



The Heat is on!

With the UK experiencing the driest summer since 1976, and temperatures reaching record levels, the drought-like conditions have been challenging across all farming sectors. With no sign of rain on the horizon here are Synergy Farm Health's Top Tips to consider for keeping livestock safe, comfortable and maintaining production in the hot weather:

1. Beware the dangers of **poisonous plants**. **Ragwort** survives well in dry conditions due to its deep roots and becomes more palatable as it dries out. **Bracken** also poses a threat if eaten in large quantities. **Hemlock Water Dropwort** (*pictured*), also known as Dead Man's Fingers can be found in damp, marshy ground typically in ditches and is the most toxic plant in Britain to both animals and humans. Hedges may contain poisonous plants not visible on initial inspection and be browsed by livestock seeking shade.



2. Provide ad-lib **clean water**. An obvious one but ensure trough space is adequate as water intakes increase (the recommendation for dairy cows is that 10% of the group should be able to drink at once), and the troughs are clean. If your water is not mains supplied it is advisable to have it tested yearly for composition and quality – palatability is important as intakes may be affected, with a knock-on effect on production. Please note it

is a legal requirement to provide water to ALL species, including sheep and goats. Caution if using river or lake sources – the Environment Agency has issued warnings of lethal Blue-green algae across the UK recently as the hot dry weather continues.

3. **Graze at night, house by day** to boost dry matter intakes and give respite from the heat. Ensure buildings are well ventilated.
4. Offer **buffer feed** to counteract the shortfall in grass quality. Most of our dairy clients will already be doing this, with some even on full winter rations. Maize silage, whole-crop wheat, molasses, brewers grains, and sugar beet pulp are all good buffer feeds providing the grass still has some nutritional value. On most units this is now not the case and decent quality long fibre feed such as big bale silage or straw must be added in. Please be aware of the risk of acidosis in grazing herds with the decreased fibre content of grass – this should be minimised with plenty of long fibre such as barley straw.
5. Consider **smaller group sizes** for dairy cows to reduce standing times in the collecting yard and to correctly manage the diet in the absence of good grass. Is it possible to split cows up into highs and lows?
6. **Vitamin and mineral supplementation**: Plants may fail to take up essential nutrients such as Vitamin E, selenium and cobalt in dry conditions which may lead to deficiencies. Supplement licks or concentrate feeding may help counteract the shortfall. If deficiencies are suspected it is

August 2018

- The Heat is on!
- Practice Standards
- Total Dairy
- Meet the Team
- Vet Tech News
- Events
- SureFarm
- Regional News

advisable to test a group of animals first to assess which nutrients are lacking to avoid over-supplementation. Be aware that in the hot weather animals' salt requirements will also increase – salt blocks can help.

7. **Kexxtone** is an intra-ruminal device containing monensin – it increases the energy available to the cow and acts to counteract the negative energy balance in the transition period and into early lactation, reducing the incidence of ketosis. Given the poor nutritional value of grass at the moment, its use may be justified in dry cows who are due to calve in at least 10 days time.
8. **Review heat detection methods**. Cattle are less likely to show bulling in the hot weather, even if the energy level in the diet remains adequate. Extra observation +/- heat detection aids such as stickers or tail paint may help reduce the drop in pregnancy rates.
9. Be spot on with your **fly control**. Nuisance flies will reduce production as well as spreading infections such as New Forest Eye and summer mastitis. Flystrike is an obvious issue in sheep but remember also animals with castration/surgery sites.



Claire Rudd
Veterinary Surgeon

Synergy Practice Standards Inspection

Synergy Farm Health recently had its annual inspection for the Practice Standards Scheme controlled by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. This involved a rigorous inspection where all aspects of our service were examined, from client care to pharmacy practice. We were incredibly proud of our report and of all the staff (both the vets and

support staff) who work so hard to ensure that we stay on top of our game!

Lines from our Assessors feedback report included;

'a very well-managed and efficiently run go-ahead practice'

'the very busy pharmacy was

excellent – very well organised and tightly run'

'Good support for younger staff'

'It was a pleasure to visit this excellent, well-managed Farm Only practice. As good as it gets!'



Total Dairy Conference 2018

In early July six progressive dairy farmers from across the practice joined our MD Andrew Davies and North Regional Lead Graeme McPherson at the Total Dairy Conference held in Stratford-Upon-Avon. Total Dairy is an annual conference that brings together knowledge from across the dairy sector with dairy farmers, vets and dairy consultants attending to hear speakers from around the world talk about their latest research and experience. Speakers this year included world leading researchers such as Alex Bach, who talked about the latest research on calf rearing through to Don Niles, a successful dairy farmer from Wisconsin.

one another and the feedback from the farmers who attended (as well as our vets!) was that they had a fantastic time learning through the talks but even more through conversations within the group. We also enjoyed a tippie at the conference dinner!

