

Breeder technology to boost suckler performance

About £800,000 a year is spent on research and development by the beef and sheep levy body for England, EBLEX. **Sarah Trickett** takes a look at some of the research projects that have received funding

Activity meters and rumen temperature boluses could be important tools to improve the reproductive performance of suckler herds.

Vet Jonathan Statham of Bishopton Vet Group and Raft Solutions said if beef producers could improve parturition predication then calf survival would also be improved.

“Both rumen boluses and activity monitors have the potential to improve reproductive performance of suckler herds. In particular, identifying females in oestrus is paramount to successful artificial insemination (AI) protocols that do not use synchronisation. If we can predict ovulation time we can reduce the barrier to uptake artificial insemination,” he said.

Speaking at an EBLEX research and development workshop, Mr Statham said having a better prediction of calving time and using AI was a major benefit to suckler producers.

“Being more focused by being armed with accurate calving dates can improve calving outcomes by targeting supervision, which in turn reduces demand for labour particularly when there are only a few cows due to calve at the end of the calving season.”



Inseminating beef cattle could help improve reproductive performance.

More than half of dairy cows' ovulation dates are monitored using an automatic system, however it is rarely used in the beef industry. “Physiological motor activities increase during oestrus as well as a 0.3-0.6C body temperature change pre-oestrus. There are no reasons why these technologies cannot be used in the beef indus-

try,” he said.

Oestrus detection technologies such as heat time now have a range that has increased fivefold, so it is now useable in the beef sector. “There is also a mark three bolus design which stores all the data in the bolus and allows a daily download, which is more suited to the beef industry,” said Mr Statham.