Farm Vet News

May 2021

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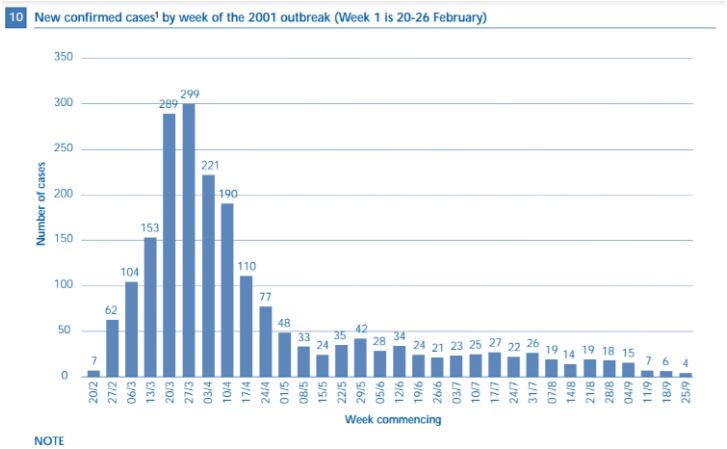
Foot and Mouth Disease 20 Years On – *Lucy Jerram*

The first case of the 2001 foot and mouth outbreak was identified in Essex on 19 February, with a second diagnosed 300 miles away in Northumberland only four days later. With the initial cases identified at the start of spring the welfare impact was immense on all farms, with animals trapped in fields with inadequate feed or space for the start of lambing or calving. By the time the UK was declared disease free in January 2002 there had been over 2000 cases detected across Great Britain with almost 6.5 million cattle, sheep and pigs culled across over 10,000 farms.

The scale and speed of spread of the 2001 FMD outbreak was unprecedented with farm vets facing a relentless battle of trying to diagnose cases correctly and rapidly and subsequently supervise culling. However out of the ashes came lessons which appear to have stood the country in good stead for subsequent disease outbreaks.



Feeding swill is now banned, passports and livestock movements are far more strictly recorded (especially for sheep and pigs) and the movement standstills that occur after bringing animals onto a farm are a consequence of the 2001 crisis. In 2007 there was a laboratory leak of FMD virus but a widespread outbreak was halted before it spread beyond the local area. Gene sequencing technologies allow tracking of virus variants which allowed confirmation of disease eradication in 2007.

The delay in implementing a UK-wide movement ban is widely implicated in the scale of disease from 20 years ago and if a new outbreak were to be detected this would be introduced immediately. Some of these changes in disease control can be seen in how the avian influenza threat was handled this winter. Population and infection dynamics are better understood for many notifiable diseases now than they were 20 years ago which ensures that the correct measures are promptly actioned.

It is not just disease control that has improved but also mental health awareness and support services. A 2005 BMJ study assessed the impact of FMD once it had been eradicated. Despite no increase in NHS mental health service demand, the study concluded it had been a human crisis as much as an animal one. The COVID-19 pandemic has once again highlighted the impact of physical disease on mental health but has also emphasised the importance of communication and community. We are lucky that, unlike 20 years ago, technology can now aid in those aspects as can services such as rural support services:

- Farming Community Network: 03000 111 999 / fcn.org.uk
- YANA (You Are Not Alone): 0300 323 0400 / www.yanahelp.org

As we come out of a very different pandemic it seems an apt time to look back at a disease that forever changed UK farming and look forward to the future.

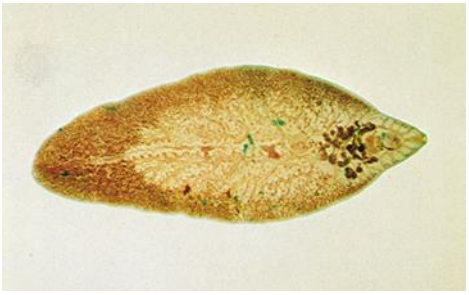
Fluke 101: What is Fluke? (*Fasciola hepatica*)- *Harry Smith*

When you leave a worm egg count sample with us, you typically only expect a result for the number of gut worms. Additional worms can be identified if requested, such as Fluke, which resides in the liver of cattle, sheep and goats.

History

In the UK, fluke infections are on the increase. This may be partly down to climate change, as the parasite thrives in wet and warm environments.

This parasite grows in the liver, with the adults reaching 3cm in size. Once matured, the adults beginning laying thousands of eggs into the bile ducts which travel through the intestine and onto the pasture.



Lifecycle

Once the eggs are passed out in the faeces, they hatch. A common UK snail (*Galba truncatula*) is needed in its lifecycle, as the egg must enter the snail to change into a form which can infect sheep, cows and goats. These snails are commonly found in rivers and water meadows, which is why we see high levels of fluke in animals grazing near water and cases are rare when hills are grazed. The snail stage requires warm temperatures to develop, therefore infection typically occurs between spring and autumn.

Once back on the pasture, these cysts are ingested by our animals and the young larvae travel through the liver, causing damage, as they develop into the large adults. This process takes approximately 10-12 weeks until the mature adults will start laying eggs to repeat the lifecycle, explaining why we see a variety of clinical signs, depending upon when they are infected and how severely.