One farmer said, 'I don't think I have ever had so much out of a conference and that's due to the company I was in.'

It was apparent that the farmers who attended got a great deal out of the time they spent together and they thought that a discussion group based around Progressive Dairying would be a welcome addition to the services that Synergy provide. Therefore it is our intention to begin such a discussion group starting this winter..

PROGRESSIVE DAIRYING DISCUSSION GROUP

Our idea is that the discussion group will visit farms and discuss topics that YOU, the group, decide are important to you and you want to explore. We will help facilitate the discussions and bring in ideas and external speakers when it suits the subject. We believe

it will suit all types of dairy farmers who are interested in pushing forward their dairying businesses, big or small, and enable exchange of ideas between farmers as well as keeping abreast of the latest knowledge and technology.

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!

If you are interested in being a part of such a group then please register your interest by email with Gemma at our office:

gemma.bowditch@synergyfarmhealth.com
or 01935 83682.

Graeme McPherson
Regional Vet Lead



As always the opportunity to learn from external speakers was enhanced by our opportunities to learn from



Meet the Team—Abbie Brister

I joined the practice in 2010 and thoroughly enjoy my role as laboratory supervisor. Day to day this means ensuring the smooth running and development of the on-site laboratory; including quality assurance, good practice and trying not to get covered in any form of sample during processing! My major areas of interest are bovine mastitis and parasitology. I am currently continuing my Bioscience studies which allows me plenty of opportunities for researching those areas. I also have the great pleasure of

working with our smallholder team and members; organising workshops, newsletters and generally chatting all things smallholder. I aspire to keeping poultry and sheep, so I'm picking up some great tips!

Of a summer evening I love to be out walking (and foraging tortoise edible plants) or working in the garden (hopefully producing vegetables and cut bouquets). When it is too dark to be outside, I will be crocheting gifts in front of the fire or in the corner of a pub playing the fiddle or trumpet for local bands.

Vet Tech News

July seems to be the month for "Matt's turn" as not only is it my turn to write a Newsletter article I also had the pleasure of hosting Synergy's RVC students on their weekly Wednesday afternoon Foot Trimming session.

Rather like a dentist appointment it's not something I look forward to but always feel a sense of accomplishment and achievement when it's over.

The 3-hour session comprises of an hour in the classroom talking about the role of Synergy's Vet Tech team and 2 hours trimming and blocking cadaver feet from the abattoir.

Usually I can't wait to get out of the classroom, a room I've never been comfortable in, but this particular afternoon the session overran as we had a discussion about people's perception of lameness and its terminology.

A lame cow and a cow in pain are one and the same thing but I feel changing "lame" for "in pain" somehow has more effect and may change a person's perception.

Instead of scoring a lame cow a "2" perhaps we should say she is in pain and a score "3" is in chronic pain.

If only cows stopped giving milk as soon as they went lame I'm sure the UK average herd Mobility Score would plummet overnight.

Synergy's IT is ever evolving and (hopefully) improving our service to you, our clients. We have recently introduced new software to record our trimming sessions. There is an abundance of new buttons to press but one button has remained the same and that is "refer to vet"

This is not a button we press frequently but when we do we always have the welfare of the animal as our priority.

Historically many of the cows we "refer to vet" seldom get seen for further treatment by a Vet. Unfortunately, the chain of communication between trimmer, Vet and client can sometimes have a weak link.

At our recent Vet Tech team meeting we resolved to ensure all cows we refer for further treatment are seen by a Vet in a timely manner and any other lameness issues that may be cause for concern are passed on to either the routine Vet or Regional Veterinary Lead.

So, I will try to be more proactive and diligent about following up problem cows that I feel need more treatment. If I may paraphrase Edmund Burke....."It only takes a good Foot Trimmer to do nothing for lameness to prosper".

Matt Board
Vet Tech



Look out for our stands

Gillingham & Shaftesbury Show
Wednesday 15th August

Melplash Agricultural Show
Thursday 23rd August

Courses

Safe Use of Veterinary Medicines
21st August at Evershot

Cattle Lameness ACADEMY

2 Day Foot Trimming
13 & 14th August

Coming in September

Safe Use of Veterinary Medicines for Commercial Sheep Flocks
5th September

DIY AI Course
10th September

Comprehensive Guide to Calving the Cow
13th September

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



Surefarm Ltd (Synergy's sister company) have been developing a new serological test for Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB). Research into this new test has shown some very exciting possibilities. One possibility is that we could use Bulk Milk as an indicator for disease. In order to prove this and get a better understanding of the complex nature of bTB we are in need of some Bulk Milk samples in

order to validate our test.

