



### Hypomagnesia/ Grass Staggers

With the snow storms and minus temperatures hitting the country most farms won't have jumped to turn cattle out. However for those of you on grazing systems or already outside wet and frosty 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 snow and rain. This is important when minerals are costly to buy in 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. Frothing around the mouth, 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 troughs often
- 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 cows 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 - Biosecurity Visits and Latest Updates

With more areas participating in the forthcoming government backed TB control badger cull project there will be a series of farm biosecurity visits carried out by Natural England. During March and April 10% of participating farms will be visited.

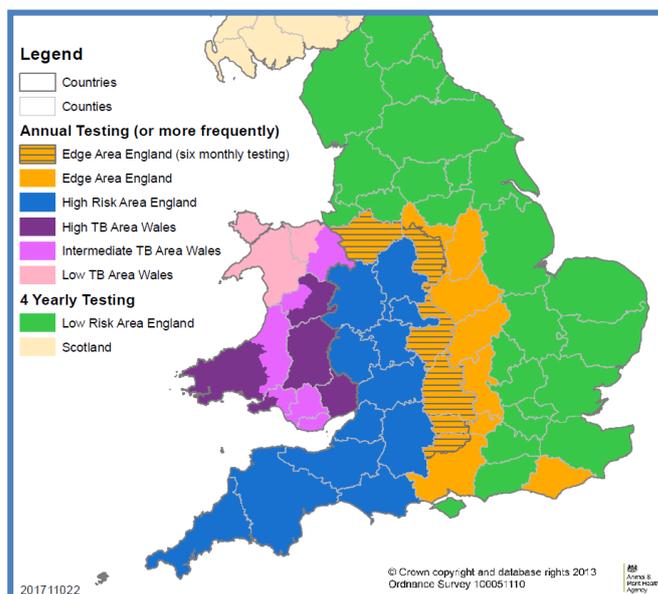
These farms will be given prior notice so that preparations and requirements can be implemented. All farms will need to complete and keep a Risk Assessment form on farm. These forms are available through the NFU or at the practice. This is a really useful exercise for all cattle keepers to complete to reduce the risk of TB.

The general principles of biosecurity rely on 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
5. Badger proof buildings and troughs – Badgers can get through a gap of 7.5cm so gates need to shut properly with smooth galvanised sheets right down to the floor

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. Keep doors shut especially at night – this applies to sheds that contains stock, bedding, materials and feed

Many of you have asked about the potential change to 6 month testing – the current information indicates that the planned move to 6 month testing intervals will be in the “Edge Area” – this is on the map as **Orange with green hashed lines** i.e. half of the strip of land between us in the High Risk Area (Blue) and the Low Risk Area (Green) in the East. We will remain on **annual** testing intervals for TB free farms with 60 days and 6 month tests for closed herds.



## #ColostrumIsGold

This month there is an extra initiative to remind farms to make colostrums a priority. It provides antibodies that form the main part of the acquired immune system. It reduces illness and prevents the need for antibiotic treatments in newborn and older animals.

Calves must have:

- 4 litres of colostrum or 10% of their bodyweight within 4 hours of birth, preferably 2hrs
- A calf needs to suckle **for 20 minutes** continuously to get this much colostrum in its first feed
- This should be followed by another 2 litres within 12 hours of birth

Calves fed sufficient colostrum reduce their risk of pneumonia and mortality by over half. It also provides other nutrients, including: vitamins A, D and E which increase the absorptive and digestive capacity of the gut; enzymes and proteins which suppress growth of certain bacteria.

Test colostrum quality before feeding calves to ensure that it is suitable to feed and store any spare, good quality colostrum for emergency situations.



### Meetings

**Dairy KPI Meeting  
Fertility**

**Synchronisation Protocols and Costs**

**WEDNESDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH**

11am – 2pm at Quedgeley

A hot lunch will be provided

Phone 01452 543 999 to book in