

Vet Viewpoint

A regional round-up of key veterinary issues

Katie Brodie



Drove Vets
Wiltshire

✱ As the weather improves, it's good to take a fresh look at the cows on our farms – their feet in particular.

Poor feet can have a huge impact on cow comfort, production, fertility and longevity.

During a recent routine visit, three-quarters of the cows were not pregnant or showing oestrus, with a mobility score 3. Is there any wonder they are not bulling or in-calf?

On another visit I saw the mobility score sheet for the past month: 25 cows with score 2, yet none had been picked up and investigated.

Lame cows with score 3 need immediate attention to improve welfare and productivity. As important are score-2 cows, which without proactive treatment, will become lame or continue to underperform.

Carolyn Baguley



Scarsdale Vets
Derby

✱ The out-of-hours duties are often quieter in summer. However, I spent a

drizzly Friday evening dealing with sick cows, prolapses and scouring calves, topped off with two calvings.

The sick cow proved interesting. Middle-aged, two-months calved and milking well, she'd suddenly become shaky, staggy, slightly bloated and a vaginal examination revealed a bulling string. Two calcium bottles later and a blood sample to confirm my diagnosis of milk fever, and she was right as rain.

It's a little-known fact that bulling cows can get milk fever – the oestrogens released into the blood during oestrus counteract the calcium-balancing mechanisms.

Never rule out milk fever just because a cow isn't freshly calved.

Simon Allen



Allen and Partners
Carmarthenshire

✱ Cows on grazing are often exposed to fewer environmental pathogens than those

in fully housed systems.

This is because turf-covered soil in grazing paddocks typically has minimal contamination with environmental mastitis pathogens, compared with organic bedding in cubicles or loose housing.

However, bacterial exposure increases as forage is closely grazed and stocking rates rise. Enough time, about four weeks is needed between paddock rotations to allow the forage to grow over bare soil and, as importantly, to allow manure load to disperse.

Certain areas with barren soil, due to overgrazing and trampling, can harbour elevated pathogen populations. Areas around feed troughs, exercise paddocks, gateways, and tracks often expose cows to bacterial concentrations comparable to that in organic bedded cubicles. Pay particular attention to hygiene scores in dry cows and in-calf heifers to avoid mastitis in early lactation as part of your mastitis control plan.

Alastair Couper



Capontree Vets
Cumbria

✱ Now the spring rush is over, we are turning our minds to summer problems.

With the development of resistance, worming lambs has become quite complex. This is not helped by many products with different names actually being the same wormer, so always check the active ingredient.

Most people know to dose to the heaviest sheep in the group, rather than guessing an average weight. Check that the dosing gun is working correctly and delivering the required dose by measuring what comes out into a syringe.

Always be sure to drench over the back of the tongue or inject by the correct route and in the right place. You should also check how effective the wormer is by doing faecal worm egg counts following treatment.

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