

Vet Viewpoint

A regional round-up of key veterinary issues



Helen Rogers

Friars Moor Vet Clinic
Dorset

* When PLI replaced PIN as the dairy selection index, it

incorporated health, fitness and fertility traits. This resulted in strong improvements in dairy cow fertility, with reductions in calving interval and, importantly, days to first service. Improvements in genetics of the national herd resulted in gains in everyday fertility of dairy cows.

Knowing the PLI of your herd and individual cows is incredibly important when choosing bulls for breeding. Alongside choosing correct type traits, bulls that improve a cow's PLI status will produce offspring who produce more clean milk for longer, while remaining fertile. Your herd's PLI breakdown is available from DairyCo as a Herd Genetic Report. It allows you to identify strengths and

weakness in your herd, as well as looking at how traits are improving in younger cows.



Graeme McPherson

Larkmead Vet Group
Oxfordshire

* While pregnancy testing for a client

who also has a big, forward-thinking arable business, he said labour costs during drilling were not a concern, as many more times these costs could be made through extra seed sown. In fact, marginal production – the last 5% – is all profit, and whatever it takes to improve this is worth doing.

Applying this to livestock means milk yield not lost to mastitis or lameness all becomes profit. The extra few calves you get from ensuring the herd is BVD free or from having bulls semen tested are all profit. Our vet bills may seem

expensive if you use us to fix things that are broken. But they are small beans if you use us to help you improve your marginal production.



Stephen Bradley

Alnorthumbria
Vet Group
Northumberland

* We have seen lots of big lambs born

this spring and the aim should be to finish them early. Creep feeding will improve weight gain and is cost-effective as the feed conversion ratio is much higher in smaller lambs. It is worth weighing lambs regularly to see if they are hitting their growth targets. Early intervention is better than having light lambs in the autumn.

Disease monitoring is vital to prevent costly losses. Monthly faecal worm counts for nematodirus and coccidiosis are recommended. Postmortem any dead lambs as they may be the start of an outbreak.

Clostridial and pasteurella vaccinations are a valuable insurance policy for fast-growing lambs.

Fly-strike prevention is best done early with a long-acting pour-on, as smaller doses are needed.

At weaning, mineral boluses or long-acting injections will be needed



Hollie Dale

Wright and Morten
Vet Surgeons
Cheshire

* Our spring calving herds are getting

ready to turn bulls out, but every autumn we see at least one herd where the bull has failed to work. This leads to a high rate of barren cows and a disrupted calving pattern. This is easy to prevent by getting your bulls' fertility tested prior to the service period. You should look out for:

* Lameness – a major cause of reduced fertility

* Condition score – bulls carrying too much condition tend to have low libido and poor fertility

* Fertility is highly correlated with testicle size – when buying a new bull, select one with decent-sized testicles.

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