



# NADIS Regional Report



**FOCUS ON TAYSIDE**  
**Ian Gill**  
BVM&S CertSHP MRCVS

**I qualified from Edinburgh in 1979 and since then I have worked at Thrums Vet Group Practice, the XL vet mixed practice, in Kirriemuir.**

**My main interests in practice are beef, sheep and game bird health and production. Outwith practice associations include the Moredun and Sheep Veterinary Society. My leisure activities include travel and hill walking.**

As I write this report in mid October our farmers are struggling to finish the last of the grain harvest with the lifting of the potato crop just beginning. The late harvest along with reduced world crop is going to make concentrate feeding expensive this winter. One pig client is telling us that his feed bill has already increased by £1000 per day.

The wet summer has seen an increase in outbreaks of fluke in both cattle and sheep (Fig. 1). At scanning



**Fig. 1: Liver fluke.**



**Fig. 2: Ruptured liver.**

in February one farm lost 10 ewes due to liver rupture following acute fluke infection (Fig. 2). Although this farm had never experienced fluke the ewes had been dosed with triclabendazole pre tupping as a result of fluke warnings. Losses stopped after closantel treatment in February which was repeated at the pre lambing vaccination.

This autumn we had one hill farm lose two cows with black disease. Clostridial vaccination had lapsed in this herd but this has now been reintroduced along with flukicide treatment.

We have completed the first year of BVD monitoring under the Scottish Government eradication programme (Fig. 3). One hundred and eighteen herds were tested with 13 falling into the not negative category. Only one PI has been identified and several inconclusives were found to be due to maternal immunity or contact with a neighbouring herd. As part of the Scottish BVD eradication scheme all breeding herds must be screened for BVD by 1st February 2013. This should be a further incentive for farmers to identify PIs and remove them from their herds. The eradication scheme has been good for increasing contact with clients to explain BVD disease and has resulted in an increase in Cattle Health Scheme membership, BVD vaccination and most importantly a reduction in disease.



**Fig. 3: BVD sampling.**

The other Scottish Government initiative of Sheep Scab control has just finished its first year under the new Sheep Scab Order and has published an incidence map of outbreaks over the last 12 months. The county of Angus reported no outbreaks whereas some counties from which our farmers source store lambs for finishing had a high incidence. Hopefully this map will highlight the risk of bringing in disease and the importance of quarantine treatment either with OP dip or avermectin injections (Figs. 4 and 5).

We all read the national surveys on anthelmintic resistance in sheep but there is nothing like local evidence to bring the message home to vets and farmers. This summer we checked for anthelmintic resistance on five farms. One had problems with both benzimidazole and levamisole drenches, two showed ivermectin resistance and one hill and one low ground farm showed that their white drench





Fig. 4: Sheep scab.



Fig. 5: Sheep scab.



Fig. 6: On farm sale.

and clear drench respectively were still 100% effective. The farm with benzimidazole resistance showed a zero % reduction in worm egg counts in other words the drench was as effective as water! This shows the importance of checking the effectiveness of drenches on an annual basis and that monepantel and derquantel/abamectin may not always be the most costly anthelmintics on the market! To help with the quarantine message one client, who sells on farm, treated all his rams with monepantel and moxidectin immediately pre sale (Fig. 6).

We continue to transfer knowledge through our local training group, Agritrain and the latest course was on 'Control of lameness in sheep'. We have now treated eight flocks with tilmosin, some flocks

treated only the rams, others separated the affected sheep and treated them while four flocks treated all adult sheep on the farm. The level of lameness was greatly reduced and welfare improved in all flocks. Hopefully the opportunity for knowledge transfer and quarantine treatment will avoid the necessity of repeating whole flock antibiotic treatment next year.



**FOCUS ON NORTH WEST**  
**Andrew White**  
 BVMS CertBR DBR  
 GPCert(FAP) MRCVS

I qualified from Glasgow Vet School in 1964 when I joined a two-man cattle practice in Lancashire where I became a partner developing the practice to 13 vets.

My interests have always been with cattle, gaining my certificate in Bovine Reproduction in 1987, followed by DBR in 1990. In 2006 I gained the General Practitioner Certificate in Farm Animal Production from ESVPS. I retired from the business in 2005 and have worked as a locum/animal health advisor to my old practice. My 'free' time is spent, lecturing at Liverpool University, helping monitor the NW Livestock Programme, Senior Vice President of SSAB.

On my non vetting days, I enjoy spending time with my family, particularly with my three grandchildren and enjoy walking in the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District. On wetter days I enjoy watching rugby union - from an armchair!

