

News from our Rounds

East

Tom Clarke



I had a great trip to Total Dairy last month with 10 farmers from Synergy's progressive dairy discussion group. There was lots of talk about calf housing and the benefits of paired accommodation on the future social behaviour of heifers and updates on the latest genomic test (ClarifidePlus) which takes into account disease resistant traits. One really interesting talk was given by a guy who works with farmers on communication within farm staff. He explained you need to understand that the way you talk to people influences how they react to what you say and his on-farm workshops help farmers answer the question "why don't they do what I ask them to do?". It is something that some people are naturally good at but most of us would benefit from spending some time understanding each others personalities and how to "flex" a little to get the best out of your farm team. On the way home we were lucky enough to get an invitation to visit the Shaneal herd of 500 Holsteins which now average 14000 litres per cow. It was great to see two brothers working really productively together on this farm – maybe they had been to a workshop!

One of my other interests is working on how we can better treat mastitis – ie more targeted treatments at certain bacteria and working out how we can decide if a mastitis (inflammation of the udder) is in fact just inflammation and there are no significant bacteria to be treated. We are trialling a system that automates this decision and after giving the machine a mastitis sample it will tell you in 22 hours what the bacteria is (if one is present) . You then follow a flow chart to see if she will benefit from targeted narrow spectrum antibiotic for specific bacteria (best cure rates) or if she is likely to self cure without treatment. This is a knowledge field that is expanding rapidly and is very exciting. We are also using a manual system on some farms now, similar to a Delvo test, that takes just 12 hours to give you a decision on what, if any, specific treatment is required.

South

Tom Cook



I have hit the ground running after getting married at the end of June and having a lovely honeymoon in France. It's fair to say that some of the Synergy team made full use of the hospitality available to enjoy themselves. I have also been on an excellent mastitis course which reaffirmed the need for quality robust data recording on farm (cell counts and clinical cases). This data will allow us to analyse disease patterns and take targeted actions to prevent disease rather than firefight when a flare up occurs. We have had the first reports of lungworm infection in cattle around the country, this potentially fatal disease will show as coughing particularly when cattle are running around.

We are pleased to welcome Interns Imogen Rogers and Tom Angel to the Synergy Team



Imogen Rogers



Tom Angel

Imogen and Tom are 2019 graduates from the Royal Veterinary College. Imogen is looking forward to exploring the coastline, and Tom grew up in Salisbury so is excited to be in this area. They are interested in all areas of farm work and are looking forward to gaining as much experience as possible.

North

Graeme McPherson



Spring calving for we vets was pretty quiet this year - likely to have been a feature of the low feed stocks that farmers had left from 2018. However, the Caeser and calving count has massively increased during June and July as beef cows that have enjoyed the fruits of the earth during Spring have become fat. Cows in body condition score ≥ 3.5 are at a much higher risk of difficult calvings due to pelvic fat. Additionally, calves that have excess energy and protein in-utero are inclined to keep growing leading to increased calf size at birth. These two factors combined make for difficult calvings as well as making cows more susceptible to metabolic disease at the time of calving. Difficult calvings have a detrimental impact on profitability of suckler cow herds for a number of reasons. One study showed that over 70% of calves delivered with assistance were still born compared with only 4% still born in natural calvings. Difficult calving also increases the time it takes for a cow to return to cycling and therefore it significantly reduces the likelihood that the cow will get in calf again with 12 month calving interval.

What to do?

- Avoid summer calving
- Check the bull breeding values for ease of calving (if in doubt, ask your Synergy Vet)
- If you are calving in summer, cows must be in a restricted paddock or housed to avoid them becoming fat.



Synergy finalists of the Antibiotic Guardian Awards 2019

This year Synergy Farm Health were shortlisted in the finals of the Antibiotic Guardian Awards. This prestigious event combines the medical and veterinary professions and aims to highlight organisations and individuals who have done most to 'Reduce and Refine' antibiotic use. Synergy Farm Health were entered into the **Prescribing and Stewardship** category, and our poster focused on how we (**that's vets, the dispensing team, and you the farmers**) have monitored our antibiotic use over the last 5 years, and how we have improved our use of antibiotics. Although not nominated for the top prize, it was an honour to be highlighted as the **only veterinary organisation**

recognised in this category.

