



Bull Breeding Soundness Exams (BBSE) — *A good idea or a load of bull?!*

As our Spring calving herds have commenced calving (dairy nearly finished, beef mid season), now is the time to think about ensuring you have adequate bull power for the breeding season ahead.

A fully "fertile" bull is defined as 'a bull that can get 45 out of 50 cows in calf in 90 days (i.e 90% in 3 cycles)', 60% of these cows should get in calf to the first service and should therefore calve in the first 21 days of the calving period.

It is estimated that **one in three** bulls fall into the **sub fertile** (can achieve a pregnancy but not at the rate achieved by fertile bulls) or **infertile** (bulls that are incapable of reproducing) category.

Signs of reduced bull fertility include:

1) Prolonged calving period

A compact calving period will deliver:

- More weight of calf per cow mated.
- More efficient use of labour
- Calves of uniform size
- Cows at a similar stage in the production cycle.

A prolonged calving period can increase the number of calves born,

however these animals are younger and hence lighter at weaning. **Early calves are the most profitable in the beef herd and early calves in the dairy herd allow cows to milk for longer if you have a fixed dry off date.**



2) Increased numbers of barren cows.

A realistic target is 95 calves/100 cows/year.

3) Delayed calving to conception.

Delayed calving results in lost dairy production and reduced numbers of replacements.

A BBSE can give an indication as to how many cows are likely to be successfully covered by a bull, thus enabling a judgement to be made on the likely '**bull power**' needed prior to the service period.

April 2016

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A BBSE is a useful tool in the marketing and subsequent sale of bulls.

How long before the breeding window should bulls be tested?

Bulls should be tested at least 60 days before the service period. This is because the production and maturation of sperm takes two months. If necessary this time lag enables other arrangements to be made.

Don't delay, book your BBSE today to identify problem bulls and have a more profitable calving season.



Andy Adler

Free Forage Analysis

RAFT is currently collaborating with Sciantec on a research opportunity to offer forage analysis services only to the clients of the parent practices Bishopton and Synergy Farm Health. Sciantec are specialists in animal nutrition and health, feed and forage based in Cawood near York, they are currently developing new Near Infrared (NIR) calibrations on a number of different NIR Instrument platforms.

To help validate the calibrations, RAFT are looking for individual samples of grass silage, maize silage, whole crop and fresh cut grass or fresh cut maize. Sciantec have provided accurately sized bags which once full provide enough sample material for testing- pre-paid postage envelopes. In return for these samples will carry out their routine nutritional composition analysis on any samples received free of charge!

Reporting of results is efficient with a full report being received within 48 hours after submission.



In addition, RAFT and Sciantec are interested in investigating the feasibility of variability within a clamp compared to variability of sampling at the face.

If you would be interested in providing samples for testing please speak to your routine vet or the office for more details.

The Black Bull

Do you ever wake up on a lovely sunny day feeling like there is a black cloud over your head? Or find it hard to put a smile on at fun family occasions such as Christmas or birthdays? Or maybe you know someone who always seems to be in a bad mood or makes excuses to avoid social events? And no this has nothing to do with feelings after Welsh rugby defeats or English Grand Slams! Because in all seriousness maybe you, or your friend or family member, are suffering from some form of mental illness.

It's the disease that shall not be named, but call it what you will; depression, anxiety, severe stress these problems are very real and very common.

Mental illness affects 1 in 4 people at some point in their lives and more than 20% of people working in farming suffer from depression, with an average of one farmer committing suicide each week in the UK.

As we all know, farming can be a tough business. There are constant concerns over disease threats such as TB, variable trade prices or unpredictable weather such as risk of flooding. Not only that, it is a constant and sometimes thankless task – it is a 24/7 job as well as a way of life and many farmers take very little time off, or holiday away from the farm. Further to this farmers can spend a long time working alone and can often go whole days without any other human contact. This means plenty of time to spend with your own thoughts, allowing the negative ones to perpetuate.

#WellbeingWellies

The charity South Somerset Mind has launched a social media campaign to increase awareness of mental health issues amongst the farming community and raise money for the services they provide. Mental illness is a serious problem in farmers, with many taking their own lives. All you

We can all experience feelings of low mood or stress, and there is usually an instigating situation for this such as a death in the family or a problem at work, but in most people this would only last a few days. If these feelings last for several weeks then you could be suffering from depression. The box below lists some of the symptoms of depression – do you recognise any of them in yourself or a family member?

