



# FarmVets

S O U T H W E S T



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## Newsletter September 2015

### Babesiosis—“Red Water Fever”

Red Water is a disease caused by the protozoan (parasite) *Babesia divergens* which is carried by ticks. Affected cattle will have a temperature, anaemia (reduction in red blood cells), and red urine. This is caused by babesia entering the red blood cells, dividing, and then destroying the red blood cell they are within, before entering new red blood cells and repeating the process. These destroyed red blood cells are shed in the urine, hence giving the name Red Water. Further anaemia occurs as the animal's immune system tries to destroy the babesia and the anaemia can become marked very quickly. It usually takes between one and two weeks for clinical signs to develop from the onset of infection.

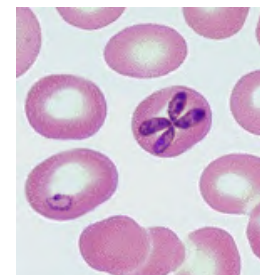


Ticks are most commonly found on rough hill and moorland grazing areas but over recent years tick numbers have seen a large increase and sporadic cases are occurring in previously unaffected and lowland areas.

Although ticks may be found on livestock throughout the year two peak periods of activity occur when tick feeding is most common – March to June and August to November. In endemic areas it is possible for cattle to develop immunity to Red Water through very low levels of infection. Home bred offspring are often immune due to transfer of antibodies in colostrum as a calf, and subsequent low level infection boosting their immunity. As a result bought in cattle from an area with no history of Red Water are most at risk. Home bred animals can still develop disease though if their immunity breaks down, for example with stress or a concurrent disease.

The severe form of the disease which occurs in adults is characterised by sudden onset dullness, anorexia, reduced milk yield, red urine, a temperature, reduced or totally absent stomach movements, and anaemia. In early stages there will often be ‘pipe stream’ diarrhoea before turning to constipation in the later stages. Abortion will often occur. If not treated quickly these animals become ‘downers’ and quickly die. In yearlings the clinical signs are similar to those in adults but less severe and death is rare. In calves the condition often goes unrecognised.

The only drug available for treating Red Water is Imizol. This can also be used as a preventative. This drug has extremely long withhold periods (21 days milk; 213 days meat) and there are other restrictions with its use. If treated early prognosis is good. In cases where the PCV is very low (<15%) then generally treatment is unsuccessful unless combined with blood transfusions. This would often only be undertaken in very valuable cattle.



## Ketosis—Part 2

Last month's article defined ketosis, outlined the importance of sub-clinical ketosis, and described the animals at the greatest risk of developing the disease. In this article we discuss the consequences of ketosis and some ways to reduce the risk on your farm. It has been demonstrated in several studies that ketosis has many negative consequences:

1. **Health: - increased risk of developing:**

- Displaced Abomasum (x3-8)
- Retained cleansing (x 2)
- Metritis (x 3)
- Cystic Ovaries (x 6)
- Culls <60d post calving (x2)
- Lowering of the immune system which increases the likelihood of infectious disease

2. **Reduced Fertility:**

- 22 days longer returning to oestrus
- 20% less chance to get pregnant on 1st AI: BHBA>1000mmol/l in blood 1st week post calving OR >1400mmol/l in 2nd week

3. **Reduced milk production:**

- Loss of more than 300kg over the course of a lactation

4. **Reduced milk quality:**

- Negative energy balance = less glucose available
  - = ↓ milk protein synthesis
  - = ↓ milk price
- Excessive fat mobilisation = more fatty acids available
  - = ↑ milk fat synthesis
  - = ↓ milk yield

Elanco

**Kexxtone**



All these figures demonstrate that ketosis is a very costly disease. **Prevention is key.** The following management interventions are proven to reduce the risk.

- Improving the transition period through altering the dry cow ration, the length of the dry period, and preventing cows becoming too fat towards end of lactation;
- Ensuring heifers do not calve down dor the first time over 27 months of age;
- Kexxtone - this is a relatively new and novel treatment for the reduction of ketosis. It is an intra-ruminal bolus given to **at risk animals** 3-4 weeks prior to calving. It continuously releases monensin for 95 days, thus covering the risk period of ketosis. Monensin shifts the microbial balance in the rumen, increasing the energy available to the cow and narrowing the “energy gap”.

There are several ways that we can test for ketosis, and it is also possible and recommended to perform herd level monitoring of this costly disease. This can be incorporated into a routine fertility visit with ease. Speak to any of the vets for more information on testing, reducing your risk and Kexxtone.

## Heifer Rearing Contract

*Highly recommended clients seek heifer rearing contract.  
Please contact Tom on 07772 854722.*