



Early growth is lean growth!

The fact that dairy heifers that calve at 22-24 months of age are the most productive, most cost effective and have fewer health problems in first lactation is well understood. Producers are well aware that to be in-calf at fifteen months of age and calve at 24 at an appropriate size, Holstein heifers have to gain an average of 850g per day.

However, how that weight is deposited depends to a large extent on the age of the animal. For instance, a 4 week old pre-weaned heifer will be growing by creating almost entirely bone and muscle tissue. In contrast, an 18 month old heifer will be depositing far more weight as fat.

The association between excessive fat deposition in maiden heifers and first lactation health problems is well established. Fat heifers are more likely to suffer from dystocia, retained placenta and metritis than heifers of a normal body condition score. As body fat suppresses appetite in cattle, fat heifers eat less after calving making them prone to poor performance and ketosis.

This means that early growth is far more beneficial to heifer health and production than later growth. The good news is that early growth is far more efficient than later growth (newborn calves require 2-3 kg food for every kg growth whereas adult cattle can require up to 8kg!).

Maximising your heifer growth rates in the first six months of life by minimising disease and paying careful attention to husbandry and nutrition means that you won't have to play "catch up" further down the line and end up with animals that have deposited too much fat.

The first step is to measure and monitor. This means knowing your average daily live weight gains, disease and mortality rates throughout rearing.



November 2016

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It really is the case that early growth means more milk further down the line.



If you would like help assessing your current heifer performance and some ideas on how to make improvements then our 0-6 youngstock team of vets and vet techs can help. Give us a call and speak to Esme Moffett or Tom Shardlow.



Tom Shardlow

Synergy Robotic Milking Seminar

Key Challenges..

Six Synergy vets recently attended a half day meeting hosted by our local Lely dealership to further develop our knowledge of robotic milking systems. As motivated dairy cattle vets we consider it vital that we remain abreast of the latest technology in order to offer the best veterinary advice, as well as added insight when new units are planned.

We have at least 10 herds across the practice, including the highest yielding six Lely robot herd in the UK (an impressive 41.6 litres/cow/day), and the highest yielding cross bred herd. Many other units are either planned or in construction, even in these difficult financial times.#

Our discussions related to a number of the challenges associated with robotic dairy farming some of which included in the box:

- ! Mastitis detection using conductivity and the risk of "false positives"
- ! Maximising cow comfort by the use of deep bedded cubicles, to include the merits of sand vs green bedding vs sawdust
- ! Changes in cow body weight - is this relevant when trying to assess energy intakes and monitor condition loss?
- ! The balance between feeding at the feed fence (to support high yields) and encouraging visits to the robot (through cake feeding) to allow multiple milkings per day
- ! Optimising cow flow to maximise easy access to the robot, especially for low ranking cows
- ! The remarkable persistence of heifer lactations on a robotic system
- ! Siting of foot baths to optimise foot health, cow flow and ease of operation
- ! Rumination and activity collars - how these help to identify sick cows and those in heat

We also spent time taking apart the teat brushes and liners from a commissioned robot to fully understand the mechanism of pre and post milking teat preparation, and its vital role in milk hygiene and quality.

Those interested in learning more about robotic milking should make every effort to attend our joint open day at Dillington Estate's Knott Oak Dairy, Ilminster on Tuesday 13th December - invitations to follow.

Ed Powell-Jackson



New Reduced Price Dry Cow Therapy

We are pleased to announce we have sourced Cefshot as a like for like replacement product for Cepravin DC. It is an identical formulation and replacement for Cepravin, and **good news – reduced in price!** Please speak to our Pharmacy for more information.



Available now from our Dairy Hygiene Vans



Stress Free Calf Tube Feeding

Designed by a vet, the Trusti Tuber significantly reduces calf stress and discomfort—soft, flexible tube, swallows easily and the calf struggling is minimised making the Trusti Tuber very easy to use.

- Flexi Tube can be held in place with one hand
- Large 4 litre capacity bottle.
- Transparent flexible tube makes it easy to clean and monitor flow.
- Ergonomic bottle handle - perfect for large and small hands.
- Reliable valve - fast flow even with thick colostrum.
- Shown in trials to almost halve procedure feeding time.



