



THE  
WOOD  
VETERINARY  
GROUP

# FARM NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2016



## Happy New Year!

A new year and a new start! It's always a good time of year when we've passed the shortest day and are heading towards summer! It can also be a time to rejuvenate and think about how we can make changes to improve things for the year to come. Improve everything by 1% for overall success! (said by the Olympic cycling coach I think!) – I know we're not riding bikes but we can evaluate our systems to look at where things can be tweaked. A New Year's resolutions if you will...

**Prevention** is a word constantly repeated by us here in the farm team. We all know that improvements in cow health will enhance production and therefore profit. What small changes can you make to your farm system for overall success? Feeding regime, lying space, feed space, water trough space? Cow handling – how do your cows flow through the system? Can it be tweaked to improve flow, reduced stress and improve yields?

## Target areas – The Transition Period and the vital 90 days!

Our dairy cows have tremendous potential to produce milk and be fertile– but very often factors get in the way to disrupt this. When looking at focusing the mind onto where small improvements can be made, start with the most important period, the vital 90 days from 6 weeks pre calving to 3 weeks post calving. Are the cows happy and stress free?



- Full rumen – if empty/hollow then there is a problem
- Lying down – is there enough space? 10m<sup>2</sup> for an 8000 L cow? (1.25m<sup>2</sup> per 1000kg milk to be produced).
- Lameness? – she won't feed for as long if lame. Consequences – risk of LDA, poor yield, longer time to service/pregnancy.
- Stress? – bullying from other cows, blocking from feed face and water trough, noisy humans?

Focusing time on these factors and making small 1% improvements has been very beneficial to our farms that we have recently looked at. Realistic targets are more likely to be achieved and kept so bear this in mind! Speak to us about assessing your system in the New Year.

## TB Testing – Yet More Reminders!

As much as we love seeing rare breed and horned cattle around the county, those of you who own them will appreciate the difficulties we face when trying to test these animals. All too often horned or wild cattle in a poor system come together to make a frustrating and dangerous combination. When you are booking in your test, of course with plenty of forward planning, please can you make every effort to have good handling facilities organised with plenty of staff. Safety during tests

is so important for you, your staff, us and the cattle. Lights are also very useful on these short days, so if they are not available please let us know so we can prioritise your call for daylight hours or make sure we have our head torch handy!

Please ring in as soon as you are allocated your testing window – all too often deadlines are dangerously close to the testing date!

## The New Face of Johne's Disease

Most of you have first hand experience of this chronic and debilitating cattle disease. Many of you have instigated long-term control strategies and seen positive results – now the target is to get 100% of dairies at the same level.

Action Johne's ([www.actionjohnesuk.org](http://www.actionjohnesuk.org)) is a joint initiative between the whole dairy industry, which through the National Johne's Management Plan hopes to reduce the negative impact of Johne's on the national herd. Hopefully a beef initiative will follow on this success!



The key date is **October 2016**, by which time all dairy farms must have a farm specific Johne's action plan in place. Many of you are already there but, through the early part of 2016 we will run some meetings to remind us all of the issues we face in managing this disease and by October we'll help you to select or update your plan inline with the new initiative.

## Mastitis and SCC levels

On farm discussions regarding mastitis and SCC levels often run along the lines of panic stations shortly followed by rash decisions regarding treatments or barring out cows. As always the key to solving issues promptly is INFORMATION. By the time an issue arises some of this valuable information is already lost to us and so over the next few newsletters we will review the best approach to a problem:

1 – Collect a sample of every mastitis case in the proper aseptic technique BEFORE TREATMENT

A good sampling technique has a very significant impact on the quality and usefulness of results:

- Clean the teat (and wash and dry if dirty)
- Discard the first 4-6 squirts of milk: they contain bacteria from in the teat sphincter, but which are not causing mastitis, and must be removed
- Rub the end of the teat 10-15 times with a swab soaked in methylated spirits
- Only then should you open the sample bottle, keeping the lid facing downwards and the opened bottle almost horizontal. This prevents particles of dust and bacteria dropping into the bottle
- Finally, with the bottle between horizontal and a 45 degree angle, squirt in one jet of milk and replace the cover immediately
- Label the bottle with your name, the cow number, the date and quarter affected.
- For immediate processing the sample needs to be taken to the laboratory as soon as is possible, preferably storing the sample in a refrigerator.

BUT... IF YOU FREEZE THIS SAMPLE IMMEDIATELY then they can be processed in groups giving us an up to date pathogen profile and preventing wild guessing about which treatment did or didn't work and why! You can discard samples from the freezer as you go - just retain the last ONE month's worth of samples.

**Processing 5 or more samples is overall cheaper and increases the chance of isolating a significant pathogen. We suggest routine monitoring every 2-3 months of 5 of the latest samples to try and be ahead of the curve.**

**This INFORMATION can also be used for selective dry cow treatment.**

**Next Time....The Bulk Tank Sample**

## STOP PRESS – DO YOU USE FORMALIN?

The banning of Formalin for use in footbaths has been talked about for many years. It now appears action is being taken. There is no doubt formalin is very effective for the control of Digital Dermatitis (DD) and is environmentally safe. However, as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016 it will be classified as a category 1b carcinogen.

This means it will not be available for 'amateur' use. In reality this is likely to reduce the number of suppliers and increase the cost. A single German company will be the sole registered supplier and 'professional' users may need to prove competence and suitable training in the event of a H&S issue. A safety sheet for the use and storage of Formalin is advised. In future, increased restrictions are highly likely and we can only hope that this hassle promotes research into other products.