News from our Rounds

East

Bella Lowis

With September nearly upon us, I feel like the summer is flying by. It is now six months since I joined the team at Synergy and I would like to thank you all for making me feel so welcome in the East of the practice. Changing jobs after several years is always a daunting prospect but I am really enjoying my new challenge and getting to know new people and farms.

A couple of seasonal reminders for you: firstly, we are coming up to the peak time for lungworm in cattle. Look out for coughing in animals at pasture, especially youngstock in their first grazing season or older stock that may have been housed previously. Secondly, it is also the season for Haemonchus, the 'barber's pole' worm, which mostly affects sheep and goats. This parasite thrives in warm wet weather and can cause anaemia, bottle jaw and sudden death. Remember to perform regular faecal egg counts (which may be particularly high with Haemonchus) and post mortem any unexplained deaths. As always, please don't hesitate to contact one of the team for advice.

As well as getting out on my usual routine visits and clinical calls, this month I have enjoyed being involved with some of our student teaching sessions. Memories of university days may be more distant and blurred for some of us than others, but as vets, we are all grateful for the huge amount of help and motivation that we got from spending time with experienced clinicians in practice. It is great to have the opportunity to give something back into the profession, and hopefully inspire the vets of the future.

A favourite weekend of the year for many of us, the Dorset Show is coming up and lots of you have been taking advantage of the free pre-movement TB tests for cattle entries. I am looking forward to catching up with lots of you there, as well as seeing what the Synergy Farm Health Tug of War team is made of!

South

Alasdair Moffett

Thank you to all that came to the Synergy Stand at Honiton show – it is always great to be able to 'chew the fat' with friendly familiar faces without being covered in muck or cattle blaring in the background. We have also been busy doing some complimentary TB testing in preparation for showing at Dorset Show, and look forward to seeing many of you there.

Hopefully Summer foraging has been good to you, and the clamps are considerably fuller than this time last year. Please make use of Silage Analysis to plan your winter feeding. We have picked up a few cases of lungworm from July onwards, and the BVD free scheme is continuing to help farms identify and put BVD plans in place. I would urge anyone to consider the use of Tag and Test tags for BVD control.

Beth is settled in our South team and enjoying life in West Dorset; Tom Angel is based from Chard now and shortly we will be welcoming Caroline Perry of Nower Farm back to the veterinary team.

The Powell-Jackson family has recently grown with the birth of their daughter Daisy, and the Moffett family should hopefully not be too far behind with a brother or sister for our daughter Bonnie. Happy families!

North

Paula Hunt

I've had the privilege this summer of watching a pair of barn owls on their regular nightly hunting trips. Their ghostly appearance in the fading dusk as they silently quarter their territory is always a treat to behold!

Talking to farmers there seems to be a fairly healthy population of barn owls on the Somerset levels. Elsewhere they are struggling, as so many old buildings are converted into housing. But anyone with a farm building can help, as many of you already do. According to the Barn Owl Trust, over 90% of modern farm buildings would be suitable for barn owls if a nest box was installed – without a box virtually none are. The pair that I've been watching have been returning to their box for several years running now, and I hope for many more to come. Visit www.barnowltrust.org.uk for more info.

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.

DISPENSARY UPDATES

ADRENACAINE IS BACK

Adrenacaine is back in stock after its recent manufacturing issues.

This product is indicated for use in minor surgical procedures, particularly dehorning and disbudding in cattle.

Now selling at a competitive rate of **£5.02 + VAT**

Speak with your vet or contact our dispensary to discuss the product further with one of our SQP's.

PRODUCT CHANGE

Rispoval Intranasal has changed to Bovalto Respi Intranasal.

This is to ensure that the active ingredient gets to where it is needed on the nasal mucosa. The nasal applicator stops any vaccine dripping from the nose. Less wasted product and more chance of maximising efficacy. Speak with your vet for more information.