The weather is often the determining factor in our farmers' activities and this year has certainly been one of the most demanding. Here, in the North West of England, we seemed to have a completely different climate than the rest of the country.

A very promising spring, during which we did not get the drought and then the floods, reported further south, led to good growing weather for the grass. The cows were turned out two or three weeks earlier than usual and the first cut silage was harvested during the last week of April. It was of good quality although a bit short of quantity. There was surplus silage left from the previous winter, so forage did not present any worries.

During May and June, the weather turned wetter and colder. The second cut, which had grown well and was ready to cut by mid June, could not be harvested because the ground was far too wet to carry the necessary machinery. The grass matured and went past its best. Some farmers managed to harvest it in a five day dry period in the middle of



Fig. 1: Maize crop - stunted growth.



Fig. 2: Barley crop beyond redemption.

July, but the majority, especially those who are dependent on contractors, missed this window of opportunity. Consequently, when the second cut was finally harvested at the end of August/ early September the sugar levels were low with MEs hardly exceeding 10 MJ. Digestibility was also poor due to the high lignin content.

Only one of our farmers has managed to harvest a third crop. Many of our farmers usually harvest four crops of grass silage each year; the implication for winter feed is becoming a worry. Those cows which have spent the majority of the time inside have now already eaten the remainder of last year's silage as well as the new first crop.

Some farmers have started to sell their stock because they cannot foresee enough food for the winter. This sorry tale has also been reflected in the maize crop. That planted in May did not get a good start to its growth because it was too cold and many crops at the moment stand at somewhere between knee and thigh height with only the best having more than one small cob (Fig. 1). The maize crop was intended to raise the energy level of the forage to be fed in the winter but this year that will not be achieved. This is beginning to raise fears that the cows will not be able to eat enough food because of the high dry matter content of the forage, to sustain their usual milk yield.

The arable farmers are also having their problems. The grain crops are poor (Fig. 2).

The wheat yields particularly, are very poor with a high infestation of fungal disease.

Some farmers decided that the crop would not survive until ripe for normal harvest and so used it as whole crop - a decision which has been justified in many cases. Much of the wheat crop is still in the fields, which are flooded. The potato crops are also poor this year. The tubers are small due to lack of sunshine earlier on and one farmer tells me he has sprayed his crop each week to prevent blight. He has been successful in this but at considerable cost. Fortunately the price is good this year.

The weather conditions have had their effect on our livestock too. Some herds have not been turned out at all this summer and one or two have been out to grass all the time irrespective of what the weather has thrown at them (Fig. 3). The majority of dairy herds were turned out to grass, brought in again and then put back out to grass. This has been repeated several times during this season. The deciding factor has not



Fig. 3: Fodder shortage leaves youngstock outside.

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Fig. 4: Damage done to soil structure.

been the temperature or the availability of the grass but the state of the fields and particularly the gateways (Fig. 4).

Those dairy cows kept inside have shown increased numbers of mastitis cases although their fertility has been quite good. Those cows that have been outside have not yielded particularly well, presumably because they have been sheltering instead of grazing and yet their fertility has been the best of the three groups. One farm recorded 88% of cows put forward for PDs to be in calf, with 75% of those being to first service. Those cows which have been in and out have shown increases in mastitis and very poor conception rates, down to 20% on some farms, and many cases of digestive upsets including displaced abomasums. This latter group have illustrated very clearly that a weekly change in diet is not good for dairy cows. We have also noticed a few more cases of listeriosis, cerebral cortical necrosis and one case of juvenile lymphosarcoma in the young stock.

In spite of the cows being inside for most of the summer we have seen little increase in either pneumonia or lameness cases. We have attributed this to our efforts last winter to impress on the farmers the importance of ventilation in cattle housing and the introduction, this year, of more foot friendly walkways and mattresses inside the buildings. This has been greatly influenced by the efforts of all concerned with the RDPE Northwest Livestock Programme. As a practice, our next area to tackle will be that of mastitis. We have noticed an increase in milking tube sales of 32–40% for the three months July, August and September, this year compared to last.

The morale of farmers themselves has been quite low this year. Crops are bad, the weather atrocious and the usual summer gatherings, the local agricultural shows which are such an important social event to farmers, have often been cancelled. The milk price was also threatened. One farmer I visited on a routine fertility visit at which an unusually poor result was recorded, when asked what he was going to do for the rest of the day, said he was going to look for a long rope! He was only joking but the sentiment was there. On the whole, farmers are an optimistic and resilient group of people and all are hoping for better times next year.

