



FROM THE VETERINARY PRACTICE

STEVE BORSBERRY

Vet Steve Borsberry, from 608 XL Farm Vets, in Warwick, shares some tips on disease prevention and tackling health problems in dairy herds, drawing from his many years of on-farm experience. Here he takes a closer look at a problem that's exacerbated by high rainfall.

Late-summer cough? It could be lungworm

Wet-weather scourge

This summer – if you could call it that with the highest rainfall on record in some parts of the UK – has proved ideal for lungworm. It used to be considered a disease of first-season grazing cattle, but vets are seeing increasing numbers of outbreaks in adults.

July to September is when it usually manifests itself. In the most severe cases it can be fatal. Cattle can die as a result of an acute allergic reaction to the parasite living in their lungs. Other symptoms include coughing and producers report cows and heifers that are losing condition and performing poorly – in terms of both production and fertility. And at this point it's almost too late. Much of the damage to the animal's lungs – and the producer's pocket – has been done. As with so many diseases and conditions, prevention is the best option.

Signs can vary from a slight cough to acute respiratory problems or even sudden death. Daily liveweight gains in youngstock can be severely affected and, in milkers, yields can be reduced by as much as 8kg of milk per day. Calving index can also increase by up to 30 days and more services per pregnancy are required: One producer estimated an outbreak in his dry cows cost him £20,000 – seven died and the rest had reduced milk yield in the following lactation.