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September 2019

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- Action Johnes; are you up to speed?
- Synergy's 10 Year Celebration
- Early detection is key in lameness management
- Events
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Sheep Specialist Emily Gascoigne shortlisted for Farmer's Weekly Award, set to be youngest to win Livestock Advisor of the Year Category

Synergy are proud to announce that our very own Sheep Specialist and Consultant Emily Gascoigne has been shortlisted for Livestock Advisor of the Year at the 2019 Farmer's Weekly Awards on 3rd October. If she progresses to winning, Emily will be the youngest entrant to have gained this award. This isn't the first time that Synergy have had recognition at the Farmer's Weekly Awards; most recently Alastair Hayton won Farm Advisor of the Year in 2015, Jon Reader reached finalist position in 2014 and 2010 saw Mark Burnell winning Livestock Advisor of the Year.

We know you will join us in congratulating Emily on reaching the finals and wishing her the best of luck at the Awards Ceremony on 3rd October!

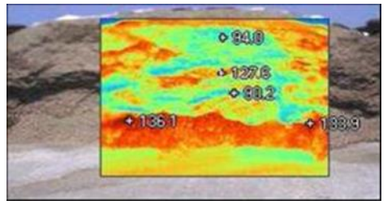
Moulds can cause disease

As we move close to feeding full winter rations I thought a quick discussion on mouldy silage and mycotoxins would be worthwhile. The risks posed from these can be substantial however, all too frequently, mycotoxins are blamed for poor performance whereas in reality they are very unlikely to be present, with the resultant intervention for a mycotoxin binder an expensive addition to the diet. The risks of moulds come from their potential to directly cause mastitis, pneumonia and abortion and indirectly via their production of mycotoxins to contribute to increased disease and reduced production , these due to the mycotoxins causing reduced feed intakes, reduced nutrient absorption and impaired metabolism and immune function.

Moulds are present throughout the environment and therefore, mycotoxins can be formed on crops in the field, during harvest, or during storage, processing, or feeding and it is true to say all feeds will have a background level of mycotoxins, *bear that in mind next time you eat some Stilton!!*

In reality in many cases on farm, the vast majority of mould and mycotoxin production will occur in the growing crop with warm, wet growing seasons producing increased problems. In the UK these will be typically associated with warm wet growing conditions which favour the red moulds (Fusarium spp). I understand there are aspects of crop management that can reduce the risk of this but at that point, I would hastily refer you to an agronomist on how this might be achieved.

The key risk area once the crop is ensiled is found where there are poor ensiling conditions, for instance the crop is poorly compacted and where there is poor maintenance of the face leading to aerobic spoilage. This happens because it can lead to extensive mould proliferation especially in restricted fermentation silage. For instance, a study in the USA on maize silage looked at the effect on maize silage of being left on the floor overnight as opposed to remaining in a well maintained face. ***It found that in the maize left on the floor the yeast count rose from 18,000 to 410,000, the mould count rose from less than 1000 to 410,000 and the pH rose from 3.68 to 3.83. These levels of mould have been recognised to significantly affect DMI and the digestibility of the forage.***



So how do we test for the potential of mycotoxicosis and or diagnose that a problem is due to them?

The first sensible option is to ask yourself, is it likely? For instance: was the growing season conducive to their formation (warm / wet) or not, did you notice red moulds on the maize cobs etc., how well is my silage ensiled, it is dry and or poorly compacted, is it heating at the face, is there evidence of visible mould?? If there are clear indications that these all the case, you may well be better simply to introduce a mycotoxin immediately.

The next option is to test for them by sending your suspect feeds for analyses. While this can provide useful information, the problem with this approach is that, as we do not fully understand how mycotoxins interact with each other, and as they are broken down in the rumen but in varying rates dependent on the rumen conditions, it is difficult to determine precisely from the figures produced, when an intervention should or should not be made.

Frequently, therefore when you are unclear as to whether a problem exists, the best option is to simply introduce a mycotoxin binder into the diet and observe for any effects in terms of health and production. Results should be seen within 2 to 3 weeks so if there is no effect, the commitment in terms of increased costs should not be excessive.

Finally, perhaps the best advice of all, is ***look after those silage faces!*** Poor management will lead to reduced palatability of rations, reduced feed values and the risk of causing disease such as abortions and poisoning your stock with mycotoxins, not a great combination!!!

Alastair Hayton
North Veterinary Surgeon

Action Johnes; are you up to speed?