We are currently asking vets to mention this to you during TB tests so that you can give us permission to get a Bulk Milk sample in two scenarios

- If in the unfortunate situation that you fail your TB test, on identification of TB in a herd (day of TT2)
- If you are lucky enough to have been tested free of TB in the last 6 months and have no history of TB in the last 6 years and based in a LOW risk area.

If YOU fit this criteria PLEASE mention to your testing vet that we need to collect a Bulk Milk sample.

There is a tight deadline for this so we are looking for samples by the **15th AUGUST**. All samples received will be entered into a prize draw with the winner receiving an iPad

Please feel free to contact Surefarm Ltd for any more information on **01935 83203**

Win an iPad

News from our Rounds

East

Tom Clarke



Well, after months of dry weather I am finally getting out my camping gear and lo and behold rain is due on the radar but for once I am quite happy about it! With heat reducing cow intakes, rationing of silage stocks fed out to cattle and more concentrate being used there have been a lot of cows teetering on the edge (and over it) of acidosis in the last month. No dairy farming system has been immune to the effects of the drought. Fly worry and the associated eye problems have also added to the difficulties. On a recent visit to Wisconsin I saw how effectively building design can help alleviate the effects of heat (and cold) stress with cross vent and tunnel vent sheds. I am not sure what the average UK consumer would make of the system, looking more like an intensive pig or poultry unit, but it was without doubt much more comfortable for the cows (and visiting UK farmers/vets!) inside than outside!



North

Josh Swain



Last month saw the second 0-6 workshop of the year kindly hosted by Dillington Farms, where heifer fertility was the focus. The North region now has the highest number of 0-6 subscribers in the practice which is fantastic and hopefully means you aren't sick of me going on about calves all the time. Esme and I recently attended two days of training looking at the importance of early nutrition on heifer growth and lifetime productivity, especially around milk feeding. With all of you being told you need to produce more food from less, the first few months of a calf's life are key to finding efficiencies.

There have been a few changes to the North team. Sadly Vlad, who many of you may have had out TB testing or with me on Wednesday's has left to start an internship elsewhere. His unique skittling abilities will be missed but we welcome our newest vet on the North, Tom Warboys, who I do believe currently holds the skittle trophy. Tom is the latest and one of many Synergy vets to have gone through the Intern programme, following in the footsteps of Gareth, myself and Charlotte on the North and I'm sure you'll make him feel welcome.

Don't forget that myself, Paula and Graeme are holding a meeting at Barrington Village Hall on 15th August covering all things TB so look forward to seeing you there!

South

Jon Reader



Obviously weather has dominated all the farming discussions recently and there is an article elsewhere in the newsletter discussing nutritional management further. However we have seen more people moving to grazing animals at night and then having them in during the day. There is some good science behind this coming out of Harper Adams and other places. It may be something to also consider even in the Autumn when temperatures begin to drop as dry matter intakes tend to be improved.

With the hot weather we are seeing more and more problems with flies. One of the main issues is with eyes and the onset of New Forest Eye. There are several treatment options for these but the key thing is to treat as early as possible and to be in touch if things are not getting better as we can inject antibiotic (and sometimes steroid) directly into the eyelid. Fly tags can also help if they are put in before you have a problem but one in each ear is often required.

August is always a busy time for Synergy as it's the show season and particularly in the South region where we attend both the Melplash and Honiton Show. If you are attending a show come and see us for a warm welcome and our traditional ploughmans lunch.

TB information Events

Weds 8th August 12pm
Ridgeway Inn, Axminster

Tues 14th August 12pm
Red Lion, Winfrith Newburgh

Weds 15th August 11am
Barrington Village Hall,
Nr Ilminster

Dispensary News

With a summer of record breaking temperatures and fly populations – eye infections and summer mastitis have increased.

Don't delay your mid-summer application of fly control.

With discount on 1L (limited stock of free guns)

No need to buy a 5L to get a keen price!



SPOTINOR

2.5 Litres £160 + VAT

Prices correct 01/08/2018 Ex VAT Offers end 30/09/2018

Please ensure your medicine order has been placed by 10am for all of our centre deliveries and no later than 2:30pm the day before your direct to farm delivery. This enables the dispensary team to organise and dispense your medication efficiently.