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Welcome to our last newsletter of 2021!

'Tis the season for audits! The last few months seem to have brought on a surge of Red Tractor audits for many of our farms, with herd and flock health plans flying out of the door hot off the press! There are new requirements being introduced by Red Tractor this month for Sheep and Beef clients, with BVD eradication strategies being a hot topic – make sure you check out Lucy's article below on all things BVD. Similarly, all dairies are required to submit their Johne's disease declaration by December 2021, so please contact your routine vet if this hasn't been completed yet!



You aren't the only ones doing audits, we have also been busy with our Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons practice standards audit (the veterinary profession equivalent of Red Tractor) and we are pleased to say that we have been accredited as *Outstanding* for farm animal practice. The whole team is really proud of this achievement as we have always strived to provide the highest quality, professional service for our clients. Endell Farm Vets remains managed and run by us locally, and we continue to be emotionally committed to the area and you, our clients and hope that should you have any concerns, things you would like us to change or services/events you would like us to deliver, you would pick up the phone to one of us for a chat. As always, we remain grateful for your business and humbled by the faith and trust you have placed in us over the years.

Josh, on behalf of the Endell Farm Vets team

BVD – Lucy Jerram

BVD is a virus that causes reproductive and immunosuppressive problems within both beef and dairy herds. Many dairy herd contracts will now require BVD testing of all calves born on farm while many of our beef farmers are part of voluntary schemes. Red Tractor is introducing new BVD requirements for beef herds, so why does the industry care so much about eradicating this virus?

Disease Spread

BVD virus mainly spreads by creating Persistently Infected (PI) calves. These are formed when a cow is infected with BVD during the first 100 days of gestation. Traditionally it was assumed that PI calves would quickly become sick and die but many will survive for a prolonged period in the herd. These PIs are responsible for the majority of infection on farms and their presence is the most important factor in the continuation of BVD. The possible outcomes of BVD infection are demonstrated in the schematic.

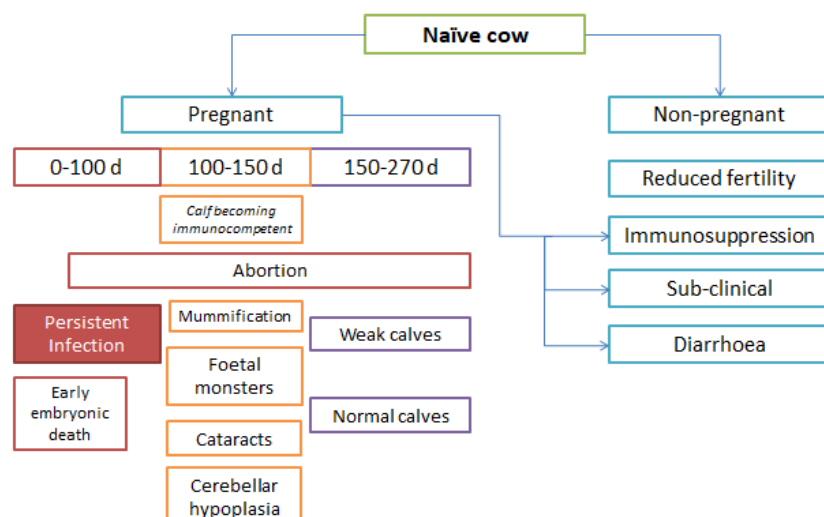


Figure 1 Possible outcomes for a cow infected with BVD

Clinical signs

BVD causes a wide variety of clinical signs – some are directly caused by the virus but most are due to immune suppression and secondary infection. Clinical signs include weak calves, foetal ‘monsters’, abortions, increased incidence of other diseases including Johne’s, TB, clostridial disease, IBR, Salmonella, calf scours and calf pneumonia, and reduced fertility.

