



Farm Vet News

November 2020



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Introduction – Lucy Jerram

2020 continues to throw challenges at the UK farming community; not only are we entering a second lockdown, but 4 November saw the Agricultural Bill return to the House of Commons for the second time after certain Lords' amendments were rejected last month. These amendments aim to set up a farming trade commission and to protect current British food standards. It is heartening for all that the House of Lords is backing British producers by aiming to ensure that agricultural and food imports meet equivalent domestic benchmarking standards. Over the past few months there have been various protests and demonstrations backing British farming including Save British Farming's tractor drives and The Landworkers' Alliance Save Our Standards pumpkin SOS outside parliament on Halloween. In a year where a global pandemic has highlighted the importance of local farmers producing local food, we are proud to be helping our clients to maintain high standards in both food safety and animal welfare. Almost 95% of people surveyed by Which? want food imports to meet our high domestic standards and with celebrities on board as well we remain optimistic that positive change can happen.

Buying British and ensuring that any imports meet our current food safety, food security, working conditions, environmental standards and animal welfare is more essential than ever, combined with reducing

food waste and doing our part to mitigate emissions. We can all do our part and here at Endell we will continue to champion and support all our farmers in their efforts.

In the meantime, we will continue to provide our usual exceptional service throughout another lockdown while maintaining social distancing and reducing the need for any non-essential visits where possible.



Dairy Calf Housing Survey

Heifer rearing is integral to your dairy farming enterprise, with a lot of helpful information becoming available over recent years to help drive improvements within the industry. In addition to this, key decision makers (often at the processor and distributor level) have been imposing more stringent guidelines for producers to follow, and one area where this has occurred is in regard to calf housing. Sophie Mahendran is a farm vet based in the South West who recently started a PhD with the Royal Veterinary College looking at various aspects of dairy calf housing. As part of this she has produced an

online survey for farmers to try and establish how calves are currently being housed, and some of the routine management decisions that are currently in place for them. This survey is part of a large PhD project run by the Royal Veterinary College, and it aims to gather information about how UK dairy farmers are currently housing and managing their pre-weaning heifer calves. They are particularly keen to identify whether calves are individually or group housed, as well as farmers' opinions about these different housing strategies. This information will then contribute to a better understanding of

current UK calf housing strategies, and will direct further work to help understand the advantages and disadvantages of these systems. The survey can be accessed online via:

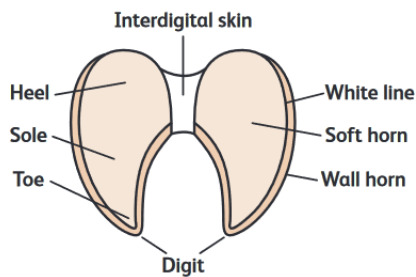
<https://rvc.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/uk-calf-housing-survey>

If you are a dairy farmer with an interest in calf health then please consider filling in this survey to help with this valuable area of research; it will take approximately ten minutes to complete and the data collected will be completely anonymised and will remain confidential.

Foot Health in your Flock – Harry Smith

One of the biggest causes of poor welfare in a flock is lameness, whether it's due to the presence of infection or unfavourable ground conditions. Historically, it was thought that routine sheep foot trimming helped to reduce lameness levels; we now know that it often causes higher levels of lameness due to over trimming, delayed wound healing, poor weight bearing and the spread of infection from the equipment used.

What is a normal foot?



Two claws are surrounded by a hard wall of horn, with softer horn at the base of each claw. The skin between claws should be light pink and dry. The horn of the sole is only a few millimetres thick and is sensitive to

trauma or excessive weight bearing, we therefore want a sheep to bear weight on the wall horn, which should extend beyond the sole. There should be no heat, smell or separated horn. Even if the wall horn is curling over this is unlikely to cause harm so should not be trimmed, unless severely overgrown and lame.

Common Foot Infections

- **Scald:** Also known as interdigital dermatitis, this is most common in wet conditions in younger animals whereby the skin between the claws becomes inflamed. Individuals should be treated with an antibiotic spray and kept on dry ground. As there is no damage to the claws, no foot trimming!
- **Abscess:** An abscess around the white line (near the toe) is one of the few cases where trimming may be required. This is severely painful for sheep, and you may see pus draining from one of the claws or around the coronary band. If you suspect this in a member of your flock we would recommend speaking to one of our vets for advice.

- **Footrot:** Footrot is seen when infection spreads up to the claws, and separation of the horn tissue of the sole will start to occur. This is extremely painful and must be treated immediately. Treatment typically involves antibiotics and pain relief. Foot trimming will not only worsen matters by delaying wound healing, but can lead to painful tissue proliferation, known as a granuloma. If you have lameness concerns, speak to one of our vets for advice on appropriate treatments.



The foot on the right shows a typical appearance of scald.