If someone has a bad case of flu or breaks their arm then they take medicine or get it fixed and we all wish them well, but there is still quite a taboo surrounding mental health, we can't stick a plaster on it and hope it goes away and telling someone to 'cheer up' is not helpful advice. The best thing that we can do for mental illness is to talk about it. However, with the majority of farmers being male and men being well known for not talking openly about personal problems, it can be very hard to make that first step to seeking help.

The good news is that there is lots of help out there. I have listed a few useful websites in the box below and also included the helpline for the Farming Community Network – they have people who understand farming and rural life available to speak to you from 7am – 11pm daily. These services also offer lots of advice to the friends and family of sufferers; sometimes you might be the ones that take the first steps in seeking help or approach your loved one about how they might be feeling.

need to do is take a picture of yourself in your wellies and post it on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter using the hashtag [#WellbeingWellies](#), then text [MIND42 £3](#) to [70070](#) to donate. Fresh air and exercise makes us all feel better, so pull on your wellies, get outside and get snapping. Don't forget

Finally, remember to look after yourself. Lifestyle changes such as reducing alcohol consumption and stopping smoking can help your mood. Taking more exercise can help, especially if this encourages social interaction and re-think about your work life balance. When was the last time you had a day off to go to the seaside or took your family out for dinner? But most importantly, please remember to talk to people whether that is a friend, family member or your routine vet! There is plenty of support available, you are not alone.

Some common symptoms of depression include:

- continuous low mood
- having low self-esteem
- feeling guilt-ridden
- feeling irritable
- having no motivation
- disturbed sleep
- avoiding social activities
- having difficulties in your home and family life

Where to go for help and support

- www.mindex.org.uk
- www.southsomersetmind.co.uk
- www.dorsetmind.org.uk
- FCN 03000 111 999
www.fcn.org.uk
- www.nhs.uk



Andrew Davies

to share your pictures with us too so we can see what you've been getting up to.



Jurassic Coast Challenge



Many congratulations to Synergy vet Alasdair Moffett who recently completed three marathons in three days (an enormous 78 miles), running along the SW coastal path from Charmouth to Studland. The terrain needs no introduction, including famous landmarks such as Golden Cap, Portland, Lulworth Cove and Studland naturist colony! A



considerable physical and mental challenge by anyone's standards. Even more remarkably Moff came 16th out of 232 participants. Very well done indeed!

Support was provided by Alasdair's loyal wife Esme, along with colleague Ed Powell-Jackson who acted as driver, with Ed's wife Polly providing nutritional support. It was a great opportunity for us as "West" vets to venture out of our patch and head east of Dorchester and explore the Purbecks, locating numerous clients' farms along the way. It was noticeable that more herds of milking cows were already turned out (and sucklers outwintered) on the more open but free draining terrain compared to the very wet Marshwood Vale, Somerset Levels

and Blackdown Hills. Lambing was in full swing but there was not much grass about - what a difference to earlier in the winter.



I am sure you will also join me and the whole Synergy team in wishing Esme good luck in her forthcoming London Marathon, and look forward to her matching her husband's impressive result. No pressure Esme! Esme is running this in aid of the Farming Community Network (FCN), a very worthy charity so relevant to many in our community in these difficult times.

Ed Powell-Jackson



Farming Community Network (FCN). This charity has strong and longstanding links with the farming community. The volunteers are all farmers or are associated with farming and understand the problems facing agriculture today. They can help with problems or issues in the following areas: business, family, health and farm. With the current economic struggles being faced by the farming community I think now, more than ever, we need charities like FCN to provide help and support to those in need.

If you can spare a few quid to show your support for me and this charity, it would be greatly appreciated. You can visit my fundraising page www.virginmoneygiving.com/esme-moffett-fcn to donate online, or you can sponsor me in person when you next see me on farm. Thank you.



On Sunday 24th April I will be lacing up my trainers and running the **London Marathon**. I'm not just doing it to get fit - I'm raising money for a great cause, the

Esme Moffett



6 Months in Shorts

Last year several of our vets took on the challenge of wearing shorts to work every day from 1st April until 30th September, for no reason other than

to just see if they can do it! We'll be embarking on this challenge again this year and we want you to join us. Take a picture of yourself in your shorts at

work and share it with us on Facebook or Twitter using the hashtag **#6monthsinshorts**. Good Luck - it can be cold in April...brrr

Plan your Pre-Turnout Vaccinations

Turnout time will soon be upon us, so now is the time to start planning prevention of a few problems including Leptospirosis and Lungworm. We are also pleased to be able to offer a 5% discount on combined purchases of Leptavoid H and Bovilis BVD.

