



Newsletter July 2021

Abortion in Cattle

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Abortion in cattle is an ongoing and often very frustrating issue to deal with on farm. It can be very obvious with the delivery of a near term calf or can be much more subtle with nothing visible externally other than a cow returning to service that had previously been diagnosed pregnant. The causes of abortion can be divided into infectious and non-infectious.

The main infectious agents include Neospora, Leptospirosis, BVD, Salmonella and IBR. We can vaccinate for all of these (except Neospora). However, we have to know what has caused the abortion before we can give any advice about what specific control measures to take – so generally testing is required first.

The non-infectious causes are numerous and can be dietary due to poor nutrition, twins, or as result of trauma - which is rarer than you may think.



Testing

As part of Brucellosis surveillance, legislation requires anyone in charge of bovine animals to report any abortion or premature calving (<271 days after service or <265 days after implantation) to the APHA, they will let you know if an investigation is required. This investigation is funded and focuses purely on Brucellosis so any additional investigation has to be paid for by yourself.

An abortion rate of <2% is acceptable and no great cause for alarm but if this increases to > 5% then further investigation is advisable. Aborting cows should be isolated from the rest of the herd to reduce spread within the herd and all aborted materials should be disposed of appropriately.

On an individual level, the best means of reaching a diagnosis is to submit samples taken by a vet as soon as possible after the abortion. At a herd level, blood samples or bulk milk tank samples can be very useful to screen for diseases.

Once we know what we are dealing with we can advise on appropriate measures to control the problem. This should be a multi-pronged attack based on sound biosecurity, vaccination if available and good nutrition.

Record Keeping

It is essential to keep accurate records of any suspect abortions including the age and lactation number of the dam, the stage of pregnancy at which the abortion occurred and whether multiple foetuses were involved.

Biosecurity

Biosecurity is the most important control measure available and should be aimed at minimising the risk of introducing disease onto a farm – if a disease doesn't have access to a herd then it can't cause a problem. If you run an open herd, effective quarantine of purchased cattle for 14 - 28 days is essential. The quarantine process must be strict and adhered to, no animal-to-animal contact should occur.

Changes to TB Testing

As of the 1st of July 2021, default 6-monthly TB surveillance testing will be introduced throughout the high-risk area (HRA). Somerset, Devon and Dorset are included in the HRA, meaning this change impacts most of the clients of FarmVets SouthWest.

You will be able to complete your first routine whole herd test (WHT) scheduled in the period between July 2021 and June 2022 as normal. Once this WHT has been completed with negative results, APHA will schedule your next test for six months later, unless the herd qualifies for **earned recognition**.



Earned recognition will allow you to remain on annual surveillance testing. You will be eligible to remain on annual surveillance testing if your herd meets either of the following criteria:

- The herd has been in existence for at least six years and has not had a TB breakdown in that six-year period (including breakdowns where no lesion and/or culture positive animals were disclosed). A single break from keeping cattle of less than four months during the six-year period is permitted.
- The herd is registered to a bovine TB health scheme licensed by the Cattle Health Certification Standards (CHECS) and accredited at level 1 or above. This is a scheme any farm can sign up to, and to gain level 1 or above you must have not had a TB breakdown for over one year. The scheme has a number of rules that must be adhered to and will not be suitable for every farm. If you are interested in joining the CHECS TB scheme, please contact the office and ask to speak to a vet.

If either of these apply to your herd and you believe you already have earned recognition, then the APHA will contact you to inform you that you are eligible to remain on annual surveillance testing; you do not need to take any further action.

If you have earned recognition but would like to be included in the six-monthly testing regime then you must contact the APHA and arrange to do so.

Remember to vaccinate for sheep abortion

Three types of infectious abortion are responsible for **86% of all sheep abortions**. These are ***Enzootic Abortion (52%)***, ***Toxoplasmosis (25%)*** and ***Campylobacter (9%)***. Through vaccination we can prevent 77% of these abortions. Cost-benefit studies carried out by ADHB showed an increase in income of £21.27/ewe where flocks were vaccinated against Enzootic Abortion and Toxoplasmosis. These vaccinations need to be administered in advance of tugging so contact us ASAP to speak about a vaccination programme for your flock today.



Congratulations Tom!

Congratulations to Tom who recently got married! We wish him and his wife all the best and we hope they have a wonderful honeymoon.



Running for charity!

A group of the FVSW Team are running the Bridgwater 10k on 5th September 2021!

This run is for charity, so watch this space for details on how to donate.