August 2019

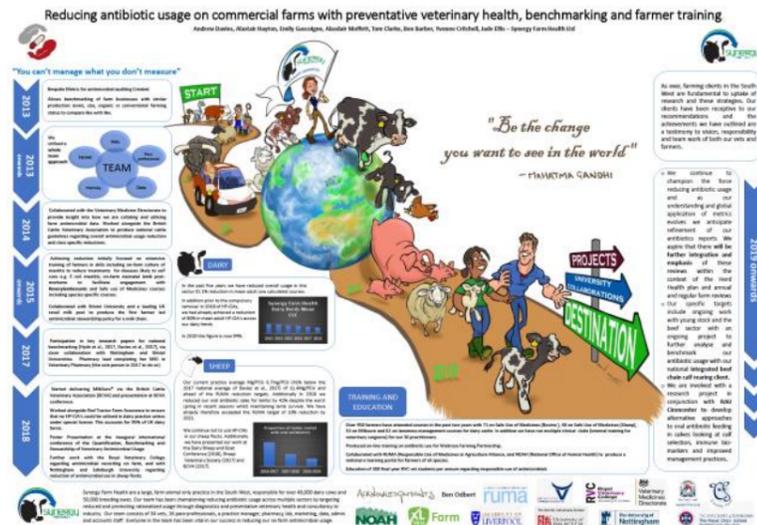
- Mycoplasma bovis
- Tubing cows: gently does it!
- Synergy's 10 Year Celebration
- Reflecting on 10 years of Synergy Livestock Services
- Events
- Regional News

We really want

to emphasise that it is only with the continued efforts of our farmers, whether via reducing unnecessary doses, commencing vaccination protocols, or improving farm infrastructure that we have been able to reduce our antibiotic use so far. *Over the last 5 years, we have had a 35% reduction in the total use of antibiotics, and a 90% reduction in the particular classes deemed most important for human health.*



Alasdair Moffett Veterinary Surgeon



Tubing cows: gently does it!

The cow is an amazing creature for many reasons, but one of them is the way her teat canal allows milk to be expressed whilst protecting her from infection....most of the time anyway. There are several anatomical features which help this, from a muscular sphincter which closes the



streak canal, to keratinised epithelium which can trap bacteria and also produce a keratin plug in between milkings, to the rather imaginatively named Rosette of Furstenburg. This is a flower shaped structure around the top of the teat canal, rich in white blood cells, which can detect infections and set off the cow's immune response.

lactating cow antibiotic in response to an existing case of mastitis. Firstly if not done cleanly then the poor cow picks up a new infection she didn't previously have. Clean for us means surgically clean using cotton wool and surgical spirit!

Secondly if done roughly, then the teat orifice and the epithelial lining is damaged and less able to do its job. Many tubes come with a dual nozzle which allows for partial insertion, but even if they don't then the nozzle should only be partially inserted into the teat canal, as gently as possible.

Finally, there is a fascinating debate going on in academic circles about the importance of the "udder biome" and whether there is a thriving population of bacteria in a healthy udder, which are very hard to grow but don't actually cause a problem. Do these get affected when we administer an antibiotic course and then take some time to recover to normal afterwards? The jury is out on this one so I will keep you posted.

All these factors mean that one of the cows most at risk of mastitis is the one that.... has just been treated! Let's make sure that we minimise this risk with careful and gentle tubing technique.



Rachel Hayton Veterinary Surgeon

Most new mastitis cases are ascending infections, which mean that they get into the udder through the teat canal. So how do we enhance the cow's ability to resist these new intra-mammary infections? More importantly, is there anything that we do that might undermine it? One of the most dangerous things that we sometimes do is actually to administer an intramammary tube. This could be at drying off, or a

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Mycoplasma bovis

Mycoplasma bovis (not to be confused with Mycobacterium bovis – which causes TB) has been making the headlines across the world especially in New Zealand where it has recently been discovered and the Kiwis are trying to eradicate the problem by culling whole herds.

Here in the UK we have seen M.bovis for many years, in herds where it has been recently introduced it can cause major problems; in others issues are more sporadic.

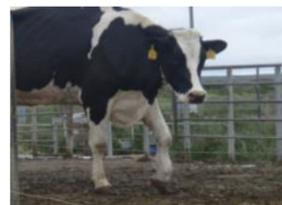
The organism does not have a cell wall which makes it very difficult to treat with antibiotics and it has a knack of hiding from the cow's immune system until it is too late.

Mycoplasma bovis causes several diseases in cattle. The commonest is respiratory disease in calves, and less commonly ear infections (otitis media) resulting in a head tilt. In older animals it can also cause arthritis, mastitis and pneumonia, but these are much less commonly diagnosed; eye infections (infectious keratoconjunctivitis) and abortion have also been recorded. M. bovis does not cause disease in humans.