Foot Trimming

So when can you trim? In general, our advice is that if you think trimming may be necessary, you should speak to the vet first, unless you're confident, the foot looks normal except that the hoof wall is severely overgrown and the sheep is lame. A toe abscess may require trimming to allow drainage of the pus, however, if not done properly then damage may be done to sensitive structures within the hoof sole, resulting in further lameness.

In summary, maintaining good foot health in your flock is essential in ensuring their welfare remains at the highest of levels and keeps them happily grazing. If you have any comments or questions from this article, please contact the practice on 01722 333291 or email harry@endellfarmvets.co.uk.

Winter Housing – Barry Ewens

Winter housing is the perfect time for a “belt and braces” approach to parasite control. Irrespective of the parasite control options used during the summer grazing season housing provides an opportunity to appropriately treat cattle for a variety of parasites. The vast majority of internal worm infestations are acquired from pasture so treating cattle around housing should allow cattle to spend the winter free of the negative effects of fluke and gut worms including potentially fatal type II ostertagiosis. Treating effectively will mean that cattle remain worm-free at turn out and so do not act as a source of pasture contamination.

Intestinal Worms

Adult cattle will have acquired a good immunity to gut and lung worms during their first and second grazing seasons but youngstock will be susceptible to gut worm infestations. Treating younger animals with a 3-ML (‘clear’) anthelmintic will allow them to maintain their growth rates while on a winter ration. Not treating adult cattle will reduce the selection pressure that can accelerate anthelmintic resistance. Treating cattle as necessary rather than in a frequent routine manner and using the correct dosage is a more responsible method of achieving good disease control.

Lice

Keeping lice and mites under control during the winter months means that fewer animals will rub and scratch on walls and posts; this significantly reduces their risk of subsequently contracting ringworm. A single treatment of a fly control pour-on at housing will reduce hair loss and discomfort caused by ectoparasites.

Fluke

All ages of cattle can be susceptible to liver fluke, so if you are in an at risk area we recommend using a triclabendazole based drench to target all three life cycle stages.



It is important to delay treatment for over two weeks after housing to allow recently ingested larvae time to migrate to the liver. This means that a single dose should then be effective against all liver fluke and means there is no need to dose a second time. There are increasing reports of triclabendazole resistance and alternative flukicide options are already limited. Discussing fluke risk with our vets or SQPs and assessing the need to treat with faecal or blood tests will be beneficial and may even save you time, money and effort!

Seasonal and Staff Updates

Throughout October our team were taking part in the UK wide Vet Month of Movement to raise money for Vetlife. Vetlife provides free support to the veterinary community including assistance for stress and anxiety, particularly important in 2020. We aimed to cover 1000km throughout October via walking, running and cycling. This target was reached by 23 October and by the end of the month eleven team members had totalled 1401km - our reception team in Salisbury walked to work, our dog owning vets and vet techs exercised their canine friends and Harry did what Harry does best - running and cycling impressive distances! There is still time to donate via our JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/endellvmom>

Harry has also recently become a member of the Pig Veterinary Society meaning he is able to undertake Red Tractor pig assurance scheme work for any clients who need this service. Lucy sat her European College of Bovine Health Management exams in September and passed at the first attempt (a very rare achievement!) meaning she is now a European Specialist in Bovine Health Management. Meanwhile, Hayley received confirmation that she passed her Post Graduate Certificate in Veterinary Education with a distinction. Well done to all!



Jim and George have recently published an article entitled "Reproductive management of seasonal calving dairy herds" in "In Practice" – a Journal aimed at veterinary practitioners. The article explains the concept of seasonal calving systems, the impacts of poor fertility, the key performance indicators used to monitor performance in clinical practice, and the key areas where improvements can be made. If you would like a read, please email George (george@endellfarmvets.co.uk) and he will send you a copy.

There is further funding available for farmers who missed out on the initial BVD Stamp It Out scheme in 2018, the initiative has been extended by six months to June 2021. The project hopes to engage 8,000 herds across England and currently has enrolled 5,500 farmers. BVD costs UK farmers ~£61m a year in lost performance with a compulsory scheme already present in Scotland for some years. The BVDFree England funding will cover vet time, the cost of preliminary testing work and up to £440 for a PI (persistently infected animal) hunt where there is evidence that this is necessary. To enquire please contact the main practice and ask for Lucy.

Farmer Training Courses

To ensure that we can comply with current COVID-19 guidelines, where possible all theoretical elements of our courses will be held on-line, whilst practical teaching will be held either on your farm or at our purpose-built teaching facility. We will adapt and change our courses to ensure that we always comply with UK government guidelines. Please enquire at the office to discuss your team's needs.

