

Newsletter March 2022

Pre-calving Trace Elements

The pre-calving management period is a key time to set up the herd for calving, lactation and return to service and is vital for healthy calves. The trace elements with the most significance during this period are copper, iodine and selenium - partially because of their importance for healthy offspring and partially because of their role in fertility. This is why:

Trace Element	Importance	Signs of deficiency	Comments
Copper	This is the trace element which gets the most attention in terms of reproduction. Copper is an essential component of a number of different enzymes which allow the animal to thrive including enzymes responsible for energy utilisation and fertility.	Typically seen in youngstock. Speckling of dark coated cattle (where depigmentation of the coat around the eyes gives a spectacled appearance), poor growth, scour, poor fertility.	Often seen as secondary deficiency due to high levels of sulphur, iron and molybdenum reducing availability of copper in the diet.
Selenium	Plays a role in the immune system, fertility, muscle tissue health and iodine utilisation. Deficiency of selenium is a risk factor for retained foetal membranes which can increase the time taken to get back in calf.	White muscle disease – stiff calves, unable to stand, weak/sickly calves, heart problems	Important role with vitamin E in immune function
Iodine	Integral to the thyroid hormones which increase the rate of absorption of carbohydrate from the gastrointestinal tract and control metabolism. This trace element should be a key consideration pre-calving.	Infertility and weak/stillborn calves most common. Also reduced growth rates, decreased milk yield, and retained cleansings	Major role in fertility

There are a number of diagnostics available for determining the trace element status of animals and it can vary greatly between farms and seasons. The simplest way to get a good picture is to use forage analysis in conjunction with blood samples.

Which form of trace element supplementation is the best?

There is an array of different forms of trace element supplementation available and it can be difficult to know which is best for your herd:

- Drenches - can be a cheap and convenient option, however they are relatively short acting and repeated doses mean greater labour. Iodine and cobalt (another trace element to be aware of, especially in sheep) are not stored in the body and we would not recommend using a drench for these.
- Free access systems - lick and block intakes vary greatly and there is a greater risk of either over or under supplementing animals within a group. Some trace elements are toxic if animals eat too much.
- Injections - unfortunately there are few options available for injection.
- Trace element boluses - boluses provide a convenient, cost-effective and controlled method of trace element supplementation. The continuous, controlled release of the bolus is particularly important for animals requiring cobalt and iodine which cannot be stored in the body and therefore a daily supply is required.

If you have any questions on trace elements pre-calving, please get in touch by calling the Bridgwater office on 01278 663399.

Beef Heifers

It's about the right time to make decisions about which beef heifers you want to breed from. The earlier your heifers sit in the calving block, the less likely they are to drag the block out next year!

There are many factors that influence successful calving seasons, including decisions made well in advance. They include:

- ⇒ Understanding what you want to achieve with your herd
- ⇒ Keeping early born heifers
- ⇒ Selecting for cows that get pregnant quickly
- ⇒ Not retaining heifers twinned with bulls
- ⇒ Evaluating growth weights and weaning sizes
- ⇒ Considering EBVs
- ⇒ Working with your vet to assess pelvic measurements and suitability for breeding



We are ready to discuss your selection policies and help with pelvimetry as part of our health planning service.

TBAS

Changes to TB Testing

APHA have now applied changes to the frequency with which TB tests are carried out. All farms will be asked to carry out a Whole Herd Test every 6 months. Farms are exempt and remain on annual testing only if:

The Farm has NOT had a reactor (slaughterhouse or skin test) in the last 6 years;

OR

The Farm is signed up to the CHECS TB Accreditation Scheme.

We can facilitate joining the CHECS TB Accreditation scheme through a FREE TB Advisory Visit. Please call Holly in the office on 01278 663399 if you would like to organise a TB Advisory Visit.

SHEEP AND GOAT MEETING FOR SMALL FLOCKS

Our Small Flock Health Club is re-launching for all sheep and goat flocks of less than 50 animals. The first meeting '**Managing Worms**' will take place at Fieldgate House, High Street, Spaxton, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA5 1BW on Thursday 10th March at 1pm.

THIS EVENT IS FREE TO CLIENTS

Food and Refreshments will be provided

Please contact any of our branches today to book your place today.

Orbenin Eye Ointment

Orbenin Eye Ointment is now back in stock, please contact any of the offices if you would like to order.



Cash Payments

We can no longer accept cash payments at any of our branches, please make payment via card, cheque or bank transfer

Thank You