What to watch out for

The disease is seen in several forms; this means that the signs can be very broad. They range from sudden death and abdominal pain, to chronic weight loss and poor fleece quality. These signs could be shown by a large variety of diseases, it's therefore important to be aware of what the risk is of your animals getting fluke and reduce any risks by minimising their contact with natural water sources where possible.

Is it fluke?

Identifying a case of fluke can be tricky, veterinary advice should be sought if you are concerned as diagnosing fluke will require an understanding of your animals' management, the signs they are showing, along with any testing, such as blood sampling and fluke egg counts.

Fluke Egg Counts

Fluke egg counts are best used to identify chronic cases (long term infections), as the young larvae can cause damage and disease before any eggs are produced.

Treatment

If after reading this you are concerned that your stock are grazing high risk land, please ring our office on 01722 333291 to speak to one of our vets, as prevention and treatment of fluke relies heavily on the use of Flukicidal treatments. The product choice and frequency of use will depend on several factors, including:

- Time of year.
- Level of fluke on the pasture.
- Management/husbandry of your animals.

Colostrum – *Mel McPherson*

"A strong, healthy lamb, up and sucking within 15 minutes of birth has a 90–95% chance of still being alive 90 days later." (AHDB website 2021)

Passive and active immunity

Ewes cannot pass antibodies across the placenta, so their lambs are born with no immunity. They therefore rely solely on 'passive immunity' from the ewe's first milk (colostrum) until they have built up their own 'active immunity' by coming across bugs in their environment that stimulate the lamb's own immune system in the first few days and weeks of life.

Failure/partial failure of passive transfer

If insufficient antibodies are absorbed, lambs are at a significantly increased risk of death and disease during the pre-weaning period. Causes for this are:

- Insufficient colostrum supplementation.
- Ewes not at target body condition.
- Inadequate pre lambing nutrition.

The consequences of this are debilitating and often fatal diseases such as joint ill/navel ill, watery mouth, pneumonia (Pasteurella) and clostridial diseases.

Colostrum quality and quantity

A lamb must receive sufficient quantity of good quality colostrum to benefit from passive immunity:

- 50ml/kg of colostrum within 4-6 hours of birth
  - A 5kg lamb needs 250ml within 4-6 hours.
- 200ml/kg of colostrum in the first 24 hours
  - A 5kg lamb needs 1 litre.
- Colostrum from the lamb's own dam is best followed by colostrum from another ewe on same farm.
- Colostrum quality can be measured using a **'Brix Refractometer'** which can purchased for about £20 – a drop of colostrum is put on the screen, the plastic cover placed over the top and the measurement read through the eye piece.

- Measurements of 12% are acceptable, greater than 25% are preferable.
- Colostrum from another species e.g. cow/goat, may be okay but can cause anaemia, so colostrum should be pooled.
- Artificial colostrum is the last choice – the products with highest antibody content are 'Immucol Platinum' and 'Lamaid'.

Annual Antimicrobial Usage Update – *Lillith Walton*

Last year we brought you good news, as our efforts to reduce antimicrobial usage had seen a significant decrease in overall use, alongside information on HP-CIAs (Highest Priority – Critically Important Antibiotics) and advice on how we can reduce usage on farms. This year we can yet again report that, as an industry, we continue to reduce our usage and have met the majority of the RUMA (Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance) targets, who have now given us a new set of targets.

This year we have again analysed each dairy's mg/PCU, using data on all medicines sold from 2020, and compared it to that of the previous year. Around 60% of farms saw a decrease in mg/PCU from 2019 to 2020 and 85% our dairies remain below the target of 21mg/PCU, which is a fantastic result!

Team News!

We are excited to announce the arrival of Jessica Willshire who arrived on 8 April weighing a healthy 9lb 6oz! The whole family is doing well and Jim is back to work after his paternity leave.

One of the advantages of being part of a large organisation is that there are national level awards which all those working within practices are eligible for. This year Endell Farm Vets had two staff members recognised: Jane was shortlisted for the Living Our Values Everyday award, while Sarah won the Practice Manager of the Year award. Well done both! Another team member who deserves an award is Tanya – she has now worked for Endells for 20 years and continues to do an excellent job of keeping vets and farmers in the right place at the right time. We are sure you'll congratulate all parties when you collect medications from the offices or are on the phone!

Recently we have had a number of new starters and so would like you to welcome Nikita Richards as a TB Tester, Radu Morindau, Olly White and Mel McPherson as Clinical Vets and Lucy Fennell who is training for her ATT (TB Tester) qualification. These come as we sadly said goodbye to Joaquin, Abi and Queren as they plan to spend more time in their home countries, and also to Barry after eight years.

