



Newsletter May 2018

Belgium vs England

After five months of working at FarmVets Southwest, some reflection from Olivier Guiot about his experiences here in Somerset, compared with his time spent back in Belgium.



It's been five months since I moved to the UK and I'm slowly starting to find my feet in the South West. I come from a small town in the southern French part of Belgium, near the Luxemburg border. The countryside at home is quite similar to Somerset - the big difference is that you won't find lots of hedges with pheasants crossing everywhere - in Belgium you are more likely to come across deer and wild boar in large woodland. These animals are not welcomed by farmers as they regularly destroy seedlings and maize. The Belgian climate is a bit harsher than in Somerset, being colder in the winter, with a lot more snow. It was really funny to see how everything became paralyzed here when only a few inches of snow fell in March.

With this climate and the hilly countryside, yields for corn and cereals are very low, so the land is mainly used for pasture. We therefore breed Belgian Blue beef cattle and there are very few dairy farms. The cattle are housed during the winter and are turned out to pasture at the end of April/early May. There are still many small farms with a hundred head or so of livestock and suckler cows tied up individually in the barn. However, with the low price of meat, the ever-increasing administrative constraints and many other factors, this traditional and family-oriented mode of farming is tending to disappear in favour of much larger and modern farms. A problem that has also arisen in recent years is the Christmas tree business. The growers try to take advantage of the relatively cheap land to plant thousands of trees, which is a problem for the farmers since the fields become more expensive and this culture requires a lot of pesticides.

Farmers in Belgium are very proud of their Belgian Blue cattle and I was surprised to see the breed so well represented here in the UK. Last year, friends of mine sold hundreds of embryos to Chinese farmers, which were then re-implanted on Angus heifers over there. The first heifers died during calving, so the Chinese vet was forced to come to Belgium to learn how to do caesars routinely, just as Belgian vets usually do. The proof that European genetics are appreciated well beyond our borders!

Luckily, we don't have problems with TB in Belgium. The country is free of bovine tuberculosis and the badger population levels are much lower than here. During the 1970s, the badger population decreased by 90% due to a campaign against rabies. Therefore, we now have more time to deal with other issues such as IBR and BVD. National eradication programs have been in place for several years now. **Thanks to all the local farmers who have given me a warm welcome, I have had an enjoyable six months and look forward to many more at FVSW.**

Huskvac: Important

Do NOT use long acting wormers or sustained release boluses at Huskvac vaccination until at least two weeks after the second dose of Huskvac.

TBAS (TB Advisory Service)

Cattle farmers across the High Risk and Edge Areas of England are already taking advantage of the free advice available from the TB Advisory Service, and implementing practical, cost-effective measures to reduce the risks associated with TB. The service, funded by Defra, offers on-farm advice visits, where experienced advisors can provide bespoke recommendations to prevent TB incursions in herds that are currently clear, whilst discussing trading options and measures to prevent repeated reinfection for farms currently under TB restrictions. A telephone advice service is also available for farmers with specific questions about bovine TB and biosecurity.



After the long, wet winter, many farmers can't wait to see their cattle out at grass, but this "can increase the risk of interaction with wildlife, which can then increase the risk of TB in some areas" said Phil Elkins MRCVS, Technical Director of TBAS. "By understanding the risks on your farm, and taking appropriate action, the risk posed by wildlife can be significantly reduced. Many farmers will also be buying in cattle at this time of year, so before purchasing, don't forget to check the vendor's TB history on www.ibtb.co.uk." For more information on TBAS visit their website at www.tbas.org.uk, email info@tbas.org.uk, call them on 01306 779410 or visit their Facebook page @TB Advisory Service.

Herd Health Plan Reviews

As most of you will already have noticed, this year has seen changes to the requirements of all Herd Health Plans including Red Tractor assurance plans. You now need to demonstrate a responsible approach towards medicine use and specifically, antibiotic use.



Red Tractor Assurance

In some instances, we will have to summate the amounts of antibiotic used on a farm in the last year and formulate a plan to minimise their use. To this end we will use the Kingshay Antimicrobial monitoring service - please call any of our offices for more details. During your Herd Health planning meeting we will also be discussing BVD Free and the National Johne's Management Plan. Certain aligned dairy contracts have even more specific requirements. As you can see, we will clearly need more time to be able to complete your herd health plan than in the past. This will be best approached by a separate herd health plan meeting. When arranging your Herd health review please give us as much notice as possible so we can organise a meeting with a vet to complete all the new requirements.

N.B. It is not possible to complete a herd health plan "on the day". It is your responsibility to ensure we arrange a herd health review meeting in time for any inspections due. In most instances we will need more than one week's notice.



May Bank Holiday Opening Hours

Our offices will be shut on **Monday, May 7th & May 28th**
Drugs can be collected from our Sedgemoor Office *by appointment only*.



Your local farm veterinary service

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