A BVD PI can increase the requirement for treatment of pneumonia within a calf rearing system by >40%

Diagnosis

Much like for COVID-19, testing for BVD can look to find evidence of previous infection (antibodies) or evidence of current infection (antigen/PCR). The most common testing types utilised for monitoring status in BVD free herds are check tests (testing unvaccinated animals for exposure to disease at 9-18 months old) and ‘tag and testing’ (tissue testing calves at birth). Check tests are also used in herds with unknown status, if negative then accreditation can be sought and if positive then testing of the whole herd is required to locate the PI animal spreading disease.

Treatment

There is no treatment for BVD. Whilst it can be tempting to keep a seemingly healthy PI in the hope that you can finish it, it is unlikely to reach that point and will be causing issues (and costing money) the whole time it remains on farm.

Control and Eradication

BVD control requires testing and culling PI calves, excellent biosecurity, testing any bought in animals and may also involve vaccination. However, we cannot vaccinate in isolation as the viral

load from a PI will overwhelm the immunity and so the disease will remain a problem in the herd. Control and eradication are complicated and farm specific so please discuss with your vet!

In the UK it is estimated that a 100 cow suckler herd with no BVD control over 10 years will cost £6000+/year.

BVD eradication schemes in England and Wales are still voluntary but there are compulsory schemes in Scotland and across Ireland as well as across much of Europe. In Northern Ireland the prevalence of BVD has been reduced from 54% to only 0.3% since the scheme introduction. It is highly likely that a compulsory scheme will be required in England in the next 5 years, so it is worth signing up early to be ahead of the game. Red Tractor is introducing new BVD Beef requirements from 2022. These mean that all cattle farmers must have a plan to eliminate BVD from their herd and subsequently prevent its reintroduction. In addition to farm compliance and the risk of future legislation, BVD is estimated to cost between £13 and £31 per cow meaning that there is a significant financial benefit to being BVD Free.



Figure 2 – Much of Europe now has BVD eradication schemes in place. Green = voluntary, Red = Compulsory



UK farming has been a world leader in reducing antibiotic use yet we have struggled to prove our progress to the wider industry, other UK sectors, consumers and other countries.

AHBD has developed ‘Medicine Hub’ which will capture and collate antibiotic data from a variety of sources across the cattle and sheep sectors, allowing us to demonstrate our commitment to the appropriate use of veterinary medicines. It will also be useful for vets and farmers to be able to compare farm antibiotic usage with other farms.

You will likely be hearing more about Medicine Hub over the coming months as vets and farmers are encouraged to participate. Importantly, there is no charge associated with contributing data. For more information, please visit the AHDB website:

ahdb.org.uk/medicine-hub.



Animal Health and Welfare Pathway

In spring 2022 the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (AHWP) will be launched across England. It is designed to help improve health, welfare and production of livestock in conjunction with your own vet. This will provide all commercial cattle, pig and sheep farmers currently eligible for BPS with an annual vet visit paid for by the government which intends to cover diagnostic testing and bespoke advice. Farms will initially complete an animal health and welfare review targeting topics such as antibiotic usage, biosecurity and greenhouse gases, before starting a journey along the pathway to include endemic disease support followed by health and welfare grants. The programme (currently in the planning stages) is based on payment by results with farmers rewarded for achieving higher welfare outcomes.

The AHWP has been developed in conjunction with vets and farmers which we hope means it will genuinely be applicable to what farmers want to achieve! We hope to learn more about the pathway over the next few months so will update you on the details the moment we have more information. Follow the Future Farming Defra Blog to stay up to date.

Team and Client News



With reduced restrictions, it's been wonderful to continue with face to face meetings after our summer sheep meeting. We ran a fully booked AI course in September with all attendees successful in leaving with their certificates and an enthusiasm to put their training into practice. Our next AI course will be at the end of November, see below for details on how to book along with details of our other upcoming events.