Call Sarah on 07795 574088

GENOMICS has the potential to revolutionise current genetic thinking

The exciting launch of **CLARIFIDE GENOMICS** was officially announced at the South West Dairy Event on 5th October by Synergy MD Andrew Davies.

Andrew and Mark Burnell welcomed vets from the XL Vet Group and Sam Gayton, Zoetis National Manager, gave a short talk about how Zoetis, owners of CLARIFIDE, see this new development in herd genetics as a real breakthrough for farmers to accelerate their herd genetic potential with the aid of scientific data. Mark supported this, recognising that like all new technology it would take time for more farmers to adopt the technology, but saw this as a key part of future farm health planning.

The launch is the culmination of four years of work by the Synergy & RAFT team engaging with Zoetis in the USA to understand how it is being applied to the American market and then

adapting the results to suit the UK market.

The testing is very simple as only a few hair follicles are required for the DNA to be analysed in America. The huge amount of DNA information is then 'unlocked' using a UK 'key' to achieve a 70% accurate prediction of the animal's potential. Current methodology is operating at approximately 30%, so there is a huge advantage in the use of CLARIFIDE. A crucial part of the process developed by our team, is to gain an understanding of what the farmer wants/needs for the future of their herd and then use the huge and complex data to plan a way forward with their semen supplier. Clarifide aligns breeding decisions with herd health. It allows us to influence improvements in herd health by making use of the DNA at an early stage.



The range of opportunity is huge, but in its simplest form farmers are able to sample their heifer crop as calves then rank

the animals' potential thereby allowing early decisions for breeding (selling, beefing, conventional, sexed etc) so increasing beef income and reducing rearing costs whilst still meeting replacement requirements... and with superior animals!



So as the graphic depicts this is a real eye on the future!

Alan King



Tyre Wire Surprise

About six months ago I was carrying out a routine LDA operation on a dairy cow, but it was proving hard to correct as there were several adhesions attached to the abomasum. Eventually I got it back and stitched it in place. I was just doing my last 'general check' of the abdomen when I felt something strange attached to the surface of the liver. It was something hard enclosed in a little capsule. I managed to push it out and to my surprise it was a piece of tyre wire. This is likely to have been the cause of the adhesions that had made

correcting the DA tricky, but this cow was very lucky that it had got stopped on the liver.

This week I had a similar situation. Gareth Foden and I were doing another routine DA, but it was again proving hard to correct. I could feel all these hard 'lumps' attached to her stomach and it confused me. When the abomasum came around, Gareth was just trying to locate the correct bit to stitch when he pulled out a piece of wire! It became evident that these 'lumps' were in fact abscess scars from where the wire had punctured the abomasal wall several times causing lots of localised reactions. This cow had obviously swallowed the wire in a mouthful of food and instead of it remaining in the rumen it had continued through the

digestive tract (very unusual), until it had got stopped at the narrowing of the pyloric sphincter; this is a muscular ring between the stomach and the small intestine. Again this cow had been very lucky that the reactions had been so localised.

Hopefully this is a reminder to us all that tyre wires are still a very real risk to cows if you keep tyres on your silage clamps. These two cows were very lucky and the consequences can be much more severe; either severe illness or death. A magnet is a cheap and easy way to help protect your cows or consider using different 'weights' on top of your clamps.

Esme Moffett



Cattle Lameness
ACADEMY

www.cattlelamenessacademy.co.uk

2 day Foot Trimming 28th and 29th November

1 day Grinder Course 16th December

News from our Rounds

Mark Burnell East



Being British it's good to start this with a comment about the weather – what a great autumn it's been (until yesterday when it 'volumed washed' me during a TB test (yes, I still do a bit!)). Most maize is safely in I think and the roads have stayed reasonably clean to keep good old Joe public happy.

At this time of year we might expect some lungworm and grass staggers but on the East it seems to have been quite quiet. What we have seen is a surge in insect associated problems – red water, fly nuisance and New Forest eye. We had a memorable week when the blood transfusion kit went out five times for Red Water cases – this is an option with severely affected (anaemic) animals. Whilst they are obviously pale we do a test called a PCV which tells us how low in blood cells they really are and we have been doing some investigations to see if this can give us a prognosis for recovery. Farms that used the French vaccine found it very successful and IF we can get it next year it maybe something you want to discuss with us if you think your cattle are at risk.

