THE WOOD VETERINARY GROUP


**Dairy Key Performance Indicator Meeting**

Each quarter we review all of the data that is recorded by dairy farms across the practice and compare each of the farms to the others in the area, and then again against the national herd performance. The aim of this is to promote good changes in our routine, praise and learn from those farms achieving or over-achieving the targets and to help those missing the targets to see a way to move forward. We record masses of data on a daily basis so it is important to assess this data and react to what it is telling us:

In July we looked at the fertility and milk quality data but this time we compared the herds to their own data from 2015. How have we changed? Largely the parameters we assessed had improved but also showed those lagging behind that it is possible to climb to the other end of the graph. TAKE HOME MESSAGE: % served by 80 DIM and therefore % pregnant by 100 DIM are key to economic production.

Our main focus of the meeting was heifer rearing. These animals as a group are vitally important for the future of the milking herd but are often a second thought in regards to time and data. There is masses of data to support that heifers grown well in the early period (i.e. 0.85 to 1kg a day live weight gain) yield significantly better. This is due to their better age at first calving. When we mapped the practice farms for age at first calving vs. Yield this was clearly represented even across this small data set. There are also many other factors that improve with an age of first calving at 2 years. The table below represents the other areas including % still alive in 5 years, time spent in milk in 5 years:

| Calving age (months) | 22-23 | 24-25 | 26-28 | 32-36 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-calving weight (kg) | 591 | 621 | 625 | 769 |
| Calving Assistance (%) | 17% | 17% | 27% | 67% |
| Weight loss post calving (kg) | 32 | 26 | 6 | 59 |
| Cows still alive at 5 years (%) | 86% | 62% | 41% | 33% |
| Total 5 year milk yield (kg) | 25,031 | 20,395 | 16,671 | 8,029 |
| Time in milk during first 5 years (%) | 48% | 42% | 38% | 18% |

All of this contributes to whether or not the heifer has the ability to produce more in her lifetime than it cost you to rear her. Many more heifers exit the herd after only just achieving zero equity and some will exit well before that. Whilst many of you are aware of these facts, what we need to establish to move forwards is: what is your current age at first calving and how to bring it to 2 years?

- Colostrum as always is vital, and a good volume needs to be absorbed within 12 hours of life. Any disease incidents will impact growth as nutrition is used to defend against immune challenges and not for growth. Adequate colostrum transfer will reduce neonatal disease incidence.
- Young calves under 6 weeks old are about 60% efficient at turning nutrition into live weight gain. This therefore is the time to spend money on them and ensure that growth rates are achieved.

| | Holstein | | Friesian | | Jersey | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age (months) | Weight (kg) | Withers height (cm) | Weight (kg) | Withers height (cm) | Weight (kg) | Withers height (cm) |
| 2 | 60% efficient | | | 2 x by 42days | | |
| 4 | | | | | | |
| 6 | Declining to | | | 55-60% ABW Bulling | | |
| 12 | 7% efficient | | | | | |
| 15 | | | | 85% ABW Calving | | |
| 18 | | | | | | |
| 21 | | | | | | |
| 24 (pre calving) | | | | | | |
| 24 (post calving) | | | | | | |

If this period of efficiency is missed then it is very unlikely heifers will reach 55% of adult body weight by the time of first service at around 13 months as efficiency rapidly declines down to 7%.

- Records – we need to record deaths, disease incidents and daily live weight gains in order to establish where we are falling short and how to adjust – without this information it is impossible to change the right things in the right direction. Across the practice some farms have improved their age of first calving and others have drifted from the target in the wrong direction.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE: Weigh calves routinely and record all disease and death incidents to establish areas for improvement

**The Offer Goes On...**Last month we reminded you of the regulations regarding medicine bottle and needle disposal on farms. **ALL LIVESTOCK PREMISES MUST HAVE A YELLOW SHARPS BIN AND GRIFF BIN** to dispose of used needles and the bin for medicine bottles. The cost of purchase includes returning the container to us once it is full for licensed disposal. To help get everyone compliant with the rules we are running an offer again this summer:

**Still running throughout AUGUST**

**Buy a 27 Litre Bottle Bin and a 2 Litre sharps bin for just £60 +VAT**

This is a saving of nearly £20. Remember don't put the lid on until it's full!

**Ring the Office today to order your summer deal!**

**FLIES...**

The impact of flies has been a serious problem this year with the warm weather and intermittent showers allowing a huge hatch to occur. They seem as persistent as ever.

Control of flies is a difficult issue. Control of environment is as important as on the animals. Whilst pour-on products are most common there are ear tags also on the market (Flextron). These can be very useful for those units suffering with New Forest Eye disease.

**New Forest Eye Disease**

This disease is a bacterial infection of the outer layer of the cornea producing an ulcer. This can first be seen as small crater on the cornea surface. The more obvious clinical signs are:

- Tear production
- Partial closing of the eye and some animals will seek out shade to get out of the bright sunlight which causes pain
- White/cloudy spot

Treatment is straightforward and very effective if done in the early stages of the disease:

- Topical ophthalmic ointments are good but a fiddle to use.
  - Usually 2 treatments 48 hours apart is needed. (Opticlox)
- Injecting antibiotics into the eyelid margin space is very effective but it requires one of the farm veterinary team to do it. Animals must be well restrained to get it done accurately.
- In non-milking grazing animals Micotil injection systemically can be useful. Micotil can only be used by a veterinary surgeon and so again needs a vet visit.

The most important aspect of all eye diseases is that the actual healing process makes the eye look worse before it looks better. The cornea has no blood vessels so healing occurs by blood capillaries growing in from the edge of the cornea and this makes the surface of the eye look angry and bright red. It can be seen as a red ring.

Eventually these vessels start to regress and form a ring around a central white scar. As long as the following is seen then the eye is healing:

- Tear production reduces or ceases
- The eye opens up fully
- You can see the healing process (picture)

These cattle do not need any further treatment. If treatment is early then full recovery is possible. However, if treatment is delayed then the eye may never heal fully and leave the animal with varying degrees of visual impairment or the need for an eye removal. Any rapid swelling/craters need to be assessed as can be from injuries or cancerous growths not NFD.

Healing Eye with Red Blood Vessel Migration