- **DIY AI** – our team is currently able to hold a two-day certificated, DEFRA approved AI course for staff from a single farm. The total cost is £450/staff member, with dates arranged at a mutually convenient time for yourselves and us.
- **Routine Foot Trimming** – we offer bespoke courses on your farm for team members interested in improving their foot trimming ability. The course can be tailored for beginners or provide a refresher for advanced hands, to include routine foot trimming, common foot lesions and lame cow management.
- **Calving Refresher** – bespoke courses at our purpose-built teaching facility for any staff members who would like to gain confidence in this critical area of both beef and dairy farming. The course makes use of cadavers and our purpose built 'barrel cows' to help practice different calving presentations as well as discussing the stages of calving.
- **Responsible Use of Medicines (10 December 2020, 2-4pm)** - this online course covers the core information needed for Red Tractor assurance on the practicalities of using and storing veterinary medicines appropriately. Please contact the office to register.
- **MilkSure** – we can provide MilkSure training, with part 1 delivered on-line, and part 2 delivered on your farm. Please contact the office to register your interest.
- **MilkSure TopUp** - for clients who attended last year's MilkSure course, and who are required by their milk buyer to complete an annual refresher. Watch this space for more information!



Bull Testing Shout Out!

Once again we find ourselves with only weeks to go before we turn the bulls out! So, if you haven't already, make sure you get them booked in for their annual Pre-Breeding Examination. Remember, 40% of sub-fertile bulls can't be identified on physical examination alone, therefore semen assessment is vital!



If you would like to book your bulls in for testing, or would like to discuss bull fertility further, please call the office on 01722 333291 or Josh on 07387 261962.



Upcoming Events

Responsible Use Of Medicines Course

10 December 2020,
2-4pm

Smallholders Club Christmas Quiz

10 December 2020
7pm

Both events will be held online this year, please contact the office to register.

Webinars

Due to COVID-19 we have had to postpone our planned 2020 client meetings, so we have instead published narrated presentations on our website as follows:

Bovine Respiratory Disease Prevention

Colostrum Management in Beef Calves

Block Calving – to Estrumate or CIDR?

Getting Lambs to Grow

Backyard Pigs

We will be adding to these regularly – please visit:

[www.endellfarmvets.co.uk/
events](http://www.endellfarmvets.co.uk/events)

for more information.

AI in the Beef Herd – Lucy Jerram

Overview

When we discuss artificial insemination (AI) it is almost invariably in the context of the dairy industry. However, there are many benefits for commercial and pedigree suckler herds that adopt an AI breeding programme. Using AI, especially when combined with a synchronisation programme, can help to shorten the calving period which in turn will increase average weaning weight and allow replacement heifers to reach target service weight at the right time. This improved weight gain is linked to the combination of a likely tighter calving period giving calves more time to grow, suffering from lower disease risk and being born with better genetics.

Bulls and genetics

AI bulls have genetic potential which far outweighs that which can be purchased in a stock bull. A reasonable stock bull siring 25 calves a year will cost ~£40/calf; a straw of top-quality beef semen is only ~£15. AI allows sires to be matched to cows in a bespoke manner based on what the aims of the herd are, allowing rapid rates of genetic improvement to be achieved. AI can be beneficial for breeding high quality replacement heifers that have good maternal attributes including easy calving, shorter gestations and good milk production. Many farms will opt to use different bulls for different cow groups. Smaller breeds or bulls producing calves with a lower birth weight and a good direct calving ease are preferred for heifers, whereas cows can be matched to sires that will produce replacement heifers or larger calves with superior carcass traits.



A Simmental cow (first calved at 2 years old, her Shorthorn 2019 daughter and her 2020 Simmental daughter)

Making AI work for your herd

To make AI work for your herd cows must be appropriately conditioned and any maiden heifers must weigh at least 65% of their mature body weight at first service. Cattle should have adequate levels of trace elements, be disease free and appropriately vaccinated. Management should be consistent in the lead up to AI with cows fed a rising plane of nutrition. Good handling facilities and records are essential. Discussing your breeding plan and options for heat detection or synchronisation with your vet will help ease the process and a pregnancy detection session 30 days after the final AI date will quickly determine the success of the program.

Artificial Insemination vs Stock Bull

AI	Stock Bull
No risk of venereal transmitted disease at service	Risk of buying in disease when new stock bulls are purchased
Reduced cost per pregnancy	Cost per pregnancy includes bull purchase price and upkeep thereafter
Requires practice +/- cost of an AI technician	No need to observe oestrus
If choosing to synchronise before AI require high staffing rates at calving	Cannot synchronise unless have sufficient bulls to serve all the cows
Need to spend time carrying out heat detection, or invest in heat detection aids	Risk of extended calving period, especially if bull is permanently housed with the cows
Choice of top quality genetics specific to the herd's aims and individuals	Bull will need replacing every two to four years to avoid him covering his heifer offspring
Initial set up cost will be moderately high	Risk of misalliance
Need good handling facilities to safely AI cattle	Need good facilities to house the bull safely
Need cows calm enough to tolerate daily handling and potential herd separation when in heat	An infertile bull risks severely affecting the next calving season and may not be detected quickly



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