Screening

Synergy are pleased to be able to offer a new initiative so that every dairy and beef farmer is able to know their disease status for BVD, IBR and Leptospirosis.

Funding is available to allow us to offer disease testing for these common and potentially costly diseases when performed as part of your TB test. The test will require blood samples to be taken from six youngstock over 8 months of age, and will look for antibodies to these three diseases to see if your herd has had any exposure to any/all of them.

Our receptionists will remind you of this initiative when your TB test is booked in. Our vets and TB testers will be happy to talk with you about the diseases and the problems they can cause and gather the necessary samples when on farm.

Events

**Safe Use of
Veterinary
Medicines
(Sheep)**

18th December

Coming in January

MilkSure Course
22nd January at Evershot

2 Day Foot Trimming Cattle Lameness ACADEMY
22nd January at Lower Coombe

Lamb Post Mortem
30th January at Evershot

News from our Rounds

East

Claire Rudd



It has been a busy month for beef client meetings on the east side! Early in November Dr. Alex Corbishley from Edinburgh University spoke with us about their work on suckler cow nutrition and its impact on calf health. Several of Synergy's suckler herds contributed to this study and it was great to see many of our clients at the meeting. A big thank you to those who participated, the Fox Inn for hosting and to Ben Barber for organising.

The Farmers Weekly ran their Rethinking Cattle Performance workshop on the 22nd at one of our East farms. The focus was on rearing bought-in calves for the beef sector and included talks from Synergy's Ben Barber and Esme Moffett on calf husbandry and disease control. Everyone got a lot out of the day and again, it was lovely to see so many clients there.

This month has been extremely busy for us all. There has been a flurry of pre-movement TB tests prior to the housing period and due to concerns over winter feed and bedding stocks. On that subject, 6-monthly TB testing is due to come into force from January 2020. Herds will be exempt from this only if they 1. Have not had a TB breakdown in the last 6 years and/or 2. Are CHeCS accredited at level 1 or above (registered and participating in TB Herd Accreditation with a CHeCS-licensed Cattle Health Scheme and have achieved at least one year without a TB breakdown). Please speak to us if you would like more information on this and visit the CHeCS website www.checs.co.uk.

We were all greatly saddened by the passing of Jane Trim this month. Jane was a longstanding client of the practice and a good friend to many of us on the East team. She was a true inspiration and will be missed by us all.

South

Abi Charlesworth



Now seems the appropriate time to reflect back on the past year, which has certainly not been an easy one for most... However, I'm always looking for silver linings and, despite the gruelling summer, we've been fairly fortunate to be able to keep cattle out so late in year, with some people housing as late as mid-November: It seems strange to think that the summer is 'finally over', with it being only a weeks away from Christmas! However, we do need to remain vigilant about the possibilities of extreme weather delaying turnout next year and ensure realistic feed reserves are in place. If you haven't already done so, a forage analysis will improve the accuracy of daily intakes and help minimise wastage, so that you can have more confidence in your winter rationing calculations.



In other news, moving into the new Axminster office at Mole Avon has been an exciting change for the South team! If you haven't already done so, feel free to pop in and say Hello if you're passing by. There is a promising move on the BVD front with government funding now available for health plans and individual herd-level investigations to help drive the eradication of the disease, with more information and meetings rolling out in the not so distant future!

North

Rachel Hayton



December is traditionally the time of year when I pull my head out of the sand and start planning for Christmas. The realisation that I should have posted parcels abroad weeks ago and will never have the time to write 200 Christmas cards leads to a slightly more pragmatic, pared down approach. Fancy table decorations give way to a few home-grown Brussels sprouts and fingers crossed nobody complains!

The same could be true of taking stock of forage supplies for the winter. Many are likely to be extremely tight and now is the time for taking a good hard look at the options. Perhaps animals need to be sold, or alternative provisions made where they are available. The earlier this is done the better and the smaller the necessary adjustments may be. Also keep on checking throughout the winter to make sure the calculations are right. Hopefully there won't be a need for feeding Brussels sprouts by Christmas.

It has been a challenging start to the winter for pneumonia cases; don't forget that we have new tests available which improve the chance of a successful diagnosis. This can guide you to the most appropriate vaccine or it may be that management issues are the answer. Get in touch if you have pneumonia concerns.



The whole team at Synergy would like to wish all our clients an enjoyable Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

Christmas Day (Tue 25th) - Emergencies only
Boxing Day (Weds 26th) - Emergencies only
New Years Day — Emergencies only
Early office closing 24th & 31st December

Our 24 hour Emergency service will continue to operate at all times when the office is closed