



## Coombefield Veterinary Hospital

### Farm Newsletter

June 2015

### Summer Mastitis



Summer mastitis occurs predominately during the warmer summer months. It is a condition affecting lactating and non-lactating animals, particularly dry cows and heifers at pasture, but can even occasionally occur in calves and bulls. Very few quarters recover and the mastitis is often fatal to the animal. Therefore most treatments are targeted at saving the animal and trying to maintain some productivity for the future. The main goal on the farm should be to avoid the disease, or at least minimise its incidence.

#### Cause



Summer mastitis is an infection which is caused by a number of bacteria which are found normally in the environment, most notably *Streptococcus dysgalactae* and *Arcanobacterium pyogenes*. These gain entry to the udder resulting in mastitis and systemic illness due to the toxins released by the bacteria. Its spread is linked to flying insects, specifically the sheep headfly (*Hydrotaea irritans*). These flies live in bushes and trees, and can only fly during mild, damp humid conditions and low wind speeds thus cases tend to be associated with "problem fields" next to woods and high hedges.

The actual means of infection is likely to be more complex, with a mixture of routes. In addition to potential external routes of infection via teat skin or teat canal, particularly if damaged, there is the possibility of infection originating internally, with bacteria spreading from other parts of the body, particularly via the blood. Once a quarter is affected then spread can then occur via infected material between quarters or even between animals.

#### Signs

##### Initial symptoms are:

- Swollen, painful teat or quarter
- Flies become attracted to the teat's unpleasant-smelling yellow secretions
- Dull and inappetent animal
- May be stiff and lame when moved

##### On examination:

- Temperature is often high
- The quarter affected contains thick foul smelling pus.



These obvious signs do not occur in every case and it is suggested that when a blind quarter is discovered after calving that these animals may have had a mild infection without showing any significant clinical signs. If left untreated, the bacterial toxins will damage the udder tissues irreversibly; in many cases the quarter affected will be lost entirely or so badly affected by the infection that it will be effectively lost.



## Treatment & Control

Treatment is most effective by regularly stripping of the affected quarter, to remove as much affected material as possible and intensive treatment with fluids administered by the vet. Heifers and cows with summer mastitis are best isolated to prevent any spread.

### Summer mastitis can be avoided by various measures:

- Having effective dry cow therapy, including the use of long-term intra-mammary antibiotics, teat end sealants and good hygiene measures at drying-off.
- Implementing measures to control and minimise exposure to flies. Flying insects should be controlled from early on in the fly season by the use of pour-on anti-parasitic treatments, the use of fly ear tags, and the application of teat fly repellents to teats, such as traditional Stockholm tar and brown salves.
- Maintaining good teat condition pre-drying off, having good dry cow nutrition and observing/checking cattle on a regular basis.
- Avoiding areas where teats may be damaged or areas where flies are a particular problem, such as near rivers and woods.



## FARM INFO

If you would like to speak to a Farm vet or arrange a visit

Please ring 01297 630515

Medicines can be requested via email or by telephone

Email: [farm@axvets.co.uk](mailto:farm@axvets.co.uk)