



# FarmVets

S O U T H W E S T



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## Newsletter June 2017

### Good fly control starts early



**With the fairly dry, warm weather we've had this season, the flies are already out and becoming a nuisance.** Economic losses can be expected from fly-worry. A reduced feed intake will result in a drop in milk yield as well as a reduction in liveweight gains in growing youngstock. Flies can also be implicated in the transmission of disease such as 'summer mastitis' - see the article below. In sheep, flies are responsible for the dreaded fly-strike, a condition where larvae/maggots bury into the fleece of the animal causing severe damage to the skin and underlying tissues.

Interestingly, **the flies you see are just the tip of the iceberg** - the majority of the fly population and life-cycle are in the form of eggs, larvae and pupae. These you won't see, as they are hidden away in the environment. The biggest breeding ground will be in livestock pens with straw bedding (like your calf pens) and any old compost/manure or bedding heaps which have been cleared from your sheds. **It is worth considering where you collect old bedding being removed from your sheds** as this is where the fly eggs are incubating.



There are many fly control methods aimed at the adult fly population but a new approach aims at controlling the early stages of the life-cycle in an attempt to prevent the problem before it happens. Products such as Neporex are available to treat the environment incubating the larvae, but you need to get in and use it early!

Applying a proven insecticide early in the season (such as Swish or Ectofly) will reduce the first wave of adult flies which will have a big impact in reducing the next generation numbers. **Killing flies early (or preventing them from feeding on your livestock early) is the key to controlling the population late in the summer when the real problem generally occurs.** FVSW stock a variety of fly control products licensed to treat fly-strike and prevent infestation in both cattle and sheep. Speak to a member of the team today to discuss the right product for your farm.

### Summer mastitis



**Summer mastitis is the perfect example of a disease transmitted by flies.** The spread of *Strep. dysgalactae* and *A. pyogenes* to the teat of a cow can result in a swollen and very painful infection that will result in permanent damage if it's not treated rapidly.

Injectable antibiotics will be needed to combat the infection, but affected individuals should also receive an anti-inflammatory, such as Metacam®, to help combat the swelling and relieve as much discomfort as possible. Whilst we need to keep prompt treatment in mind, the incidence of summer mastitis will be significantly reduced with a good fly control protocol.

## Teat Sealants - why to use them, how to use them and their role in selective dry cow therapy

All cows should receive teat sealant at dry off - up to 50% of cows do not form a functional keratin plug, and of those that do, the teat canal will remain 50% open for the first 10 days of the dry period.

High yielding cows are less likely to form a plug. The function of this plug is to act as a physical barrier to bacteria which would otherwise travel up to the teat canal and infect the udder.

Teat sealants act as the keratin plug should by blocking the teat canal. There is a lot of evidence available proving that using teat sealants will reduce the incidence of new infection during the dry period both in cows treated with antibiotics (combination dry cow therapy) and those who are not (targeted dry cow therapy).

### Administration

Teats should be thoroughly sterilised in a clean environment and the teat sealants administered in a sterile fashion using clean gloves. Hygiene technique is of utmost importance to reduce the risk of toxic mastitis and potential fatalities.

Where cows are receiving combination therapy, the teat sealant is to be administered after the antibiotic.



*For more information speak to one of the FVSW vets for one of our free drying off guides.*

## Is your ram due an MOT? - the 5 T checklist

**Rams are all too often overlooked when planning your flock for the breeding season.**

Fit, fertile rams are an integral part to achieving your target scan percentages. Identifying and correcting problems will need to be done well in advance of tupping season, especially if you're expecting each ram to serve 60+ ewes.

In a similar approach to a bull breeding soundness examination or BSE, a ram BSE will consist of basic physical checks and semen evaluation. **The 5 T checklist can be a useful way of ensuring all important aspects are considered;**



1. Tone - Aim for a body condition score of 3.5 to 4.
2. Teeth - Ensure your rams teeth are in good enough condition for the season.
3. Toes - All four feet will need to be inspected, sore feet will affect his willingness to work
4. Treat - Ensure your ram/rams are up to date with all their vaccinations and there is no sign of disease.
5. Testicles - Testes need to be palpated for any changes (such as asymmetry) that may suggest a change in his fertility.

Full semen evaluation will require semen collection using an electro-ejaculator. Specimens will be examined on farm for density and progressive motility, smears of these samples will also be stained to evaluate any morphological defects. The optimum time to examine semen is 6-8 weeks before the ram is needed

**For more information, or to book your ram BSE visit, contact your nearest FVSW office.**