Back in 2015 the **Action Johne's** initiative was launched, bringing together members of the dairy industry to better manage and reduce the incidence of Johne's disease in dairy cattle. Since then the initiative has made great progress with over 80% of UK milk production coming from milk buyers signed up to the scheme.

A huge amount of support now exists for managing Johnes on your farm, with the **National Johne's Management Plan (NJMP)** providing six different control strategies to implement in your herd. This is easy to sign up to, and has now become a necessity for a number of milk buyer contracts, some of which have added further requirements surrounding the Johnes status of cows contributing to the tank.

The vets at Synergy are **BCVA accredited Johne's advisors** and can assess your risk, implement the best plan for your farm, and help you stay aligned with your milk buyer requirements. In addition, our vets can analyse your farm data to identify possible disease transmission routes and potentially higher risk animals. Above all, we our aim is to make Johne's management as stress free as possible for both you and your animals.

Even herds currently testing negative for Johne's will benefit from the management plan. It is thought that approximately one third of UK dairies are currently Johne's free, the plan is critical in protecting these farms as well as reducing the disease on others.

For those of you yet to sign up, it's not too late! Call us to request a Johne's management plan visit or ask for it to be discussed at your next herd health plan meeting. More information on the scheme can be found at http://www.actionjohnesuk.org/ or calling the **Action Johne's team direct on 01765 645893.**

If you are already signed up, your next **Action Johne's deadline is fast approaching!** For most of you the deadline is 31st October, however some milk buyers have requested declarations as early as 30th September! By this date, member farms are required to have reassessed their risk within the previous 12 months, reviewed their plan with their BCVA accredited Johne's advisor, and implemented the correct protocols to adhere to the plan. At this point your vet can sign your 2019 declaration form. If you are yet to receive a form, it can be downloaded from the Action Johne's website.

Johne's disease, what's new?

With the complicated nature of Johne's, it's important we stay up to date with the current thinking in terms of detection, risk, and management strategies.

1) Due to the disease chronicity, you cannot rely on clinical cases as a practical diagnosis of disease on farm. These are the "tip of the iceberg", with many others potentially subclinically affected, and the disease could have been on your farm for a number of years before clinical cases appear. You need to **test your herd.**

2) Similarly, by implementing positive changes, it will take 4 to 5 years before significant progress is seen with the disease in your herd. **Stick with it!**

3) Despite the causal agent being a bacteria, antibiotics will not fix this problem! The disease is **incurable** with infected animals likely to be culled earlier and suffer multiple different diseases along the way such as mastitis, lameness, and high cell counts. **Prevention is key.**

4) Bulk tank testing is not suitable for establishing your herd status. **Targeted screening tests** on blood or milk are more suitable but require planning with your vet.

5) While testing is important, establishing your **specific farm risks** and ways to reduce them is equally as important. This is achieved through the management plan.

6) **TB testing can affect your Johne's results!** Leave a minimum of 6 weeks between TB testing and Johne's sampling.

7) A **vaccine** exists, aimed at delaying the onset of clinical disease, but should only be considered as a **last resort** and is not supported by some milk buyers. It can also affect TB testing results and does not actually reduce disease prevalence on farm.

8) **Buying in cattle** still remains the highest risk of **introducing Johne's** onto your farm. The more you buy in, the greater the risk of introduction.

9) 80% of infections occur within the first month of life, with most of these occurring in the **first few days of life** . Resistance to infection increases with age making new infections in adults very rare. Focusing efforts around risk cows and calving pen management will be rewarded in the long term.

10) The main **route of infection** is still calves ingesting faeces containing the Johne's bacteria, MAP. This does not require direct faecal ingestion, but simple contamination of bedding, equipment, and udders is sufficient to pass on the infection.

11) While faecal contamination is most important, it is still possible for MAP to pass through the **milk** . For this reason we advise against pooling colostrum or milk as this could have disastrous consequences.

12) While rare, it is still possible for **unborn calves to become infected via the placenta.** The risk is higher in cows suffering clinical signs of Johne's so offspring from these cows must be considered a risk regardless of even the strictest snatch calving protocols!

Pete O'Malley
North Veterinary Surgeon

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

Kindly Supported by MSD Animal Health — The Science of Healthier Animals™

synergy 10 YEARS 2009 - 2019

TO RSVP PLEASE CALL 01935 83682

Early detection is key in lameness management

Back in March I was given a great opportunity to attend and present at the International Conference on Lameness in Ruminants in Tokyo. Below is a summary of the piece of work that I presented there.