Mycoplasma mastitis is a rarely diagnosed cause of mastitis here in the UK. However it may be underestimated due to difficulties in diagnosis. It takes a long time to grow and is not picked

up on routine bacteriology. It behaves as a contagious mastitis pathogen, and spread at milking is probably the commonest means of transmission

M. bovis causes a severe arthritis in calves and adult cattle. Animals are very lame, with one or more swollen lower limb joints in which damage rapidly occurs. It is often seen as a swollen knee joint in the front leg of a cow which has suddenly gone lame with no obvious problems with the foot. Again this reponds poorly to antibiotic treatment.



The organism is usually transmitted by close and repeated contact and untreated infected milk can also be a

source of infection to calves. Once infected, the bacteria are thought to be shed at a variety of locations including eyes, nose, vagina, and rectum and through milk.

Research from the USA suggests that the likelihood of Mycoplasma mastitis increases with increasing herd size. There are often carriers of Mycoplasma bovis, which show no symptoms; their role in the disease is not clear, but when considering buying in cattle, purchasers should ensure they are aware of this potential when sourcing animals. It also appears that in situations when herds have concurrent problems (other diseases such as Salmonellosis or BVD) or very poor nutrition or environments, Myco-

plasma species outbreaks can be severe both in terms of numbers of cows affected and severity of clinical signs.

The largest risk is considered to be from the purchase of cows or heifers, which may be clinically or subclinically infected with Mycoplasma bovis. Maintaining a strictly closed herd policy is the best method to minimise the risk of introduction of Mycoplasma bovis. If cows or heifers have to be purchased, there is always a risk of buying in infection. This risk can be minimised by a collection of a detailed history, only purchasing from low somatic cell count herds, and by screening individuals before they enter the main herd.

Cows that are highlighted as being positive for Mycoplasma should be considered a high priority for culling at the earliest opportunity. Feeding of waste milk to calves is not recommended where Mycoplasma bovis has been diagnosed and pasteurisation of colostrum is a good way to try to reduce the transmission of the disease. Generally good calf hygiene will also help.

No commercial vaccines are licensed in Europe for Mycoplasma bovis. However, there is potential for one to be imported from the USA. Also it is possible to produce your own bespoke vaccine if the organism can be cultured from a post mortem specimen (usually a calf).



Jon Reader
Veterinary Surgeon



Reflecting on 10 years of Synergy Livestock Services

With this being Synergy's 10th year of business I thought I might look back at the development and progress of the Vet Tech Team.

Last week at our monthly get together I counted 13 techs around the table with 1 apology. This week Synergy placed an advert



Now in it's 10th year, Synergy's experienced Vet Tech Team continue to grow in number and expand their livestock services

for Tech number 15 to help the busy East team. The car park was full of vehicles with Synergy's familiar livery, I sometimes think we must have as many vehicles in our fleet as Eddie Stobbard.

When I started on the 4th January 2010 there were 4 trimmers. 2 East and 2 West. I joined Dave Frecknall and the late great Roy Gray in the West. We were then based in Crewkerne at the Kingfisher Practice. We had a small garage out the back for storage and maintenance and barely enough parking for 2 crushes and Landrovers. I miss the Vet Nurses

but do not miss trying to reverse our large cattle handling crush into and up over the small sloping yard, washing it down after use on a freezing winter afternoon would result in the yard becoming an ice rink. We now have excellent facilities with ample space at Lower Coombe near Crewkerne.

The services we offer have progressed and evolved in the last decade.

You may remember the A4 paper we used to scribble our trimming records onto, it was duplicated using carbon paper and usually in tatters and almost illegible after 20 cows. A simple tick was the only detail recording a lesion and if the carbon paper wasn't lined up that tick could be in the wrong box for a different lesion. Now we electronically record in great detail, using Synergy's

own software. We leave a printout or if preferred email the report so the farmer can check a cow's treatment. Please take the time to read our reports, especially any comments we might add regarding further treatment.

Our crushes have evolved as well. Now all but 2 are remotely controlled by the trimmer. This makes loading much quicker and safer. All of Synergy's newest upright crushes lift up off the ground when an animal is loaded; this is more comfortable for the cow as her leg need not be lifted as high and is easier on the trimmer's back.