	Price per dose	Combi Price per dose
Leptavoid H (25 dose pack)	1.80	1.71
Bovilis BVD	2.00	1.90

News from our Rounds

Pete Siviter



After a very challenging winter for many, it feels good to have a bit of spring in the air - although the grass still doesn't seem to be growing as well as it was at Christmas!

Nevermind, this busy time of year is in full flow and nothing quite compares to the tense excitement of lambing and calving. The only shame is that the skittles season is now over and for me the stick-ups have been few and far between - perhaps we'll get in some out-of-season training before next year.

Hang on in there folks, and remember to watch out for lungworm after turnout.

JUNIOR LABORATORY SUPPORT TECHNICIAN

An enthusiastic and organised individual is required to join our team at Synergy Farm Health - a busy, progressive Farm Animal Veterinary Practice based in Evershot Dorset.

This full time role is focussed on the development of our laboratory service which is run in conjunction with an independent laboratory company. The post also includes additional responsibilities related to the operational requirements of our veterinary team. The successful candidate will have an interest in laboratory procedures, good attention to detail and a willingness to learn. A background in the veterinary / agricultural industries would be an advantage.

Synergy Farm Health is an equal opportunities employer. A clean current driving licence is required.

Please apply to

jo.masters@synergyfarmhealth.com with your CV Closing date 29th April 2016

Gareth Foden



Some of you may know that I became a father at the end of February and spent two weeks in the comfort of my home. Our little Norah was born on the 26th February weighing in at 8lbs 15oz which made us question the choice of sire, however she is growing at a monstrous rate so feed conversion is also efficient. I find that fatherhood suits me and for now has changed my perspective on life. I wandered into the doctor's surgery to register Norah and met a gaggle of coughing old ladies, so ran from the building thinking that the ventilation and bug challenge was too risky for my newborn. Despite adequate hygiene and plentiful antibiotics at my disposal Norah still managed to get an umbilical (navel) abscess which is apparently common, but the blue spray soon cleared it up (joke!). Since my return to work, aside from the norm there seems to be plenty of lambings taking place. I have heard of a few cases of joint ill outbreaks. Try to ensure adequate colostrum intake and hygiene in lambing pens. Dress all navels appropriately to try and avoid my daughter's blunder. If you see me looking tired over the next few weeks you will know why...Synergy are working me too hard!

Alastair Hayton



You can always tell it is March, not by the increasing day length or the rise in temperature (just a glimmer of this now!), or the arrival of Hot Cross buns in our cupboard but because it is Displaced Abomasum season. Please don't ask me why, it's not a case of a problem associated with intakes post turnout, the vast majority are not turned out yet, the cows are no fatter, the diet hasn't changed ostensibly but we just get more random cases. All very frustrating for all those concerned and answers on the back of a postcard if you can come up with a sound theory as to what is going on!

On the farming front, beyond the very obvious issues; milk price, TB (more severe restrictions for breakdown herds coming), etc there has not been a huge amount to report.

Let's hope the weather now sets fair for us and we can get the grass growing well, we very much need an excellent growing season.

Congratulations

Congratulations to The Bowden Herd of Beef Shorthorns belonging to Sue Watson and Tim Prior of East Chinnock, they have won Best Small Herd in the Southern England Herd competition. Not only that, at the Southern Calf Show their two young bull calves picked up a 1st and a 3rd prize.

If you're out and about this forthcoming show season then let us know - we'll share your achievements on our Facebook page.

EVENTS

Visit our new website for further details on these events
www.synergyfarmhealth.com

Farm Biosecurity

Mon 25th April 7pm
The Kings Arms, Stoborough, Wareham

Beef Discussion Group

Weds 27th April 2-4pm
Nr Dorchester

Sheep Lameness Meetings

Tues 10th May 7.30pm The Royal Oak, Bere Regis
OR Mon 23rd May 7.30pm—Eagle Tavern, Chard

Safe Use of Veterinary Medicines

Weds 11th May
at Evershot

Organic Sheep Discussion Group

Weds 25th May 2-4pm
at Rempstone Farm, Wareham

Complete with
Organic Cheeseburger!

Mastitis Control Workshop

Mon 23rd May
at Evershot

For further information or to book your place on any of these events please contact 01935 83682 or email courses@synergyfarmhealth.com

WEST HILL BARN, EVERSHOT, DORSET, DT2 0LD
01935 83682

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