



THE
WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP

FARM NEWSLETTER MARCH 2020

Flooding

Many of you have been struggling with the extreme weather and flooding in the area causing unknown damage to spring grazing, peaks in disease such as pneumonia and mastitis due to persistently wet housing and a lot of forage crops have not been planted due to heavy machinery standing no chance on saturated fields. It also impacts the time it takes to complete everyday tasks at an already busy time of year for calving and lambing, such as feeding and checking on livestock when roads in the area are permanently or intermittently closed. We unfortunately had to rearrange our Vet Tech launch at Coombe hill for early March (please see dates below) so fingers crossed its all dried up a bit more by then.

We need to consider what risks remain after the water returns to the confines of the river:

- Flooded pastures will be high risk for Leptospirosis infection especially to unvaccinated animals so make sure vaccinations are done well ahead of turnout
- The main contaminants will be from flood water with human or livestock faecal material in it such as Salmonella and Cryptosporidium
- Hydrocarbons from fuel can also be an issue from road run off. Be aware of local industrial plants that may have leached chemicals into standing water
- Where flood water has eroded the soil it can expose soil based bacteria such as Anthrax to the air causing spores
- Be conscious of Liver Fluke as the extended flooding will have increased the mud snail habitat to areas that haven't previously been a risk for fluke infection



Avoid using previously flooded pastures for as long as possible. UV light and drying out will help to reduce the risks from biological contaminants. This will also promote new shoot growth and root development ensuring more pasture survives into the grazing season. You may need to graze poor pastures as “sacrifice pastures” early on to protect pastures that have potential to recover well to provide enough viable grazing for the summer months and this years harvest.

Neospora caninum - Abortions

Neospora is a single celled protozoan parasite that causes cattle abortions. It is recognised as one of the major bovine abortion causes worldwide. *Neospora* causes abortion between 3 months and full term, neurological calves that do not survive long, and early foetal resorption seen as infertility and increased time to conception. This results in increased calving interval and calving blocks being completely shifted.

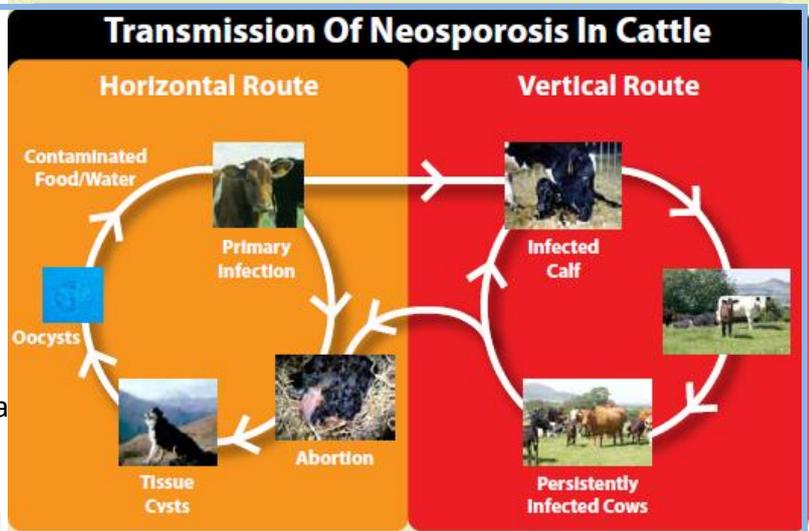
Neospora is spread from dog to cattle and dam to offspring. It first gets onto a farm via these routes:

1. Buying in an infected cow – at some point she aborts infecting a dog when it eats the aborted placenta/calf or she has an infected heifer calf that is kept as a replacement
2. A recently infected dog defecates in cattle drinking water or feed or fields being grazed by cattle

As a result a naïve heifer/cow is infected from feed/water/grazing and either aborts or gives birth to a normal but infected heifer calf kept as a replacement. Dogs shed oocysts (eggs) for 7 to 10 days after eating abortion material and these oocysts can survive for up to 6 months. Rodents eating abortive material can also infect dogs so good rodent control is also vital.

This highlights how it is often not a dog infecting cattle prior to every abortion but both oocyst survival and vertical transmission from dam to heifers that maintains the infection within the herd. It is also worth noting that there is no transmission between cattle other than through pregnancy or a dog intermediate. Infected cattle do not abort every pregnancy but can intermittently have live calves and abortions.

Younger cows and cows newly infected by dog faeces are more likely to abort than cows infected years ago. When a dog has infected naïve cattle, a significant proportion of the herd abort at the same time known as an abortion storm. When a herd is mainly vertically infected (dam to calf) we see much lower numbers. This is because the protozoa sits dormant within the animal and when changes happen to the immune system during pregnancy, the Neospora invades placenta tissue causing foetal damage and death or infects the calf. This last group of calves are infected for life and show no outward signs until they abort a pregnancy.



Management Strategies

The best time for testing animals is during pregnancy, directly after an abortion or after a suspected new infection because the animal will have sufficient antibody against the active stage of the parasite to give a positive test result. Testing an animal several times will reduce the risk of false negative result.

Culling out infected animals is normally not practical due to the proportion of the herd that is likely to be infected. However, breeding strategies can help to reduce vertical transmission within the herd:

- Test all cows that abort (promptly after abortion)
- Test all heifers prior to first service
- Breed positive animals to non replacement semen i.e. beef semen for dairy units
- Do not keep any offspring from positive cows as replacements

Biosecurity plays a major role in preventing infection entering the herd:

- Closed herds remove the risk of bringing in infected cows
- If purchasing cows, source from neospora accredited negative herds
- Dispose of aborted foetus and cleansings in a rodent and dog proof container prior to collection
- Prevent dogs from scavenging cleansing or afterbirth material from ALL calvings
- Pick up dog faeces from farm dogs and dispose in household general waste
- Where footpaths mean local dogs are crossing land put up posters requesting people to pick up faeces explaining why and avoid calving cows in these fields if possible
- Good rodent control stops dogs from eating rodents that are already infected with neospora

A New Face

We are really pleased to welcome a new vet Katie Kipling to the farm team. Katie is an experienced vet who is returning home to Gloucestershire from practice in Scotland. She will be out on farm from the beginning of March so give her a warm welcome to the Wood's team.

Meetings

DAIRY KPI MEETING

**Developments in Fertility Management
SDCT Progress**

Wednesday 25th March 2020

11 – 2pm at Quedgeley
Lunch will be provided

Meetings

VET TECH AND ANIMAL HEALTH PRODUCT LAUNCH

JOIN US FOR A BEER AND BUFFET

The Swan at Coombe Hill (GL19 4BA)

*** NEW DATE* 5th March at 7pm**

The Anchor Inn at Epney (GL2 7LN)

12TH March at 7pm