



# FarmVets

S O U T H W E S T



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## Newsletter June 2016

### Dairy Efficiency Meeting Report

Great to see so many of you at our meeting in May. For those who missed it, here is a brief summary. Given the current economic climate for dairying, **efficient farming has never been more important**. Making changes in the right areas can have significant impact on the cost of production. The two most significant costs are nutrition and heifer rearing. A few facts to think about:



- Age at first calving is the major determinant of the cost of rearing
- Heifers calving down at 30 months results in a 30 month net rearing cost of £1050 compared only £315 if she calves down at 24 months
- This means that for **every month past 24 months of age** at first calving, rearing costs increase by approximately **£120 per heifer**
- Heifers calving later than 24 months also have lowered subsequent conception rates
- Severe **pneumonia in heifer calves** can increase calving interval by 12% and almost **halve** their chances of completing **first lactation**
- Producing a healthy heifer, that calves at 24 months, requires 3 main things:
- Good colostrum management
- Correct feeding regime to achieve a target daily live weight gain of 0.8kg/day
- Good disease management - particularly pneumonia and scour
- Minerals are often over supplemented in adult dairy cattle. In some cases this can account for thousands of pounds wasted unnecessarily

**FarmVets SouthWest can help you reduce these costs** and improve efficiency with their diet analysis and formulation service and heifer rearing health plans. Speak to our office to book a visit.

### Bluetongue



Bluetongue is a midge-borne disease of sheep, cattle and goats. There is currently an outbreak in France and APHA have predicted an 80% likelihood of the disease reaching the UK by September. We would remind all clients to be **vigilant** for the signs of bluetongue, which is a **notifiable disease**. For more information on bluetongue please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bluetongue>. To discuss the risk bluetongue may pose to your herd or flock, and control measures available, please contact the practice.

## What is BVD Costing your herd?

**Is BVD a problem in your herd?** With 90% of UK herds estimated to have been exposed to the virus and the economic impact of BVD on a 100 cow dairy herd estimated (in 2004) at £90,000 over ten years, **leaving it unchecked can be devastating.**

BVD infection can result **poor fertility, abortions, reduced milk yield and ill-thrift** in adult cattle, as well as, less often, fever and diarrhoea. In young calves BVD infection **suppresses the immune system**, leading to higher levels of pneumonia and scour.

Infection of pregnant cows can result in the birth of a **persistently infected (PI) calf**; this individual will continuously shed high levels of virus for its whole life, **maintaining disease** within the herd.

**Using vaccines, such as Bovilis BVD, will reduce the impact of disease**; nonetheless a move should always be made towards eradicating the disease from your farm. Fortunately, this can be achieved through a strategic series of bulk milk screens, blood sampling and tag-and-testing new-born calves. The central objective to any eradication plan must be the **removal of persistently infected animals** - a "PI hunt".

FarmVets SouthWest will be more than happy to work with you identify and remove PI animals and to create a BVD control plan tailored specifically to your herd.



## Get your rams right now before it's too late!



As sperm production takes 47 days, identifying and correcting problems is best done well in advance of the tupping period, to ensure that there is time for sperm production to recover or to source replacement rams. FVSW offer a variety of **ram breeding soundness examinations**, from basic physical checks to semen evaluation, to check that your rams are fit for purpose. Please contact the practice for more details.

It is also important to ensure that rams have the same level of vaccination cover as the ewe flock (with the obvious exception of abortion vaccines!). Vaccinate bought-in rams if their vaccination history is unclear, and don't forget the annual booster (e.g. **Heptavac P Plus**) for your own rams. A ram lost just before tupping to a preventable disease could be disastrous!

Getting the **ram:ewe ratio correct** for your mating system is vital to avoid disappointing results. A ratio of 1:40 for normal tupping is required, but for ram lambs this should be adjusted to 1:20, and after synchronisation 1:10 is advised.

Vasectomised (teaser) rams can be used to give tighter synchronisation, to improve conception rates to AI, and to aid in advancing the breeding season. Speak to the practice today about how teasers could benefit your management system and to book in **ram vasectomies**.

For more information, **come to our evening meeting** on 7<sup>th</sup> June!

## Improve Abrupt Dry Off with Velactis

FVSW now stock **Velactis** - an aid to abrupt dry off in cows.

When given by single injection immediately after last milking, Velactis reduces milk leakage by 80% and decreases new intramammary infections during the dry period by 21%! Buy **Velactis** from FVSW to improve cow welfare, reduce mastitis, and save money!