Our rollover crush underwent modification several years ago to make it much more cow friendly by now gently restraining the animal with a large rubber matted pivoting wall.

Beyond foot trimming our freeze branding service has seen the most growth, branding approximately 7000 heifers a year. Each day at least 1 or 2 Techs are mobility scoring somewhere. Knock Down disbudding is growing in popularity as clients understand the welfare benefits to the calf as well as less stress to the Tech and client.

Synergy's 2 Day Foot trimming courses are always well attended and the Techs all take turns teaching the RVC students on a Wednesday afternoon.

What might the next 10 years bring? If the present pattern continues will there be 28 Vet Techs in 2029? What might our roles be?

At present we have 2 Techs that are training to be associate TB testers. Perhaps the Techs may take on more of the duties or procedures that were traditionally performed by vets.

Sadly the one certainty I am sure of is that in 10 years time there will still be lame cows. Or will there? It's up to us, let's work together to change the future.



Matt Board
Vet Tech



Future Proofing for Profitable Production

Tuesday 13th August 7:30pm
Frogmary Green Farm, South
Petherton, TA13 5DJ

Thursday 15th August 7:30pm
Blandford Badger Brewery,
Blandford St. Mary, DT11 9LS



We would like to invite you to join us on one of the following evenings for a supper club based discussion looking at strategies to ensure profitable production for the future with an emphasis on cost of production.

Speakers include:

- **Dan Knight** from Evolution ABS Chartered Certified Accountants
- **David Pett** from AHDB Knowledge Exchange – Benchmarking.
- **Emily Gascoigne**, Specialist Sheep Vet from Synergy Farm Health, Evershot
- **Ben Barber**, Vet from Synergy Farm Health, Evershot

There will be a £10 charge towards a hot supper and a drink. Booking essential. Please contact Synergy Farm Health on 01935 83682 to book ASAP.

You are invited to our...

10 Year Celebration Open Day

At Synergy Farm Health, West Hill Barns, Evershot

Saturday 14th September 3:30pm—late



Help us at Synergy Farm Health mark our first decade by joining us for our 10 Year Celebration.

- Hog Roast and Refreshments
- Live Music in our Marquee
- Come celebrate with our Vets, Vet Techs & Support Staff

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TO RSVP PLEASE CALL
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Dairy Apprenticeship Course



Applications have recently opened for the second intake of students on our level 3 Dairy apprenticeship programme which we run in conjunction with Bicton College. This new intake of students will start in September 2019.

This practical programme is based at our premises at Lower Coombe, near Crewkerne, and is aimed at students in Somerset, Dorset and Devon. Synergy delivers teaching on a variety of dairy related topics, whilst administration and assessment are handled by Bicton College. About 50% is based on farm and practical (eg calving simulation, foot trimming), the other 50% classroom based teaching.

For further details please visit: www.synergyfarmhealth.com/training. All enquires and applications should be made to Peter Reed at Bicton College – 07976 328155.

For more information on Synergy Events, please get in touch with us: call 01935 83682, email courses@synergyfarmhealth.com, visit our Facebook page or our website www.synergyfarmhealth.com.

SEE US AT THESE UPCOMING SHOWS FOR A CHAT, A CAKE & CUP OF COFFEE...

- GILLINGHAM & SHAFESBURY SHOW 14TH AUG
- MELPLASH SHOW 22ND AUG
- DORSET COUNTY SHOW 7TH—8TH SEPT

Coming in August

Mastitis Workshop
12th Aug 10.30am-2.30pm at Mole Avon, Axminster

Sheep Faecal Worm Egg Count
20th Aug 10am-3pm at Evershot

Coming in September

Safe Use of Veterinary Medicines (Sheep)
17th Sept 10.30am-2.30pm at Mole Avon, Axminster

Milksure Course
24th Sept 11am-1pm at Mole Avon, Axminster

Coming in October

Milksure Course
7th Oct 11am-1pm at Evershot

Sheep Lameness Course
8th Oct 10am-2pm at Mole Avon, Axminster

ROMS Registered Mobility Scoring Course
9th Oct 10am-4pm at Lower Coombe

Safe Use of Veterinary Medicines (Sheep)
10th Oct 10.30am-2.30pm at Evershot

2 Day Foot Trimming Course
14th-15th Oct 9.30am-4pm at Lower Coombe

DIY AI 3 Day Course
15th-17th Oct 9.30am-4pm at Evershot

Safe Use of Veterinary Medicines (General)
24th Oct 10:30am-2:30pm at Evershot