

Vet Viewpoint

A regional round-up of key veterinary issues

Edward Hewitt



Armour Veterinary Group
Ayrshire

* The Scottish BVD eradication programme continues to make good progress by removing a significant number of persistently infected animals.

The benefits seen include improved calf health, reduced abortions and better fertility. However, given the tough economic times, there has been a temptation to cut costs by stopping BVD vaccination.

As we are in a stock-dense area with significant neighbour contact, ceasing vaccination has led to major breakdowns. This resulted in marked economic losses far exceeding the cost of the vaccine.

Similar situations have also arisen as a result of missed batches of animals and the vaccine not being administered correctly or, in some cases, within the correct time frame.

Vaccination for BVD remains a sound investment for the future, both in terms of health and profitability. It should be part of a planned health approach in conjunction with your vet.

Daniel Robertson



Willows Veterinary Group
Cheshire

* In Cheshire, the land isn't really drying up. This means cattle are

being housed for longer than usual. New silage clamps, often of poorer quality, are being opened and we are seeing an increased number of left displaced abomasums (LDAs).

Clinical signs include reduced milk yield, appetite and rumination.

While LDAs are usually seen in cows that have calved within the previous month, we have also been seeing them in cows in mid-gestation.

Cows calving with a body condition score of 3.5 or greater, and those that suffer post-calving disease such as milk fever and metritis, are considered at risk.

Ensuring sufficient trough space and as few social group changes as possible in the transition period will help keep cow stress levels down and rumen fill high.

Gradually introducing cattle to silage from a new clamp alongside existing clamps can also help minimise metabolic compromise.

Paddy Gordon



Shepton Veterinary Group
Somerset

* We have reviewed cases involving calves in the practice during the winter. We found it had been a busy time, with both more treatments and more vaccines used.

Pneumonia was problematic, perhaps due to the mild weather in the south-west. We are now doing blood tests on recovered calves to identify the bugs involved, and produce a vaccination plan.



TIM SERVENIER

Farmers are advised not to cut costs by ceasing BVD vaccinations, as the losses of a breakdown can outweigh the cost of the vaccine

We have launched a youngstock service that monitors growth rates and advises farmers on how to reduce calf disease and mortality.

As rearing youngstock is the second-highest cost on farm, making small improvements can have a big effect on the bottom line.

Our vet technician, Clare Maggs, carries out the assessments, providing Oliver Tilling, our youngstock expert, with the data needed. Common issues relate to colostrum feeding and ensuring animals get adequate milk solids in the first few weeks of life.

Steve Glanville



Hook Norton Veterinary Group
Oxfordshire

* On the edge of the Cotswolds we are seeing many sudden deaths in ewes turned out with lambs at grass. New

grass leys are a worse culprit than permanent pasture, but both are implicated.

Diagnosis requires a veterinary post-mortem to rule out other causes, but a sample of fluid from the eye analysed in the laboratory will confirm low magnesium status.

Treatment involves the intravenous administration of a mixture of calcium and magnesium, along with a magnesium sulphate injection under the skin, but it is often unsuccessful.

Prevention is the best route and involves daily supplementation of magnesium via food, water, boluses and licks.

Suckler cows will be at risk after turnout and are best given a magnesium bolus pre-turnout or magnesium in the water.

Remember, magnesium needs to be given on a daily basis as sheep and cattle do not store any magnesium.