



FarmVets

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Newsletter March 2015

MONITORING NUTRITION IN YOUR HERD Part 4: Pete O'Malley

In my last three articles I have discussed the benefits of monitoring nutrition both during and outside of the routine. The final part of this monitoring involves using figures and statistics as an objective measure of performance at a herd level, group level, and cow level. This has benefits far beyond nutritional management alone as it considers herd health in a much broader sense, thus helping improve all areas of cow health. It is also something that is becoming increasingly important as we look for ways of increasing your profitability in the face of dropping milk prices.

Milk recording is a great way of collecting all of this information. For those that do milk record, FarmVets SouthWest can access a large amount of data on your farm, including yields, lactation curves, fat and protein levels, cell counts, and all data recorded on farm including fertility and mastitis.



This data is analysed and reported by our vets as part of our routine health visits and provides a valuable aid in monitoring and improving herd performance, but also targeting problem areas that need particular attention e.g. a drop in conception rates, or a rise in SCC.

For those that don't milk record, milk receipt comparisons, bulk milk sampling and routine fertility monitoring can still play an important role in reviewing herd performance. Using these reports, FarmVets SouthWest can offer benefits far beyond just the traditional fertility scanning to include herd health monitoring and advice. This approach aims to reduce treatment costs, improve cow performance, and ultimately increase profitability.

If you think your farm would benefit from a routine health visit, or if you would like your farm's performance reviewed by one of our vets then call any of our offices.

TB TENDER UPDATE

From 1st May 2015 Defra will no longer control the delivery of TB testing throughout the UK. The contract to be become the new delivery partner has been awarded to XLFarmcare Ltd. You will be asked by the new delivery partner who you would prefer to do your TB testing. If you wish this to continue to be done by FarmVets SouthWest you must state this clearly. The delivery partner is obliged to give your test (where possible) to your preferred practice.

Hypothermia in Lambs



Lambing season is in full swing and lamb mortality will become a primary focus for a number of you. It may come as no surprise that the first 48 hours of life is the time when lamb mortality is the largest – accounting for almost 50% of all lamb losses. What may surprise you, however, is that the largest cause of death in this age is actually hypothermia!

Lambs have a store of fat which they use to stay warm. However this runs out approximately 5 hours after birth (sooner in small lambs!). After this they are entirely reliant on colostrum/milk for energy to stay warm. If they have not fed by this point their chances of survival are significantly reduced, particularly if they are wet or in a cold environment. Lamb mortality at this age can be significantly reduced by following 3 main principles – drying, warming, and feeding. This can be achieved with a few vital but inexpensive bits of kit - a thermometer, fan heater, towels, stomach tube and syringe, and reserve colostrum. For more guidance on management of hypothermia and hypoglycaemia in lambs, speak to one of our vets.

Sheep Abortion

During the busy lambing period nothing is more disheartening than a storm of abortions within your flock. The national target of less than 2% is good to keep in mind, but at what point should you consider further investigation? Typically if you experience two or more abortions daily for two or more days consecutively then you should seek further advice.



To carry out a full investigation you should retain both the placenta and lamb(s). From looking at the aborted material it is sometimes possible to recognise features typically associated with certain infectious agents. However, for a definitive answer we advise using the expertise offered by the post-mortem service at Langford. Arranging use of this service is simple, just give the office a call and one of our vets can complete the required submission form and discuss your case with the Langford team before your arrival.

The major infectious agents *Toxoplasma*, *Clamydophila* (Enzootic abortion) and *Campylobacter* can be held responsible for 70% of UK sheep abortions but other abortion inducing infections do occur. We can discuss these infections in more detail following confirmed diagnosis (alongside a treatment/control plan to prevent further losses). Vaccination protocols can be used as a cost effective method to prevent both *Toxoplasma* and Enzootic abortions. Of course good hygiene is important and so all other material/bedding should be disposed of appropriately and aborted ewes should be marked and isolated as soon as possible. Finally, please remember that some causes of abortion can be passed on to humans so pregnant women in particular should take care.

EASTER OPENING HOURS



Good Friday: Closed
Saturday: 09:00-13:30 (Bridgwater only)
Easter Sunday: Closed
Easter Monday Closed
Drugs can be collected by arrangement

