

Vet Viewpoint

A regional round-up of key veterinary issues



Laura Sloan
Millcroft Veterinary
Group
Cumbria

* We have seen more assisted calvings and caesareans this autumn, probably due to the recent flush of grass leading to fatter cows and larger calves.

Ideally, you should aim for a body condition score (BCS) of 3.0 for autumn sucklers. When fatter than this there is an increased risk of dystocia, especially in heifers, and they may tire more easily while trying to calve. This can potentially reduce the chances of the animal rearing a healthy calf and could delay the time to return to normal cycling and conception.

If possible use restricted pasture with free access to straw. Try to manage body condition by adjusting stocking rates and graze tighter if necessary. Grouping cows by age or condition also helps to achieve target pre-calving BCS and allows different feeding regimes to be used. Weaning later may help if conditions for grass growth are favourable.

Sarah Gibbs



Lambert Leonard and May
Cheshire

* As the temperature drops, we are turning our attention to calf rearing. Like people, calves try to maintain a constant body temperature regardless of the temperature outside. Calves less

than three weeks old use energy to keep warm when temperatures drop below 15C (a common occurrence in British winters). If feed rates are not adjusted for these extra energy requirements, growth rates will fall and calves become more susceptible to disease.

To avoid this, it is really important to consider average temperature as well as target growth rate and increase winter feeding accordingly. This information cannot be found on the back of the milk powder bag. We calculate feed rates using the specific powder constituents, air temperature and target growth rates of each individual farm.



Craig McAlister
Parklands Veterinary
County Tyone

* Coughing cows seems to have become a more common problem in the past few years.

When a farmer mentions the cows are coughing I think of lungworm, IBR and mycoplasma, but there can be other causes including RSV and PI3. It is dangerous to jump to one conclusion as the condition may be multifactorial, so always seek professional advice.

This summer has seen a large increase in animals infected with lungworm, with 26 out of 36 faecal samples tested for lungworm larvae in our practice testing positive.

The age range has shifted from the expected young animals towards adults. This has manifested as a range of symptoms from just



ELPAREX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Lungworm has been a problem in grazing cattle this autumn.

a cough to deaths, and in dairy herds, a sudden milk drop. I will be recommending that my clients sample and treat, if necessary, the whole herd for lungworm at housing.



Vicki Shepherd
Penbode Vets
Cornwall

* The warm climate late this summer has understandably tempted many farmers to leave their dairy cattle out to graze longer.

However, the decreased dry matter, lower metabolisable energy and increased fibre of the grass, coupled with decreasing daylight hours for grazing, means dry cows in particular have struggled to consume enough to meet energy demands.

They have decreased dry matter

intakes in the past 60 days before calving as the calf growth hinders rumen fill, and so boosting feed consumption at this stage is vital. With little supplementary silage feeding, and dry matter intakes decreasing due to such wet grass during the transition period, cows have mobilised fat reserves and subsequently developed ketosis.

Dry cows out at grass should ideally have their body condition scores closely monitored to ensure their condition remains stable at 2.5-3.0 during those last few weeks before calving.

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