

Newsletter April 2022

Fertility in spring calving sucklers

Fertility is the single most important factor in suckler calf production and calving spread is the most sensitive measure of cow performance. The rewards of a tight calving block include reduced calf disease and a heavier, more consistent batch of calves to sell. The best farms achieve a calving block of 9 weeks, but how do they do it?

Heifer management

Choose the oldest calves from the previous year as replacements. These are likely to be born from the most fertile mothers who managed to calve at the start of the previous season. Begin breeding heifers 3 weeks before the main group; giving them time to recover from first calving and still comfortably re-breed within the main block.

Healthy fertile bulls

A bull is expected to get 90% of 50 healthy cycling females pregnant in a 9-week period, with 60% of these in the first 3 weeks. Bulls should be foot-trimmed and fertility tested annually and remember that sub-fertile bulls are more common (and harder to detect) than infertile bulls.

Dystocia (difficult/assisted calving) is a disaster. Survival of the cow/calf is only half the battle; the chances of the cow re-breeding in the time frame we require is greatly diminished if she had a difficult calving. Fatter cows are more likely to suffer from dystocia. Manage body condition by manipulating previous weaning dates and feeding a balanced diet during the winter. Select bulls for calving ease.

Infectious disease control

Ideally herds should be free from BVD, IBR and Leptospirosis. If not, then a carefully managed vaccination program is essential.

It may seem daunting, but a 9-week calving spread does not need to be achieved in one year. Begin with a 12-week spread and a smaller autumn calving block (6-week spread). With replacements continually being fed into the spring block, the autumn group will soon diminish leaving you with the spread you desire without heavy culling.



Medicines Course

The next Medicines course will be at 2pm at Sedgemoor Auction Centre on **Tuesday 26th of April**. Please call any of our offices to book your place today.



Cool bags

Unfortunately, once again, we have no cool bags as they haven't been returned. There now will be a **charge** for each bag (which is then yours) or bring your own.



Free blood sampling for Total Protein

In April, our Vet Techs will test for free, total protein levels from blood samples of your calves. Suitably high levels of total protein from a blood sample of calves up to a week old indicates that the calves have achieved successful passive transfer of immunity from the dams colostrum.

Is your colostrum good enough quality? Are the calves getting enough? Ever wanted to know? Failure of colostrum transfer leads to huge problems! Find out for free in April.

Ring Art or Eoghan and we will organise the vet techs to take some samples - 01278 663399 or 01460 55004.

Vaccination Service

Our Vet Techs are currently going to some farmers to administer vaccines - BVD, Leptavoid, IBR, Blackleg, Heptavac P etc. They will bring the vaccine and automatic guns. They will ensure the important 'cold chain' for vaccines is maintained. Vaccination and correct administration of the vaccine is very important. The correct vaccine, at the right time, for the right animals, at the correct temperature, via the correct route is all necessary to ensure your animal is protected from these diseases. The Vet Techs will ensure all of the above happens, freeing up labour time on your farm and administering your vaccine correctly. There is a journey fee and the time charge is £30 per hour, not bad for peace of mind and another job done. Ring Kath to book your visit in and order your vaccine 01278 663399.

Mobility Scoring

More and more regular mobility scoring of your dairy herd is a requirement of your dairy contract. Our Vet Techs are qualified ROMS (Register of Mobility Scorers), mobility scorers. Contact us if you wish to avail of this service - no journey fee and £27 per hour (minimum 2 hours) at a time to suit you and your herd. Ring Cormac or Eoghan to organise 01278 663399.

Sheep Abortion/Poor scanning or Lambing percentage: Free lab testing

Annually, through the FlockCheck scheme, MSD Animal Health **subsidise the laboratory fees** to test ewes for exposure to toxoplasmosis and EAE. These cause the majority of abortions and embryo loss in Sheep in the UK. **Six to eight blood samples will be taken from unvaccinated ewes that have either aborted, are barren or have produced weakly lambs.** Subsidised blood testing is only available until 30th June 2022 so take advantage of it now! There will be a charge for a visit and time to take blood samples.

Sheep & Goat Health Club

Our Small Flock Club is now up and running again after a long hiatus due to Covid. Membership includes all of the following:

- 1-hour **FREE** flock health planning visit annually
- Five **FREE** of charge faecal worm egg counts annually
- Dedicated WhatsApp group for advice
- Quarterly group meetings covering health and management topics
- Diarised local area vaccination, worming and fly treatment days administered through our Vet Tech service (so you don't have to pay for 20 doses when you only need a handful!)

For ONLY **£19 a month + VAT.**

If you would like to join please contact any of our offices today.

Herd Health Planning & Red Tractor Work

These documents are being viewed as very important in the industry now and we have hundreds to do. Please book them in well in advance as they take time and cannot be squeezed in last minute. All health planning must now be done **ON FARM** and not the office.