



**White Hills Surgery,
Sibford Road, Hook Norton,
Banbury, OXON OX15 5DG
Tel: 01608 730085
Fax: 01608 730439
www.hooknortonvets.co.uk**

APRIL 2011

FARM NEWSLETTER

CATTLE

TURNOUT

1. STAGGERS

With the recent dry weather, many of you will be thinking of turning cattle out in the next few weeks, especially as feed and bedding are in short supply for many farmers. With a drop of rain the grass will grow quickly, and magnesium deficiency (Staggers) will present a very real threat.

The first sign of Staggers can often be finding a dead animal. You may see that the animal had been thrashing about prior to death. In these cases, the only way to diagnose the deficiency is to take a sample from the eyeball, so feel free to drop one into the surgery if you'd like a diagnosis!

Early signs of Staggers present as the animal being 'twitchy' and the beast may also be aggressive. More advanced cases are seen with an animal flat out, paddling the legs and frothing at the mouth. This is an emergency and urgent treatment is needed. We recommend that you have bottles of **Magniject** in

storage, along with a flutter valve and some sterile needles. Always give the magnesium under the skin. Never into the vein: this will result in immediate death. Be careful when doing this as the animal may be thrashing about. If you are unsure of what to do, then please call us as soon as possible.

Prevention is possible! Cattle cannot store magnesium in their body as they can with calcium. This means that the animal must ingest magnesium every day within the diet. Fast growing spring grass is low in magnesium, so supplements must be offered as an additional food source. Concentrates and 'licks' will provide sufficient magnesium, as will good quality hay and silage. If in doubt, giving a bottle of magnesium under the skin will never harm an animal. Magnesium boluses are available and given 2-3 days pre-turnout will provide magnesium for the first 6-8 weeks at grass.

Remember any sudden death in cattle should be reported to the local Animal Health Office for an Anthrax investigation.

2. VACCINES

Prior to turning animals out to pasture, remember vaccines/boosters!

All young stock need 2 doses of **Huskvac** 4 weeks apart, with the 2nd dose 2 weeks before turning out to pasture.

Leptospirosis is a high risk at this time of year so remember to do any boosters. **Leptavoid H** is now licensed to reduce the shedding of the bacteria in urine. Leptavoid H can now be given at the same time as **Bovilis BVD**.

Blue Tongue vaccine is not such a necessity this year as we are in a low risk area. Anybody wishing

to give a booster to already vaccinated cattle should let us know numbers as we will not be keeping the vaccine in-stock and will order the vaccine on an individual needs basis.

Due to limited supply of Blue Tongue vaccine, please contact the Surgery in advance if you require any - giving at least 48 hours notice. At present only the larger size bottles are available with limited shelf-life, so we will order more in, as required.

Please remember to vaccinate against Clostridial diseases such as Blackleg and Tetanus. Two doses are required prior to turnout. We recommend **Bravoxin 10** which covers all the clostridial diseases of cattle.

REARING DAIRY CALVES

Jim recently went to a meeting for a talk by Dr. Sam Leadley, a specialist in calf rearing. He made some valid points which seem like common sense but we don't all adhere to them. These are all aimed at getting the dairy heifers up to 350kg at 13-15 months so that they can be served.

- When thawing stored colostrum, never put it in boiling water as this will denature the protein. It must be allowed to thaw naturally.
- If pooling colostrum, remember the risk of passing on Johnes to newborn calves. A colostrometer can be used to tell you the quality of the colostrum. Never keep heifer colostrum due to its poor quality.
- Powered colostrums do not contain any white blood cells, so every calf needs some cow's milk to help establish an immune system.

- Powered colostrums do have the advantage of containing sufficient vitamin E and Selenium in it. All calves on the dam would benefit from a Vitesel injection in case their levels are low.
- Once the temperature drops to below 16C, a calf has to use more energy to maintain its body weight, leaving less energy that can be used for growth. So calves need more milk/food in the winter if you wish them to continue growing. (Think of this year!).
- For a calf to have a functioning rumen that can support its maintenance and growth and thus allow weaning, the calf needs to ingest a handful of concentrates and roughage for 21 consecutive days so that the rumen is fully developed.
- If calf cake has a molasses content greater than 5%, or the cake sticks together, then a calf's dry matter intake will be reduced.
- All calves with bacterial diarrhoea should have both injectable antibiotics and boluses.
- Any heifer that requires 3 courses of antibiotics for pneumonia prior to calving should be culled as it will not be a productive cow.

BOVINE TB

DEFRA currently run a Farmer Advice project to highlight and address issues that Bovine TB can create when a breakdown is

found on a farm. These numerous workshops help to increase awareness of the disease and show ways in which farmers can reduce transmission. Due to the increase in TB outbreaks in Oxfordshire, the initiative has been extended to this County.

A workshop will take place on the 19th April at 7:30pm at Agricultural House, Eynsham. To register, please contact NFU on 01730 711950, or e-mail: south.east@nfu.org.uk

SHEEP

We recently held a meeting for our sheep farmers to allow the virtues of **Closamectin** to be extolled. This 4-in-1 injection allows treatment of lungworm, gastrointestinal worms and adult fluke, and the control of sheep scab. This is the only injection of its kind. An added bonus is that the meat withdrawal is only 28 days.

At this time of year, ewes are being pushed to provide good lambs and sufficient milk to protect them. Prolactin, the hormone that helps milk production, suppresses a sheep's immune system thus making it more susceptible to the effects of the parasites. Once out at pasture, the ewes will ingest over-wintered parasites, and they may still contain adult fluke that were ingested in the autumn. This will not only affect productivity, but will lead to more metabolic diseases such as Twin Lamb. You may wish to confirm fluke by sending in faecal samples so that we can check for eggs. Barren ewes can have their livers inspected for any fluke damage at the abattoir. At this time of year,

Closamectin will be sufficient to treat the adult fluke along with the intestinal worms.

Do remember to use **Fasinex** in the Autumn as this will kill all stages of fluke.

If treating for Sheep Scab, give the ewes another injection of **Ivermectin** 7 days after the Closamectin injection.

Any bought in ewes should be treated with Closamectin 48 hours before entering the flock.

GAMEKEEPER MEETING

Finally for all our clients with a farm shoot, we are holding a Gamekeeper meeting on: 'Breeding and Rearing of Game Birds - New Treatment Strategies' on April 20th at 7.30pm at the Horse & Groom, Milcombe, OX15 4RS. We will have some experts to advise you on how to keep those pheasants alive in your release pens.

All are welcome. If you would like to submit any questions in advance please e-mail them to the Practice: hnvs@hotmail.com