

# Farmer Meetings

This Autumn NWF are working in partnership with Shepton Mallet Vets in the south west, with a series of farmer meetings. The meetings, which include refreshments, will focus on fertility, cow signals, forage stocks and seasonal veterinary topics.

To register your interest please call our New Business Team on 0800 756 2787

Somerset - Wed 30th Oct  
At Lambrook Farm, Queen Camel,  
Yeovil by kind permission of  
Mr & Mrs Dewey

Cornwall - Wed 6th Nov  
At Carvannel Farm, North Cliffs,  
Camborne by kind permission  
of Mr & Mrs Johns

Devon - Wed 13th Nov  
At Meadwell Farm, Kelly, Tavistock,  
by kind permission of  
PC & CG Cox



## Vet viewpoint



## Giving cows the best chance of conception

*"Understanding the basics of fertility means giving your cows the best chance of conception during the forthcoming months,"* says Michael Head, of Shepton Veterinary Group

Let's all pretend we are an egg (oocyte) or sperm; I will leave it up to you, the reader, as to which you would like to be!

You will say that your health is paramount; any compromise of this will obviously affect subsequent fertility. Of late, you have no doubt been blighted by heat stress, but we will not see the effects of this until we see a reduction of numbers calved eight to nine months from now.



### Your Objective No.1. Fertilisation.

A close up of the point the sperm

### The surprises and facts of the normal oestrous/bulling cycle

We all know that cows cycle normally every 18 to 24 days. The assumption you may have is that a small follicle (where the egg is before ovulation) at the beginning just gets bigger and bigger until at the end of the cycle it bursts (ovulation) to release the egg where upon it meets you (if you are pretending to be a sperm) in the fallopian tube (oviduct).

The small follicle at the beginning of the cycle, however, is not the same one that is released at the end. Cows have a series of cycles (or waves) in the normal cycle. So what?

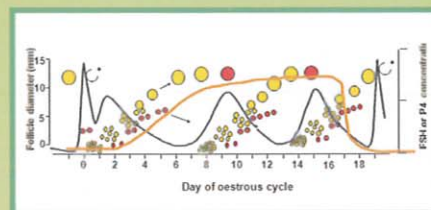
Well, we can explain about the hormonal treatments that are used on farm with knowledge of the cycle. The likes of prostaglandin, 'prids', 'cidrs' and holding injections all mimic the natural cycle.

There will be no magic bullets but nutrition of the egg is paramount. Did you know that the heifer before calving has in excess of 200,000 potential eggs on her ovaries and the egg that produces the calf develops in the dry period? So the control of energy and body condition score is fundamental.

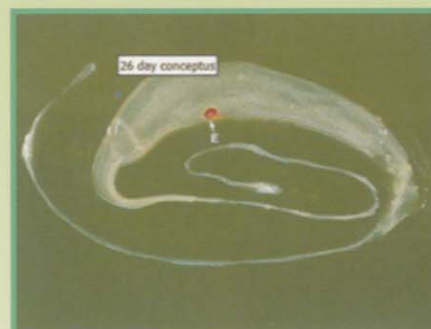
Did you know that it is minimising the loss of condition between calving and service that has the greatest effect over all the other factors on your farm? Another thing we know is that the stronger the bulling the higher the conception rate and the ease of the passing of the A.I. gun is related to the conception rate.

So nutrition is key but let's be sure we use this time to plan for the next few months. Carry out housing modifications to ensure cow comfort to reduce lameness and take a serious look at ventilation in your sheds; a well-ventilated shed will mean a shed whose bedding will dry quicker so preventing environmental mastitis bugs getting on top of you.

Do not let the period of dry lure you into a false sense of security: plan your liver fluke control too.



Michael Head is a partner at Shepton Veterinary Group, Shepton Mallet. He has a Certificate in Cattle Health and Production and a Diploma in Bovine Reproduction.



### Your Objective No.2 Successful Pregnancy.

A 26 day embryo and the associated tissue that will be the placenta.