Flies seem to have had a real late season surge and for some have made milking very frustrating due to clusters being kicked off. On some units we have been using an IGR (insect growth regulator) which kills off developing fly larvae and is a technique common in the pig sector. It can be very successful – my usual 'test' is whether there are still too many flies in the farm kitchen, but this year I think we may have stopped applications too early.

Finally, if you are interested in finding out more about Genomics and how to breed towards your ideal cow. Watch out for a farm meeting coming to our region before Christmas.

Ben Barber South



The unusual lingering warmth at the start of October has meant that some unwelcome diseases have also managed to cling on. Several farms in the south have had outbreaks of lungworm during the late summer and some are still being surprised by it even now - unfortunately a disease that is predictably unpredictable in its appearance. Respiratory problems seem to be a theme with the sharp changes in temperature through the day accounting for a frustrating increase in youngstock pneumonia on some farms. Hopefully some of you managed to attend the youngstock meetings recently which had the charismatic Jamie Robertson discussing his no-nonsense approach to effective housing designs for cattle.

We are able to assess your building's ventilating capabilities and offer advice regarding pneumonia vaccination. Many farmers balk at the cost of vaccine but improved growth rates more than cover the cost of an effective vaccine programme. Also remember that when buying in young stores, it is worth paying a premium for already vaccinated calves through the Sure Calf Scheme. You can read more at www.surecalf.co.uk.

I had the opportunity last month to attend some genomic workshops with our very own Mark Burnell leading them. There we looked at some of the new technologies that are available, allowing us to realise the potential in our heifers and capitalise on it. Being able to visually assess the spread of qualities in a herd and then manage them accordingly was highly satisfying. Who thought looking at PLIs, inbreeding values and type traits could be so addictive. . .

Graeme McPherson North



For those who haven't met me yet, I joined the Synergy team on August 22nd and have really enjoyed getting to know the farmers – and the area. When I came and had my interviews at Synergy and on later visits when I was visiting to look for houses, I was beginning to think that West Country weather was beset by permanent horizontal rain. I have been pleasantly surprised by the beautiful Autumn we have had since I started and this has served to heighten my families optimism about the move from Oxfordshire.

A mild and relatively dry Autumn is extremely valuable to our North Farmers as many of them have cattle grazing 'the Moors'. This year people have been able to leave their cattle out for longer grazing relatively good quality grass. This translates into a serious cost saving as housed cattle cost in excess of £2 per day to keep. Good news.

The mild temperatures and extended grazing season may catch some people out on the parasite front. The worm and fluke life cycles are able to continue when the average ambient temperature is over 10 degrees C so sheep produces and grazers of young cattle need to be watching their animals carefully for signs of scour and/or weight loss. Sheep farmers should also be on the look-out for anaemia caused by Haemonchus (Barbers Pole worm) which may still be active in these mild temperatures.

With winter housing upon us, we need to be ready for an increase in digital dermatitis (DD) as infection pressure ramps up with all our cattle permanently housed. Foot bathing has proven to be an essential element of dealing with DD.

Commercial flocks & smallholders welcome

Sponsored by

Sheep Sparging:

Tuesday 29th November 2:00pm

Kindly hosted by the team at "The Pig on the Beach", Manor House, Manor Rd, Swanage BH19 3AU

Key areas we will cover include vaccinations, fluke management over winter and as usual a catch up about your stock.

Call to book - 01935 83682

We also invite you to bring a friend. A fellow smallholder perhaps. £10.00 per person for non-members. There are limited spaces so please confirm attendance and numbers.

Sheep Sparging and pre-breeding workshop.

So come along, learn, question and discuss with vets and other smallholders.

EVENTS

Herd Health and Fertility
Tues 22nd Nov

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

We are going to be hosting a **Footbathing and Digital Dermatitis Control workshop** in the North in December. Keep an eye out for your invitation and other promotional material