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## FEBRUARY 2012

### FARM NEWSLETTER

## **SHEEP & CATTLE**

### **SCHMALLEMBERG VIRUS**

Many of you will have heard or read of the Schmallenberg virus by now, which has this week crossed the channel and been diagnosed in this country. This was inevitable as the disease is transmitted by midges. At present there is no vaccine against the disease.

So far, the disease has only been diagnosed in sheep within the UK. Clinical signs include abortions and stillbirths, which are caused by abnormalities of the foetus such as persistent flexion of the joints and twisted necks.

Cattle are also susceptible, with symptoms including fever, loss of appetite, reduced milk yield, occasional diarrhoea and abortions.

If you suspect you have a problem then please contact us straight away. This is currently NOT a notifiable disease, so a positive diagnosis will NOT mean that

your farm will be placed under any restrictions. There are no known risks to humans from this disease. Treatment for any suspected cases is supportive therapy such as adequate food and water intake, anti-inflammatories, and antibiotics to cover any secondary infections. Animals generally recover after 1-2 weeks.

## **CATTLE**

### **FATTY LIVER**

This is when too much fat accumulates in the liver which impairs the liver's function. The clinical effects range from loss of appetite and poor productivity, to a very painful death!

The problem is associated with cows/heifers that are too fat when they calve. Cows that appear to have a normal body condition score may be susceptible if they have a lot of internal fat, such as in Holsteins.

Once calved, a cow has to start producing milk - a large drain on her energy supplies. Fat cows eat less than thin cows but still need the same energy to produce milk, so they mobilise fat from the liver to convert into energy so that their demands are met. Hormones released at calving only serve to exacerbate the effects. A cow's liver can only cope with so much fat in it at any one time, and when this critical level is exceeded, the liver's function is impaired. This is why the problem is commonly seen in fat stale cows, which have had an excessive dry period. They release so much fat in one go to meet their energy needs that the liver just cannot cope.

Cows showing clinical signs often have ketosis as a consequence of their reduced liver function. The cows appear to 'melt' and (because of an impaired immune system) often suffer from problems such as toxic mastitis, metritis and milk fever. Displaced abomasums are another consequence.

Treatment is mainly supportive including drenching the cow with water and glycerol at frequent intervals. Injections of vitamin B can help liver function and increase the appetite. Limited steroid injections can promote glucose production. We do now sell a '**Pro Liver**' drench which also contains salt to stimulate the cow to drink, and vitamin E to help the cow's immune system as well as short and long acting forms of glucose. These are very sick animals, and death is not uncommon. Sub-clinical fatty liver problems often present as very poor fertility in a herd. There will be an increase in problems such as retained cleansings, milk fevers, mastitis, displaced abomasums and ketosis.

The only way to diagnose a problem is to blood test cows pre- and post-calving to check the fat levels in the bloodstream. This should be the first thing to consider when fertility levels drop or disease incidence increases. The vet and nutritionist can then work in combination to form a diet for the dry cows so to ensure that they are Body Condition Score 2.5 at calving. If you want some advice on how to B.C.S. your cattle then please ask us. You should think twice

about persisting with cows that you cannot get in calf as they are often the greatest problem when they eventually do calve. Beef farmers, you are not immune from this problem!!

Last year we had cows, and heifers in particular, that were too fat at calving. Calving was difficult as a consequence, and when a cow is in pain it doesn't eat. This causes the cow to enter a negative energy balance which in turn triggers the enormous fat supplies to be released into the bloodstream. The fat 'clogs up' the liver, destroying it and causing a painful death. Please keep your cows slim in the lead up to calving to reduce calving difficulties? If you have a cow down after calving, drench with glycerol, and give sufficient pain relief.

## SELENIUM

As you all know, colostrum is essential for a newborn calf to help it establish an immune system. The number of antibodies which are absorbed in the gut to form this immune system can be increased by up to 42% with the use of selenium. Most milk powders contain sufficient vitamin E/selenium, but calves only on fresh milk can have low levels so supplementing with a **Vitesel** injection at birth may be beneficial.

We do sell **Locatim** which is a small bottle containing sufficient antibodies for a newborn calf. This is given in the mouth and very useful when faced with recumbent calves, those that are a bit dopey and those born at 2am! There is increasing evidence that high producing dairy cows have poor quality colostrum so extra

supplementation would be advisable. Using a product like Locatim instead of another cow's milk avoids the potential spread of diseases such as Johnes.

## HUSKVAC

Cattle develop lungworm after eating grass contaminated by the parasite. The larvae migrate to the animal's lungs causing clinical signs ranging from a mild cough, to death. Adult cattle are not always immune and dairy cows which are infrequently out to grass commonly pick up the infection, causing reduced milk yield. A recent study in Holland showed that severe lungworm infection can cost you up to £135/cow in lost production.

Huskvac allows the cattle to develop immunity against the parasite that the persistent use of wormers will not. Calves need two doses of the vaccine from anytime after 8 weeks of age. The second vaccine must be given at least 2 weeks before the cattle are put out to grass. If an animal has never been out to grass then they will have no immunity!!!

When ordering your Huskvac from us, please allow 2 full days for it to be delivered. When you order, we will automatically order both doses for you. The Huskvac has an expiry date of up to 2 months. We do not keep any in stock so don't just turn up at Hook Norton without pre-ordering!

## ANTIBIOTIC USE

It is becoming increasingly apparent that some farmers are misusing antibiotics. This

is a serious problem as it will only serve to increase resistance. There will be major changes in the next couple of years restricting the use of antibiotics in farm animals so get used to minimising their use.....!!

DO NOT give multiple antibiotics in one go. One antibiotic is sufficient and if ineffective you probably have the wrong diagnosis. Antibiotics often take at least a day to be effective so there is no need to give several different types within a day. There is no benefit to multiple antibiotic use as they don't work in combination. If your animal is not responding after one/two day then phone us. Our advice is free! And you are only wasting money by using excessive drugs. If we feel that you are using drugs irresponsibly then you will not have any dispensed to you. As vets, we are under increasing scrutiny and legislation to check that antibiotics are being used correctly.

## MEETING

Our next meeting is on the 8<sup>th</sup> February at the Horse and Groom in Milcombe, starting at 7:30pm. There will be a presentation on: **The Hidden Dangers of IBR in Both Dairy and Beef Herds**. This will be followed by a **Q and A session on Johnes, Neospora and BVD**. Guda Van der Burgt from the AHVLA will be on hand to help clear up any points of confusion you may have on these diseases which are becoming increasingly relevant. **Please phone the**

**Surgery if you wish to attend.**