



THE  
**WOOD  
VETERINARY  
GROUP**



## FARM NEWSLETTER APRIL 2015 EUROPEAN TRAVELS

### **Another “Retirement”**

This July sees another change within Wood Vet Group, Chris Watson will be retiring as a director of the company but will still remain very much involved within the practice on a part-time basis.

Chris came to Gloucester in 1979 as locum cover for six weeks to allow Roger to travel to South America. Those six weeks have turned into 36 years of dedication to the Practice and the clients that it serves. In those early days there was the obligatory small animal surgery, usually at our former Stonehouse branch but Chris rapidly convinced everybody that his considerable skills were best utilised in cattle practice.

Over the years Chris has been heavily involved in all aspects of large animal work including embryo transfer programs in goats and cattle and he is well regarded and respected within the profession and farming community particularly in the fields of fertility, lameness and data analysis.

He has also had very notable achievements in the world of IT. He was heavily involved in the development of “Daisy” and subsequently “Interherd” the dairy herd management software systems which are at the forefront of modern dairy farming enabling rapid, informative data analysis. His IT prowess has meant he was always the “go to man” for IT challenges within the practice. Chris will still be very much around the Practice however the shooting and fishing trips may become more frequent and prolonged!

### **Hungary Farm Study Tour – Phillipa Page MRCVS**

Hungary is in the European Union and has seven bordering countries. Following the end of communism almost 20 years ago, Hungary sought to redistribute land for agricultural industries and production. The reclaimed land was available to rent and many European consortiums, a number from the UK, sought the opportunity and have set up dairies across Hungary.

The situation now appears to be changing somewhat with the tenancies up for renewal and a dairy focussed government reclaiming the land for its own interests. In some cases the land was being reclaimed from foreign investors and either added to farms owned by Hungarians (including government ministers!) or left currently ‘unfarmed’. The nature of available EU funding and grant applications appeared to follow in the same way, with the dairy sector receiving an over generous share of the funds. Whilst this made it difficult to compare production costs, it was a fascinating insight into the differences surrounding dairy production in this Eastern European country. Farmers/owners suggested that they were very aware that dairy farming was a well-funded industry to be in, whilst acknowledging that an opposition party coming into power could change the situation rapidly. Politics obviously plays a very large part in

farming in Hungary as well as in the UK, but there seemed to be considerably less red tape and far more subsidies, the latter of which did not encourage efficient milk production. It made our political parties look like saints!

The majority of the farms we visited were owned by shareholders, up to twenty in some cases and then managed by one or two of the shareholders and a dairy manager. Many also had other arable enterprises associated with them such as potatoes, wheat and corn. The average herd size in Hungary was quoted as 350-400 milking cows with 235,000 Holsteins estimated to be within Hungary. The main dietary components included alfalfa, maize and Lucerne. The major genetics used were American with the major selections involving yield and PLI (profitable lifetime index). The traditional Hungarian breed was the Steppe Simmental (a Hungarian longhorn grey cross Simmental) but selection for yield and dairy qualities means the Holstein is now the predominant breed.

The milk price ranged from 21-25ppl as the result of a milk price drop over the previous 12 months. The average yields were quoted as 9000 – 10000 litres/cow/lactation. The majority of milk was retained in Hungary where it was ultra-heat treated for sale. Liquid milk was also sold to

neighbouring countries such as Romania, Serbia and the Ukraine.

We visited one dairy who sold fresh milk from 14 vans around Budapest. He was receiving the equivalent of 50-55ppl and he also sold specialist cheeses and yoghurt. Hungarian cheese left a lot

to be desired and so sampling these specialist cheeses was welcomed!

In the next newsletter I will discuss their production systems and health issues in more detail.

### **Countryside Productivity Scheme – 40% Funding**

As part of the 2015 Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) fund there are 40% grants for some areas of production including automated dairy cow lameness detection, collar-based rumination monitors, foodstuff analysis, calving detectors and activity monitors to detect oestrus. Search for the Rural Payments Agency online for more information if these were on your shopping list. Deadline is 30 June 2015!

### **TB Testing**

The government has finally announced the results of the tender process covering animal health field services, primarily TB testing. We are part of the successful XL Farmcare Wessex bid that has secured the tender for the mid-west region. XL Farmcare is a group of practitioners wanting to sustain local veterinary practices as the point of delivery for TB testing. The tender process has produced a significant drop in the payments for TB testing and we will see a gradual change over the whole country from clinical veterinary surgeons doing the testing to a dedicated team of testing vets. This trend will massively change the face of many practices. The end result is that for the first tender period (3 years) you will see non clinical vets – often Spanish – doing the testing who are unable to offer other veterinary skills at the test. On many tests this is not an issue as there is little time for little clinical extras but testing will now be the only focus of these visits.

It is likely that the trend will continue to involve non veterinarians doing the testing after the next tender period but the present issues are the ones we need to address: -

- The practice will still be doing your test
- Tests will have to be booked well in advance – at least 6/8 weeks.
- There will only be one visit charge allowed so splitting tests is expensive and there may be an extra charge incurred for spilt tests.
- Any clinical work needed at the test will have to be planned before the test.

### **TB Day 1 and 2**

It is important to remember that all animals presented for the TT1 on the first day **must** be presented for TT2 on the second day or the test may be declared invalid and trading standards may become involved.

If an animal is due for slaughter between the test days give the tester a list of the animal identifications and do not test it on day 1 - but remember that if it is still in the herd on day 2 the

test will not be complete until it is slaughtered or tested and restrictions etc. will not be lifted and the next test possibly delayed. Update BCMS as soon as animals go to slaughter.

If an animal has to be slaughtered for welfare reasons or dies between day 1 and day 2 then make sure that this is recorded with the reasons why and we will notify animal health. BCMS also need to be updated asap. Animals present between day 1 and 2 must be the same.

### **Meetings**

#### **Dairy Herd KPI Meeting**

#### **Wastage in Heifer Rearing – A Review**

Wed 15<sup>th</sup> April 2015

11.30am coffee for 12pm start – 2pm

Refreshments provided

Phone 01452 543 999 or email

largeanimal@woodvet.co.uk to book in

### **Meetings**

#### **RABDF, Dairy Co. And BGS**

#### **Milking Grass for Profit**

Hosted by Lydney Park Estate

28<sup>th</sup> April 2015

10.30am Registration

Pre registration essential at [www.rabdf.co.uk](http://www.rabdf.co.uk)