



Hypomagnesemia/ Grass Staggers

Technically we are yet again in spring but with the current weather being so variable, animals that are turned out will be on very wet ground. Wet spring grazing is very low in magnesium and also low in fibre so grass passes through the gut quickly. This reduces the absorption of what little magnesium is present. Those of you top dressing or mixing minerals in exposed feed faces will see the run off effect of rain. This is important when minerals are costly to buy and have a strong link to metabolic diseases in calving cows.

Key areas are: -

- Cows will twitch or seem unsteady on their feet. Affected animals can often be hyper excitable which can make them dangerous to handle, so please take care. Froth around mouths, exaggerated blinking and teeth grinding can also be seen. Clinical signs of an acute case can progress quickly and often the animal will just be found as a 'sudden death'.



- Ruminants cannot store magnesium and rely on daily dietary intake:
 - 60g/cow/day of calcined magnesite needs to be given orally somewhere in the diet
 - Supplementation can be done in a concentrate feed, in a TMR ration or in water
- When adding Magnesium to water sources:
 - No other water source must be available
 - If the grazing is very wet, uptake of water from troughs may be low so increase the dose
 - Do not let magnesium chloride accumulate in troughs as it is very bitter. Clean out troughs frequently.
- Start using magnesium well before grazing. Cows do not store Magnesium well so you need a “run-up” access period.
- Try and buffer feed animals with more fibrous foods at pasture to slow down gut passage and increase magnesium uptake (i.e. silage or hay)
- Avoid relying on a mineral block as there can be a huge variation in how much individual cows use them, leaving some cow still at risk of staggers
- Avoid Potash application onto grazing pastures in the spring as this further reduces the level found in grass. (NB Slurry contains high levels of potash so acts the same way)

Magnesium deficiency is usually a combination of low magnesium levels and some stress factor. For most stock this will be adverse weather at grazing but could also be other things such as weaning calves for beef animals, bulling for block spring calving herds or water restriction for any stock. Try and minimise stress at danger times of the year – spring and autumn.

Treating beef cows for hypomagnesaemia is often very unsuccessful so take preventative actions

TB Test Reactors

The start of 2017 has been very busy for testing and unfortunately the practice area has had quite a few reactors. We often have the recurring conversation about reactors that have come back from slaughter with no lesions found. We understand that these letters are frustrating and demoralising but we are confident in the tests ability to pick up reactors. Here are some detailed points as to how the test is performing:

1. The skin test is actually very good at determining if an animal is truly positive (specificity 99.99%)
 - For every 5000 cows that are deemed reactors only 1 will have been uninfected at standard reading
2. When the animals report comes back as ‘No Visible Lesions’ it does not mean that the animal was not infected – merely that there has not been sufficient time for visible abscesses to develop. The test is measuring the animals immune response and so rightly identifies the animals as early as possible to remove the infected population
3. Where the test is less accurate is at determining animals that are truly negative (sensitivity 80%) - for every 10 reactor cows on a farm it will find 8 of them. This is where a recurrent breakdown will happen due to positive animals passing tests as clear. This means 2 out of every 10 positive farms may have a clear test despite being infected.

Whilst you all have to go to the effort of preparing for TB testing there are some points about biosecurity that could help to prevent further new infection entering your farm.

As you are all aware, it is about limiting Badger access and contact. Cattle catch TB from eating infected feed, fodder or pasture contaminated with

faeces, urine, saliva and pus as well as inhaling bacteria from infected animals.

1. Fence cattle away from known latrines in field edges – young cattle are inquisitive and often investigate where they shouldn't!
2. Keep mineral licks off the floor to prevent cross contamination from saliva
3. Use water troughs that are 90cm high or more with a lip
4. Secure all concentrate feeds – they can get higher than you think! Badgers defecate and urinate as they eat so will contaminate feed easily
5. Badger proof buildings and troughs – Badgers can get through a gap of 7.5cm so gates need to shut properly and with galvanised sheets right down to the floor – smooth surfaces stop easy ingress



6. Dig fencing down by 0.5m and across by 0.3m to stop digging and make sure they are 1.2m high and remember smaller holes than 7.5cm
7. Once you have changed buildings, keep doors shut especially at night – this applies to sheds that contains stock, bedding, materials and feed

We understand your frustrations with TB but please be assured the test is working at reducing the positive population but using the above tips assess your buildings and see if there is any scope to further protect your farm.

A Fond Farewell from Phillipa

I'm afraid I am bidding you all a sad farewell as I won't be returning to the practice following my maternity leave. I will be aiming to rear our two boys Jack and William and embark upon a new part time veterinary venture. It has been a privilege to work at WVG, which is regarded as a prestigious practice in the livestock veterinary world. Over the past 7 and a half years I have enjoyed working with and learning from some exceptional vets and support staff and exceptional farmers. I wish all the very best to colleagues old and new and farming clients and friends. Phillipa

Meetings

Dairy KPI Meeting
Mastitis – Fine Tuning
Milk Sure – Getting Ahead of Residue Testing

WEDNESDAY 22nd MARCH
11am – 2pm at Quedgeley
A hot lunch will be provided