

Newsletter March 2021



Importance of Water

Goncalo Barrenho



Quiz:

_____ is the most important nutrient and necessary for life processes in every mammal!

Decreasing _____ intake, will reduce feed intake and consequently reduce milk production and growth rates!

_____ troughs must be clean at least weekly!

Livestock must be provided with adequate access to a supply of fresh, clean drinking _____

As in Red Tractor standards, _____ must be tested every 2 years for the presence of microorganisms and Ph.

_____ is important during heat and cold stress.

If you did not automatically answer WATER in every question, this article is for you.

While feed and ration management are generally monitored in detail, water intake, availability and quality are often overlooked. Water plays a fundamental role in milk production, growth-rate, control of body temperature and many other body functions in cattle. Just for maintenance cattle need to ingest approximately 10% of their body weight in water every day. *Water constitutes approximately 87% of milk* and 60 – 70% of body composition of livestock.

Water is an especially important nutrient during periods of heat and cold stress. The physical properties of water are important for the transfer of heat from the body to the environment. And the high heat capacity of body water acts as insulation by conserving body heat. As you walk by a water tank, ask yourself if you would drink that water. If the answer is 'no' then the water needs to be cleaned. Cattle consume water several times per day and is generally associated with feeding or milking. It sounds simple, but the amounts of water involved are significant. One kilogram of dry matter intake utilises up to five litres of water. And cows need at least three litres of water to produce one litre of milk. This means that high-yielding cows need more than 150 litres of fresh water every day! And depending on hot and dry climates, this amount can even be higher. Cows like to drink fast – up to 20 litres of water per minute. If they cannot do it for any reason, their water intake may fall, and their milk yield will suffer. A 40 percent reduction in water intake can cut milk production by 25 percent. It is essential that you meet all your cows' drinking needs. Cows like to drink when they eat and just after milking. They prefer a large, calm drinking surface from which they can drink quickly and without stress. Such natural drinking behaviour promotes further eating, even more drinking and thus greater milk yields.

Three to four metres is needed around the water trough to reduce pushing and shoving. This is important for submissive cows to be able to drink without being afraid of being pushed away from the water supply by dominant cows.

In terms of water availability, at least two water points should be present per group of cows.

This will prevent dominant cows from monopolizing a single water point. You need to allow for 10 to 15% of a herd to drink at the same time, a minimum of 3.9 ft trough perimeter needs to be accessible per 20 cows for open surface water tanks to achieve this. The optimal height of the water trough is around 23.6-27.5 inches, and the water depth 2.75 inches or more, which allows animals to submerge their muzzle.

During the liquid feeding stage, calves receive most of their water as milk or milk replacer. However, as studies show that calves offered water in addition to a liquid diet gain faster and consume dry feed earlier than calves provided water only in their liquid diet. So, water must be supplied from the first day of life.

The most common water quality problems affecting livestock production include high concentrations of minerals (excess salinity), high nitrogen content (nitrates and nitrites), bacterial contamination, heavy growth of blue-green algae, and accidental contamination by petroleum, pesticides or fertilizer products. Monitoring of water quality during periods of reduced production or nonspecific diseases should be one aspect of an investigation of herd health and production problems.

Important information

Art McAlonan

Blackleg vaccine is no longer available, the alternatives are **Covexin 8** and **Bravoxin 10**.

Ringvac is not longer available, we are importing an alternative called **Trichoben**. It is similar and the best alternative.

Sheep Scanning:

For smallholders with smaller numbers and as a barren ewe check, FVSW can now offer sheep pregnancy scanning. This is a simple pregnant/not pregnant service (no counting of lambs). Speak to Art for any queries.

New Product Available Exclusively to FVSW

The **AgriCure Rumen Support** which we have trialled on a few farms is now widely available in handy single use sachets. These pre-biotic sachets are a great therapy for any inappetent dairy cows. They contain protected methionine which helps support liver function. Vets have been using these on cases of Ketosis, Fatty liver (alongside *Dairy Boost*) and metritis and mastitis (alongside an electrolyte sachet if dehydrated). They are best delivered by aggers pump but can be drenched when diluted in a little water. They are currently priced at £6.00 and are our best value rumen powder.

Rumen Support is a nutritional supplement specifically developed and formulated to stimulate microbial activity in the rumen, stimulate metabolism and appetite, stabilise rumen pH and boost recovery.

Rumen Support is formulated from a high concentration of yeast, rumen protected Methionine, vitamins (A, B, D3, E) and trace Elements.

Use Rumen Support to support appetite and recovery after illness or veterinary treatment, to support appetite in cows receiving veterinary treatment (for example, cows on antibiotics, anti-inflammatories) or cows post-surgery (caesarean or displaced abomasum), to support appetite in cows suffering transition acidosis, to support cows with Mastitis or Metritis, cows suffering from heat stress, to high risk cows: fat cows, older cows, cows with previous history and as soon as possible after calving to stimulate appetite and reduce the risk of ketosis.



Get ready for Turnout!

Art McAlonan

Lungworm: don't cough up for respiratory parasites!

With turnout hopefully not too far around the corner now is the opportune time to get Lungworm control fresh in your minds to avoid losses at a later date. Lungworm (also known as 'husk', 'hoose' and 'parasitic bronchitis') is caused by the parasite *Dictyocaulus viviparus*. Animals are infected after grazing on contaminated pasture and eating larvae. These larvae then migrate via blood vessels and lymphatic system to the lungs where they break out into the airways, and become egg producing adults. The cycle continues with immature larvae crawling up the trachea, getting coughed up, swallowed and passed out in the faeces again. Lungworm can present in a dramatic fashion, where an airway full of adult worms can lead to severe respiratory distress, or even death! Animals often present at grass with coughing, particularly after running around. Other signs of increased respiratory effort are also seen – not surprising considering hundreds of adult worms can be blocking the airways!

Economic losses result from reduced growth rates, poor fertility performance, lost milk, mortality and treatment and veterinary costs.

Although often thought of as a disease of first grazing calves, lungworm has the potential to infect any animal that has not built up immunity following exposure. Fortunately there is a product that can allow exposure to the lungworm larvae, without the development of clinical signs, thus allowing the animal to build up immunity prior to turnout. HUSKVAC is a two dose vaccine given four weeks apart that can be used in animals eight weeks or over. Animals can then be turned out two weeks later.



BVD and Kexxtone

Eliot Hedley

Still in the dark about BVD?

We now have more funding for free BVD testing! The funding covers the lab fee for an antibody screen, up to 5 animals. The vet visit, time and blood testing tubes will have to still be paid for. Now is likely your last chance to get FREE testing for an extremely significant disease! From these results we can assist you in the next steps to eradicating or preventing BVD on your farm. Please email eliot.hedley@thefarmvets.co.uk if you would like to organise a blood screen. The visit doesn't have to solely be for the BVD testing.

Kexxtone

Kexxtone is a bolus that alters the environment in the cow's gut in order to favour a particular type of "good" bacteria. This bacteria helps create more useable energy for the cow, which has been proven to reduce ketosis in dairy animals after calving. In a recent study performed in Ireland, it was shown that even grazing herds are still susceptible to ketosis after calving. Ketosis can lead to many other problems such as lower milk yield and higher chances of becoming ill, such as getting an LDA.

Target cows at higher risk of developing post-calving ketosis are as follows:

S – Sick O – Old F – Fat T – Twins/Triplets

In studies it has been shown to be very important to administer the boluses at the correct time, 3-4 weeks pre calving, or we suffer a loss in effectiveness of the Kexxtone bolus. Please speak to one of the vets if you would like to discuss using Kexxtone boluses in your dairy cows.