It was fantastic to see so many clients at the Bath and West Dairy Show last month – we very much enjoyed walking around the show chatting to farmers. Sorry if we didn't get the chance to see you there, but we hope to see you next year! Since then Maggie, Harry and Jane hosted a worming talk at Newton Wood Barns for the Small Shepherds Club who have members across Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire – the event was well received and we would like to extend a warm welcome to any clients who joined the practice as result. Finally we made the most of a mild October afternoon with our Farm Walk and Lameness Talk organised by our Beef Team. We are very grateful to Longford Estate for hosting the day and taking us on a tour of the cattle and impressive bull handling system as well as to Jay Tunstall who provided interesting insights into the primary causes of beef lameness. His research



created great discussion among the attendees and vets and clients alike were interested to learn that the most common foot lesions are often non-infectious meaning that reaching for the antibiotics may not always be the best approach.



We love hearing and seeing client news (please do send any in to us so that we can include it in future newsletters or post it to Facebook) and this autumn has been a busy one for many of you! Mike Smales of Lyburn Cheese was presented with a specially commissioned portrait at the Local Produce Trade Show at the Ageas Bowl on 30 September, this comes on the back of Old Winchester winning 2 Star Gold at the Great Taste Awards – well done Mike and the Lyburn team! The cheese success continues with Laverstoke Park Farm who won Gold in the Halloumi category at the Global Cheese Awards and Best in Category in European Type Cheese – British Buffalomi showing the black and white dairy cows how it's done!



We do our best to keep up to date with farming news and listening to Farming Today (often on catch up!) is a good source of information – listening is even more enjoyable when we hear our clients talking about their cattle, as happened with Roche Court Limousins during Radio 4's Livestock Breeding Week feature in mid-September.

Finally a huge congratulations to Oli Chedghey who is a Nuffield Farming Scholar for 2022 on the topic of 'Living the Farming Ladder'. His scholarship is supported by The Trehane Trust and will provide the opportunity to travel the world to further his understanding of the topic – we are already excited to read his report.

Within our team we have been enjoying a return to in person vet training events with Lucy and George attending the British Cattle Veterinary Association annual conference, this year held in Wales with an opening talk by Nigel Owens (rugby referee turned beef farmer!) Katie is making great progress with her ATT training under the guidance of Nikita and Mel and we hope will soon be out testing as a fully-fledged member of the team. Last but certainly not least, Josh has completed his Post Graduate Certificate in Cattle Health – we're sure you will congratulate him when he's next on farm!

Upcoming Courses and Meetings

To book your place or register your interest, please contact the office in the usual manner as places are limited.

- **Beginners DIY AI Course, 29 and 30 November 10am until 3.30pm (Day One: Newton Wood Barns, GU34 3EW, Day Two: Sunnyhill Dairy, SN8 3ET):**
DEFRA-approved Certificated DIY AI Training providing dairy or suckler farm staff with the knowledge and skills to carry out this important process themselves. The course covers bovine anatomy and physiology and heat detection and AI timing theory. It then provides the chance to get to grips with the practical technique using uteruses and then live cows to ensure safe passage of AI guns through cervixes and into the correct part of the uterus.
Cost: £450 + VAT for full course including learning material to take away. (We also offer refresher options if spaces are available for the on-farm days - please contact the office if this is of interest.)
- **Responsible Use of Medicines Online Course: Thursday 2 December, 11am.**
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.
Cost: £25 per person
- **Annual Smallholder Christmas Quiz – to be confirmed!**

If you would like a specific or tailor-made training course for your farm, please contact us to discuss.



Lameness in Sheep – Mel McPherson

Lameness is a huge problem in the UK sheep industry. It is estimated that each case of lameness costs a farmer £90 once the cost of medicines, time and loss of production (growth rates, fertility, twin lamb disease and milk production) have been taken into account.

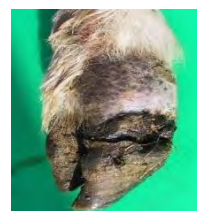
With the average lameness incidence at 10%, lameness will cost a farmer £900 per 100 animals.

