



# Coombefield Veterinary Hospital

## Farm Newsletter

### April 2015

#### **Ketosis and Nervous Acetonaemia**

This is a disease seen in cows that are freshly calved. There are two causes of Ketosis, Primary Ketosis and Secondary Ketosis. Primary Ketosis is caused by fat cows calving, inadequate exercise, lush pasture and inadequate fibre intake. Secondary Ketosis is caused by anything causing the cow to not eat. If a cow is sick from retained cleansings or mastitis, peritonitis or metritis and she becomes anorexic then she will become Ketotic.

When a cow becomes Ketotic, it means that she no longer has enough glucose stores in her body to maintain her milk production and starts to break down fat. When fat is broken down there is a by-product of ketone bodies circulating in the blood, which is then excreted into the urine and milk and can be smelt on a cow's breath as a sweet pear drop smell.

Some cows become starry eyed, drop their milk and stop eating, others can develop into nervous acetonaemia where they show strange behaviours such as circling, excessive licking, head pressing and bellowing. This is due to the circulating ketone bodies affecting the brain.

The treatment is to support the cows' energy demand with oral glucose or propylene glycol. This will stop the cows' body breaking down the fat and utilise the glucose from the drench. Once the ketone bodies in the system reduce the cow feels more like eating and once her eating increases her lactation will start to improve.

To prevent ketosis it is important to make sure your cows in the later stage of their lactation are not getting too fat. Once they have been dried off it is very difficult to alter their condition. It is important to give good quality forage during the dry period and introduce the lactation ration into their diet 3 weeks before calving but ensure a third of the ration is fibre.

Susceptible cows, fat or especially thin cows or those known to produce high yields would benefit from a relatively new product called 'Kexxtone' boluses which are to be given three weeks before they calve. This enables them to utilise the diet more effectively and minimise the risk of getting ketosis.

If you are concerned that the cows are not reaching their potential yield as quickly as they should you may have a subclinical ketosis problem where the cows are not showing the obvious clinical signs but are coping with the ketones by lowering their milk yield to compensate.

If you think you may have a clinical or subclinical ketosis problem talk to one of us and we can measure ketones in the blood of your fresh cows. This will very quickly determine if Ketosis is affecting your herd.

#### **Important TB Testing News**

As you may be aware TB testing has been put out to tender by DEFRA. XL Farmcare (Devon/Cornwall) have won the contract for Devon and XL Farmcare (Wessex) have won the contract for Dorset and Somerset. We will be sub-contractors for both companies, so will continue to do your TB tests.

From your point of view there will be very little change, Defra will still notify you about your TB tests. There will be some changes, particularly the smaller tests, in that we will contact you to organize TB tests when we are in your area, more often than now, as under the tender terms we are paid no mileage and a much reduced fee for testing. By organising TB tests by area we will hopefully reduce our travelling costs and make smaller tests more efficient so our losses are kept to a minimum. We thank you in advance for your co-operation.

## **Rise in Lungworm Outbreaks makes Vaccination Critical**

Lungworm is becoming endemic once again. Historically, lungworm problems have been most commonly associated with youngstock, but a greater proportion of cases are now being reported in adult animals.

This escalation in disease outbreaks is apparently due to a combination of the use of long-acting wormers in calves, reduction in vaccine use and changes in weather patterns.

Planning lungworm control strategies prior to a heifer's first grazing season makes sound financial sense. And relying on wormers alone often doesn't allow the animal to develop its own natural immunity.

Huck infection occurs as a result of infection with the worm *Dictyocaulus Viviparus*. Cattle develop it after eating grass contaminated with infective larvae. Once in the gut, the larvae migrate through its wall to the lungs where they begin laying eggs after several weeks. A spell of mild, wet weather such as we have had recently can create sudden dramatic increase in lungworm populations, which can be very harmful, even fatal, to any stock that have little or no immunity.

Bovilis Huskvac is a live vaccine, made from irradiated larvae, which are incapable of causing disease. For dairy calves, vaccination consists of two doses a month apart and should be completed at least two weeks before the calves are turned out to grass, for suckled calves it should finish two weeks before the calves begin to eat significant amounts of grass. Wormers such as sustained-release boluses should not be given until two weeks after the final dose of vaccine.

The vaccine produces a very good immune response against disease but it does not prevent all worms from natural infections completing their life cycle. This allows for the continued development of natural immunity, which often fails to occur where there is an over-reliance on wormers.

Vaccination with pre-turnout course of Bovilis Huskvac is the most reliable and cost-effective way of ensuring the development of immunity to lungworm.

The vaccine is available this year should you wish to use it.



### **And finally.....**

Yarcombe and District Show and Sale went very well on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, below are a couple of photos of some of the lucky winners



If you would like to speak to a Farm vet or arrange a visit  
Please call 01297 630515 or email [farm@axvets.co.uk](mailto:farm@axvets.co.uk)