

Newsletter November 2020

Sterility of Teats

Eliot Hedley



In the recent months, with weather changes favouring damp and sometimes humid conditions, I personally have witnessed several cases of poor sterility when it comes to teats.

The first example would be at drying off. When a cow is dried off incorrectly without proper sterility you run the risk of introducing a bacterial infection into the teat, most commonly leading to an E.coli mastitis and likely a dead dry cow – in other words a disaster! Using antibiotic tubes at drying off does reduce this risk but we should not need antibiotics to make up for poor hygiene at drying off.

The second common example would be in taking milk samples for culture when we are looking for the bacteria that is causing mastitis on your farm. Many samples have come back as “mixed growth” or “contaminated” which is down to poor sampling technique leading to contamination of the milk sample – meaning a waste of money and time.

Wet and dirty conditions make the above tasks more challenging, especially as we approach winter. It is essential to remove all visible dirt and debris from a teat and then to use wipes or swabs with a disinfectant (commonly spirit based) to clean teat ends to remove invisible contaminants.

There is far too much detail to go into in just one newsletter article, but if you need any help with teat sterility during drying off or milk sampling then we can provide 1 to 1 training on farm or just simply provide visual aids to keep in your parlour. Remember the teat is a very vulnerable part of the cow to infection and drying off/sampling **must** be surgically sterile.



Countryside Productivity Grant

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Applications for these grants are open with DEFRA until the 4th of November and includes a range of equipment and systems which will benefit animal health and productivity on your farm such as cattle crushes and handling systems, cluster flush systems, plate meters and automated heat detection systems.

Our Vaccine Cool Bags

We would like to kindly remind anyone who has borrowed one of our vaccine cool bags to return it to any of our offices as soon as they can; we are running very low. Thank you in advance.



Dairy Replacement Heifers

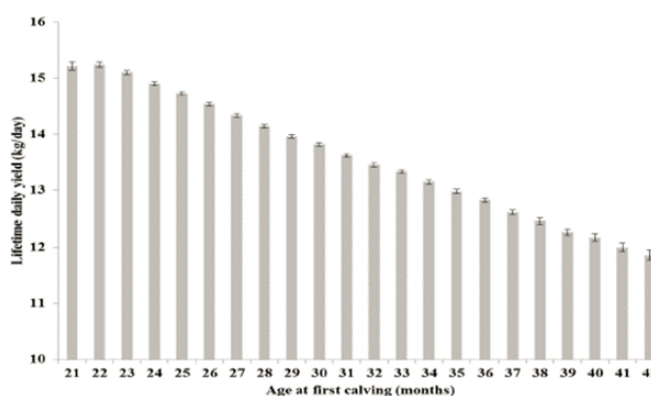
Eoghan McAlonan

It has been well documented how important it is to have our heifers calve down at 24 months at the latest. If calved by 24 months, heifers produce more milk in their lifetime, see the graph below. Although these heifers may be physically smaller, they do not have excessive pelvic fat and so have fewer calving problems. This in turn means they get back in-calf again sooner and will not suffer from an extended dry period and further problems “down the line.” We also know that heifers that calve younger actually survive longer in our herds; again, because they get less disease following their first calving.

To calve **on average** by 24 months they need to be in calf **on average** by 15 months, which means being at target breeding weight by at least 14 months (as they will not all conceive to first service).

Heifers only reach maximum fertility by their 3rd oestrus cycle so if we want good conception rates by 14 months, we need them to be cycling well by 13 months. The start of cyclicity is dependent on puberty which in turn is dependent on weight and nutrition. To achieve target weights, we need to look at the whole heifer rearing process especially avoiding disease, providing good quality nutrition and regular monitoring of growth rates. **Target weight at first breeding for a Holstein is 420kg, with a withers height of 129cm (AHDB targets).**

Impact on lifetime yield by calving at 24mths



Last chance to get FREE on-farm Advice

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As many of you will have seen the Farmer's Weekly ran a Bovine TB Editorial Special recently in which it discussed measures farmers can take to protect themselves from TB including getting involved with the TB Advisory Service.

As a practice we have been carrying out these FREE visits in our clients farms for the last two years helping them tackle the risks associated with TB on their farm.

Furthermore, APHA are due to begin 6 monthly testing here in the South West in the coming year but through a TBAS visit we can discuss how you can stay on annual testing.

In addition, legislation changes in November 2018 mean that without undertaking certain TB prevention measures certain cattle that fail a TB test in breakdown herds will only have compensation paid at 50% market rate. Through a TB Advisory visit we can detail how you can avoid a situation like this.

These FREE advice visits are only funded until **December 31st** so get in contact with us today to arrange your visit.