90% of sheep lameness is caused by footrot. Footrot is caused by the bacteria *Dichelobacter nodosus* which causes underrun horn of the sole and hoof wall, and produces a characteristic smell. Infected sheep spread the bacteria on the pasture where it is then transmitted to other sheep. Treating animals with antibiotic injection and spray as well as pain relief within three days of first noticing even a mild lameness may be sufficient to control this disease in the flock, but often this is not practical on a busy farm and therefore other management changes must be made (see later).



Scald is an earlier stage of footrot, caused by the same bacteria. It manifests as inflammation of the skin between the toes, hair loss and moist, oozy skin. If you run your finger between the toes, it will have the same characteristic smell as footrot. Individual treatment of scald involves antibiotic spray only, plus pain relief if warranted.

Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD) only causes 5% of lameness in sheep in the UK but, as the name suggests, is very contagious, so if it gets into a flock, 40% of animals can become infected in a short space of time. The damage starts at the coronary band, where the horn meets the skin, and progresses down the inner hoof wall. There is no characteristic smell unless there is a concurrent footrot infection. Individual treatment for CODD involves antibiotic injection and spray, and pain relief but often whole flock treatment with foot-bathing is required.



We do not advise trimming the feet of lame sheep because it is very common to spread bacteria on foot trimming equipment. Also, the underrun horn offers some protection to the delicate tissue underneath, and over-trimming can lead to granulomas.

Larger numbers of sheep can be treated for footrot, scald and CODD via a footbath but the regime is different depending if you are treating footrot/scald or CODD so it is important to distinguish which you have.

Foot-bathing should only be carried out if the correct conditions can be met otherwise gathering the animals together may just spread the disease more. It should be carried out on a dry day and the sheep should go through a bath of just water first to clean the feet. If the handling system is not suitable or the sheep are not used to going through it then they are likely to just skip through and the correct contact times won't have been achieved. The sheep must then stand on a dry, clean surface for at least 20 minutes after bathing and then turned out onto pasture that has not been grazed for two weeks to avoid reinfection.

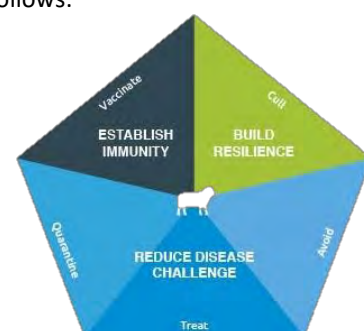
Foot-bathing treatments for footrot/scald are as follows:

- 10% zinc sulphate requires the animals to stand in the footbath for 15-20 minutes
- 3% formalin and 10% copper sulphate require the animals to walk steadily through the bath

Formalin or zinc sulphate footbaths are NOT effective and are painful. An antibiotic footbath is required for CODD – please speak to one of our vets for advice.

AHDB has come up with a five-point plan to assist in decreasing lameness in UK sheep flocks and one of the points is footrot vaccination (Footvax), but it is important to stress that this is just one tool in the box for controlling lameness in your sheep. You may get away with just following two or three of the five points for a period of time, but if the flock is under any sort of stress eg: lambing or bad weather, there is no 'buffer' and outbreaks can occur. The five points are as follows:

1. **Cull** out the worst offenders to build resilience – cull any animals that have had two incidences of lameness.
2. **Quarantine** incoming sheep for four weeks to decrease disease challenge.
3. Rapid **treatment** of clinical cases to decrease disease challenge.
4. **Avoid** spreading disease by liming around feed/water troughs and gateways, using a mobile handling unit and having a clean well drained handling area.
5. **Vaccinate** the whole flock with Footvax twice a year to establish immunity.



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
for more information.

*Please visit our website
if you would like to
read the full blog
articles summarised in
this newsletter.*



Endell Veterinary Group, 49 Endless Street, Salisbury SP1 3UH

Telephone: 01722 333291 Email: info@endellfarmvets.co.uk www.endellfarmvets.co.uk

Registered office: CVS (UK) Limited; Registered in England; Company Number 3777473; Registered Office: CVS House, Owen Road, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 4ER.