

Vet Viewpoint

A regional round-up of key veterinary issues

Bill Pepper
Cliffe Vets
East Sussex

* Too often we investigate bovine abortions without identifying the cause. However, there is no doubt that, at least locally, neospora infected cows are rapidly increasing in number and neospora is now the most frequently identified infectious

cause of abortions in cattle.

A neospora-positive dairy cow has, on average, a 10-times-higher chance of aborting than a non-infected one. She should be identified by a management tag and only inseminated to a beef bull because of the strong likelihood of the disease being transmitted in the womb.

The estimated prevalence in dogs

Ian Bates



Fenwold Vets
Lincolnshire

* A favourable summer last year meant cattle at

housing looked far better than they had during the previous two years. Calves at foot have been exceeding target weights at weaning of 320kg. However, it is still common practice to wean and house calves

in the UK is 13% and yet most dog owners are unaware of the potential hazard they pose to pregnant cattle. Infected neospora oocysts passed in dog faeces survive for long periods outdoors.



DAVID SPENCER

Focus on ewe feed pre-lambing

The type of compound feed supplied to ewes in the run up to lambing is crucial to maximise ewe and lamb performance, according to Mole Valley Farmers' Adam May.

He says the amount and type of energy supply is critical, with an ideal feed containing an energy level of more than 12ME.

"To optimise rumen function, diets must be formulated to a specific level of starch and digestible fibre," he adds.

"Overfeeding starch, particularly in late pregnancy when forage intakes are low, can lead to acidosis, which can have potentially serious consequences on the subsequent

health and performance of the ewe."

The amount and type of protein supply is also important. "Particular care is required with the type of protein. Ewe compound feeds should include a minimal total protein level of 18%, but it's important to check the level of undegradable protein," says Mr May.

Trials have also highlighted the importance of vitamin E, with ewes fed additional vitamin E producing more vigorous and faster-growing lambs at birth.

Mr May advises using a compound feed with a minimum vitamin E level of 155 IU.

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at the same time. Combined with some recent changeable weather, this has resulted in pneumonia outbreaks. We've identified the cause as mannheimia (pasteurella) and a change in protocol, combined with vaccination this coming year, should prevent this in future.

BVD is still "doing the rounds", with another herd identified with a recent incursion despite a closed herd status. The only purchase has been a bull sourced from a BVD-accredited herd, so a biosecurity breakdown must have occurred.

Tom Clarke



Synergy Farm Vets
Dorset

* The mild autumn and winter has resulted in more

worm and tick problems than normal. Thankfully the cold has finally arrived in Dorset, which will cause most parasites to go into winter hibernation mode and reduce new infections.

As our veterinary job moves away from fire brigade services to an advisory one, I find myself working more collaboratively with other practice members. Our dairy hygiene team will report back after visiting a dairy to undertake a bactoscan troubleshooting visit. The problem may have been solved simply with



Modifying parlour wash regimes can help address hygiene issues.

If straw alone is fed for too long, and water is rationed, the bacteria in the rumen can die and fail to digest it.

their advice on machine hygiene or by modifying wash regimes. Or it may have identified a cow hygiene or mastitis issue that I would want to bring up with the farm myself.

I draw on the dairy hygiene team's extensive knowledge of test products, liners and machine maintenance when I advise on mastitis control.

Roger Scott

Scott Mitchel and Associates
Northumberland

* The use of straw as a feed has to be done carefully as if straw alone is fed for too long, and especially if water is rationed, then the bacteria in the rumen can rapidly die and fail to digest the straw. Ill and dying cows maybe the result, as two recent cases have shown.

The first concerned the use of straw and water restriction to dry cows off. These cows retained a hunger drive and continued to eat the straw.

A similar scenario occurred during extremely cold weather where the cows ate voraciously and overfilled with straw, coinciding with a frozen water supply.

In both cases, the result was the same – fermentation stops and the cow impacts with undigested straw, which it cannot digest.

So take care when drying off. Water deprivation should not be necessary – simply shifting to a less rich dry cow ration should suffice.

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