**FOCUS ON SOUTH WEST**  
**Martyn Whitehead**  
 BVSc DBR MRCVS

I qualified from Bristol in 1988 and started in mixed practice at the Yale Veterinary Centre in Cullompton, where I have stayed ever since. As I get older and my memory gets poorer, I find I have forgotten most of my small animal practice knowledge and concentrate on farm work, although I retain an interest in small animal orthopaedics.

I completed the DBR at Liverpool in 2001.

Away from veterinary work, I play the saxophone and violin in a variety of styles and groups, peaking with an appearance at Butlin's in Minehead!

The Healthy Livestock program is running well into its second year now. We have a good proportion of our farm visits completed and have had a good uptake of the Johne's and BVD streams in particular. (Just a matter of wading through the paperwork now!) Despite this, we have recently run more awareness meetings and managed to get more farmers involved. These clients apparently missed out on the earlier meetings, but are now keen. Maybe they have been talking to their neighbours!

The BVD youngstock screens have been an excellent extra tool to encourage farmers to investigate the disease on their farms (Fig. 1).

The results of the screens have not always been predictable, with some low antibody herds having evidence of BVD circulating in the youngstock, while some high antibody herds have no BVD circulating. The tricky results to interpret are the 1–2 seropositive animals in an otherwise seronegative group. Resulting PI searches have been mixed, but have identified PIs in several youngstock cohorts, while bulk milk PCR has indicated PIs on three farms that have made it through to the milking herd.

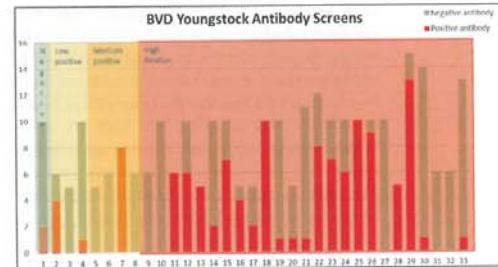


Fig. 1: Background shading indicates herd bulk milk result.

Farmers have varying opinions of what they want to achieve, with some happy to tighten up on their vaccination protocols and screening, while others are seizing the opportunity to try to eliminate the infection. Strict biosecurity and regular surveillance in those herds will be necessary to reduce the risk of future disasters!

Whilst the enthusiasm has generally been stimulated for BVD and Johne's, there is less enthusiasm for Schmallenberg. We saw the effects of infection earlier in the year, when some lambs were aborted or born deformed, and later the same problems occurred in cattle. Interestingly we also saw several other types of unrelated foetal deformities, such as lambs with two heads and calves with missing or extra legs, as farmers were aware of the possibility of Schmallenberg infection (Fig. 2). But more recently, with the advent of serological testing, it is becoming apparent that infection may have been more widespread. Several herds are having positive serological results from cattle which have aborted or 'resorbed' at some stage during the summer. It seems very likely that some of the infertility we are seeing is not solely due to the poor nutrition and weather that we have suffered over the 'summer'.

There, I've said it – weather! To say that clients are concerned about their silage stocks is probably a bit of an understatement. Four weeks ago the maize

crops were looking a little better, with cobs setting better than expected. One farmer observed that the main problem he was having was that the pheasants were taking the lower cobs because they could reach them this year as crops are not as tall as they should be! But at the time of writing, it's raining again and the saturated ground is slowing down harvesting on many farms. Some of those that have managed to get the crop into their pits are reporting yields around 60% of what they expected. Analysis of these maize crops will help to assess what needs to be done to balance the winter diets. Herds have either suffered during the summer with the effects of poor grazing, or have buffer fed well over the summer and are now short of forage. Grass silage analyses so far are very variable with some pits of good quality and low volume, and others full of low energy, low protein rubbish.

We had a series of meetings with the help of Richard Cooper of EBVC to discuss the options available for the coming housed period and we will be having more in a couple of weeks. What is clear is that, more than ever, we will need to keep a very close eye on dry cows and the transition group this year to ensure that cows suffer as little metabolic stress during the crucial early lactation period as possible.

The weather has brought some other problems. We have seen deaths in three suckler herds of cows at pasture. Post-mortem examinations have in all cases revealed haemorrhagic small intestines with petechial haemorrhages and bloody contents. This suggests clostridial enterotoxaemia. It is likely that the muddy conditions led to the ingestion of contaminated grass. Moving the cattle and vaccination seem to be the best option on these farms.

We had our 24½ year reunion recently. We didn't quite make it to 25 as one of our number had travelled home from 'down under'. We have all struggled with the concept that the students on EMS with us now were usually born after we qualified! There were some stark comparisons. The small animal clinicians were generally better dressed, and seemed less troubled with back and shoulder pain. But I was still pleased to have a closer relationship with my hair than some of my contemporaries! Bring on the next 24½ years!



Fig. 2.

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