Introducing our new team members:

Nikita Richards BVetMed MRCVS

Nikita graduated from the Royal Veterinary College in 2013, after which she spent six years TB testing in Pembrokeshire, Wales, where she grew up. At the beginning of 2021 she joined the Endell Farm Vet team after relocating to Salisbury to live with her partner. Having been brought up on a dairy farm, Nikita has always been keen on working with farm animals, in particular the TB aspect of the profession. Outside of work she enjoys entertaining her busy one year old. She also loves going back to the Welsh coastline to water-ski and spend time on the beautiful beaches.

Mel McPherson BSc (Hons) BVM&S MRCVS

Mel graduated from Edinburgh University in 2006 and has worked as a farm vet in North Wiltshire pretty much since then. She loves all aspects of farm vet work but is particularly passionate about farmer and student education via newsletters, work-shops and meetings. Mel's husband is also a farm vet and they have two school age children, a dog and two cats but they have every intention of extending this menagerie to include bovines and ovines in the future! She spends much of her spare time walking as far as possible within the constraint of family life, but will often cover 8-10 miles of an evening after the kids have gone to bed. Mel also plays the tenor horn in her local brass band and thoroughly enjoys watching the public enjoy listening to the band playing at summer fetes, bandstands and especially carols at Christmas!

Olly White BSc (Hons) BVSc MRCVS

Olly is Salisbury born and bred, having grown up on his family dairy farm near Sixpenny Handley. After completing a degree in Bio-veterinary Sciences at the Royal Veterinary College in London he moved to the University of Bristol for Vet School. Post-graduation, he began his farm vet career down in Devon but has since returned to Wiltshire to be closer to the herd and family. Clinically his main interests are around cattle (dairy and beef), with a particular interest in fertility and lameness and a side interest in backyard poultry. Additionally, he is planning to undertake some post graduate training in dairy herd nutrition. Outside of work, Olly is likely to be on his farm, enjoying managing the autumn block dairy herd as a break from vet life or exploring the countryside with his partner and two Boston Terriers, Lexi and Bean.

Radu-Ion Morindau MRCVS

Radu graduated in Romania in 2016. He started his career as a vet in Romania and worked in a poultry farm. Since he wanted to expand his horizons, Radu moved to Wales where he spent two years in a large animal practice. He joined Endell Vets in February 2021 and is passionate about all aspects of the veterinary world but enjoys emergency work and poultry in particular. Outside work, Radu is very passionate about fitness and nutrition.

Upcoming Events and Courses

Responsible Use of Medicines
Friday 25 June, 12pm
Thursday 19 August, 9am

Beef Lameness Talk
August – date TBC

Summer Barbecue
Watch this space!

Webinars

The following webinars are available on our website:

Beef Benchmarking Introduction

Bovine Respiratory Disease Prevention

Colostrum Management in Beef Calves

Block Calving – to Estrumate or CIDR?

Getting Lambs to Grow

Backyard Pigs

Please visit **www.endellfarmvets.co.uk/events** for more information, as well as full versions of all our previously published blog articles.

Important Reminder: Kexxtone Boluses Are Toxic To Dogs – *Lucy Jerram*

Kexxtone are oral boluses used in dairy cows before calving to improve rumen health. The wings on the bolus are designed to prevent regurgitation but rarely this will occur. The active ingredient is highly toxic to dogs and horses and there have been some recent reports of fatalities in dogs. Our advice is as follows:

Dairy Farmers:

- Write down the cow's ID on each Kexxtone bolus so that if any are regurgitated and are undamaged they can be re-administered to that cow.
- Do not turn cattle out to grass for around one hour after bolusing to try and reduce risk of immediate regurgitation.
- Keep an especially close eye on dry cow yards/paddocks for the first week after Kexxtone administration.
- Keep an eye out for regurgitated boluses when muck spreading.
- Consider placing signs on any dry cow fields that have public rights of way through them explaining the risk.

Dog Walkers:

- Keep an eye out for orange boluses when walking on footpaths through farmland.
- If you do identify one then bag it without touching it.
- Do not let the dog touch the bolus, if they do get hold of one then get them to drop the bolus, bag it and seek veterinary attention from a small animal vet as soon as possible.

CHeCS Johne's Disease Scheme Update – *Josh Williams*

Last week, CHeCS (PCHS Cattle Health Scheme) announced an update to their rules of Johne's disease testing for herds within their accreditation scheme, aiming to increase consistency and confidence in the results obtained. The main change, which comes into effect from 1 July 2021, will limit the number of animals which can undergo confirmatory faecal testing following a blood positive result; this will be limited to 2% or one animal per herd. Should confirmatory testing exceed this, the herd would be re-classified at a higher risk status. Please contact your vet if you would like to discuss how this change might affect you and your herd.

COVID-19

We would like to reassure all of our clients that we are open for business as usual. We are taking preventative measures to reduce the risk to both our staff and to you as our clients and to ensure that we can continue to provide our usual service to you:

- We are practising social distancing and would like to remind you to be mindful of the 2m rule.
- We ask that you please phone ahead with all drug orders so that we can have them ready for you to collect.
- Our door is open; when visiting the office please wear a face mask and enter after using the hand sanitiser provided.
- If you are isolating, please make staff aware so that we can make suitable arrangements with you.

Thank you for your support and understanding.

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