Early detection and appropriate treatment of lameness are important factors in lameness management and greatly predisposes further lameness. Despite this knowledge, the practical application of "early detection and treatment" is challenging. Lameness prevalence remains stubbornly high, with farmers identifying the key barriers to lameness control as lack of time, a lack of skilled labour, training and lack of appropriate trimming facilities. Our aim was to deliver a commercial service that reduced lameness on farm through early detection and treatment of lame cows. Objectives included performing all routine trims, and all lameness detection and treatment, attend newly lame cows within 48 hours, charge for the programme based on the number of cows in the herd and use technological aids to deliver an efficient service.

The farm milked 250 Holstein Friesian cows twice daily, calving year-round. Cows were housed in cubicle sheds with rubber mattresses, straw bedding and concrete flooring. The collecting yard was rubber matted and low yielders had access to grazing for at least 100 days per year. An independent foot trimmer attended the farm approximately once a month until the beginning of this programme. Digital dermatitis was reasonably well controlled through footbathing twice weekly with formalin 2%. An on-farm foot trimming crush was used for lameness treatments. At the start of the service the independent foot trimmer was stopped.

Three methods of lameness detection were used: - Fortnightly mobility scores, CowAlert, which uses lying time algorithms to detect lameness and farm staff could alert the team to any other lame cows.

The team delivering the service consisted of two Vet Techs performing all routine trims and some lame cows and mobility scoring, and two vets attending to lame cows and vet tech referrals. Farm staff separated out lame cows upon request and alerted the team if they noticed additional lame cows. Ice Robotics provided technical advice for the Cow Alert system. Communication between all team members and farm staff was predominantly via a WhatsApp group.

Lameness treatment was to attend newly lame cows within 48 hours and treat acridly. A triage system enabled Vet Techs to refer cows for further veterinary attention. An online spreadsheet (Google Sheets) was designed to capture all lameness treatments and automatically scheduled re-visits. It also allowed the team to access live records and to track cases closely over time.

The cost to the farm was based on a slightly discounted standard Vet tech rate and worked out on a per cow 12 month rate charge, split in to a monthly charge.

The service was delivered between January and October 2018. The most frequent causes of lameness were sole lesions (55% either sole ulcer or haemorrhage) and white line disease (19%), and digital dermatitis infection on claw horn lesions was a common reason for re-presentation. At the initial mobility score in December 2017, 27% of the milking herd were lame (18% were mobility scored 2 and 9% were scored 3). By May, 10% of the herd were scored 2 and none were scored 3. Until this point, the on farm staff and Synergy team worked well together and the service was efficient to deliver.

In May 2018, there was a change in farming policy. During this time the herd manager left, the high-yielding and low-yielding groups were merged and temporary staff were brought in. Both the communication with farm staff and detection of lame cows by farm staff reduced greatly, and the service that we could deliver suffered. Lameness prevalence increased once again for the farm.

This approach can rapidly reduce lameness on farm. The service was tailored to the specific on-farm situation, meaning that in this case it had to focus primarily on the detection and treatment of lame cows. However, lameness control programmes must also emphasise reducing index lameness cases. Team work was key, and the service was successful in reducing lameness when the communication between the on-farm team and the team delivering the service was good. The service was not successful when communication broke down.

This service was economically beneficial to the farmer, and the revenue gained from cull cows alone – that would otherwise have cost as on-farm mortalities – paid for the entire prevention service. It is an economically sound plan to have in the toolbox to offer to particular farms.

Dave Philips
Vet Tech

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.

DORSET COUNTY SHOW 7TH—8TH SEPT

Please do visit us on our new Hospitality Unit for some cake and a chat. It promises to be a great weekend, we look forward to seeing you there!

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

Meet the Team Emily Craig

Emily joined Synergy's busy reception team last December, working with the day to day running of the diary, assisting with the small holder memberships and has recently been assigned as social secretary. Her family are dairy farmers in South Dorset and after six months of traveling Australia and New Zealand last year, she felt it was time to come back into the agricultural industry.