



## Spring Turnout

As pastures have dried out sufficiently from the winter flooding, many beef and dairy units are now grazing some if not all cattle as well as taking off first cuts of silage and busy planting maize. Hopefully, the warm weather and intermittent showers will make for a strong growing season ahead.

## Blackleg

Where pastures have been flooded causing soil erosion or have been grazed tightly, they are extremely high risk for Blackleg disease this year. Silages that contain soil from being cut when sword length is very short can also trigger cases. Caused by Clostridium chauvoei, this disease can present as lameness, a loss of appetite, rapid breathing, and very high temperatures when signs first appear. However, due to the rapid onset of the disease it is very common to just find fit, healthy animals dead at pasture. Calves are highest risk, especially those from 10 months to 2 years. When an outbreak occurs, and several animals are found dead, other animals may show areas of muscle swelling and the area will become cold as it loses blood supply to the affected area and the tissue dies off. Death will occur in 12-48 hrs in these cases.



Young animals are highest risk for Blackleg disease due to erupting teeth and wounds gained from fighting however it has also been linked to dirty injection sites, trauma from bulling and bruising from bad handling in any age animals. Due to the lack of warning and grazing of high-risk groups a vaccine protocol for young grazing cattle is the best way to avoid outbreaks on farm:

- Primary course of two injections 4 – 6 weeks apart covers the grazing season
- Annual booster every 12 months gives continued immunity
- Vaccinating cows 8 – 2 weeks prior to calving provides colostrum antibodies to cover the calf for 12 weeks
- Calves can be vaccinated from 3 months old ahead of their first grazing season
- Cattle can be vaccinated as early as 2 weeks old on high risk farms but need a second full primary course at 3 months

## Hypomagnesaemia/Grass Staggers

Grass growth has already been triggered by a very warm April and spells of wet weather, but Spring grazing is always high risk for Grass Staggers. Spring grass is very low in Magnesium and lower in fibre and often high in moisture and so passes through the gut quickly. This reduces the absorption of what little Magnesium is present. As cattle require daily dietary intake of Magnesium, and use a constant amount especially for milk production, it is important to control their intake in the face of changing forages. Those of you top dressing or mixing minerals into feeds that are fed indoors but at exposed feed faces will see the runoff effect of rain.

## Clinical Signs:

- Cows will twitch or be unsteady on their feet. Affected animals can often be hyper excitable/sensitive to stimulation which makes them dangerous to handle, so please take care
- Frothing around the mouth, exaggerated blinking and teeth grinding can also be seen
- Clinical signs in acute cases can progress quickly and often



the animal will just be found as a 'sudden death' – this may be linked time wise to peak yield or bulling activity

#### Management:

- Ruminants cannot store magnesium and rely on daily dietary intake:
  - o 60g/cow/day of calcined magnesite or Cal Mag needs to be given orally somewhere in the diet either in a concentrate feed, in a TMR ration or in water
  - o As it can be very bitter it is vital to dose correctly and mix well into rations
- When adding Magnesium to water sources:
  - o No other water source must be available
  - o If the grazing is very wet, uptake of water from troughs may be low so increase the dose
  - o Do not let magnesium chloride accumulate in the bottom of troughs as it will stop cows drinking completely. Clean troughs often when treated with Magnesium.
- Start using magnesium well before grazing. Cows do not store Magnesium well, so a "run-up" access period is required to ensure no cases straight after turnout
- 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 mineral blocks as there can be a huge variation in how much individual cows use them, especially with dominant behaviours and bullying. This leaves cows still at risk of staggers
- Avoid Potash application onto grazing pastures in the spring as this depresses the level of Magnesium 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 a stress event that triggers disease. For most stock this will be adverse weather whilst out grazing but could also be events such as weaning calves for beef animals, bulling for spring block calving herds or water restriction for any stock. Try and minimise stressors at the most dangerous times of the year for low Magnesium – spring and autumn.

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

##### Anti-Inflammatory Medicines (NSAIDs)

Over recent years we have seen a major increase in the use of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSADs) in all our food producing animals. They provide improved welfare and faster recovery times for disease such as mastitis, lameness, and pneumonia to highlight just a few. We have recently acquired a **Flunixin** injectable product back into pharmacy after a break in availability, in the form of **Allevinix**. This is a very useful product that can be given both into the muscle or into the vein.



**Dose:** 2ml/50kg IM or IV daily for 1 to 3 days

**Milk Withdrawal:** 24 hrs (IV route), 36 hrs (IM route)

**Meat Withdrawal:** 10 days (IV route), 31 days (IM route)

**Speak to your vet about how to introduce Allevinix into your farm treatment protocols**

##### Covid 19 Update

As the Covid-19 pandemic and public movement restrictions continue, the farm team are coping well and the supply of medicines is stable.

Please continue to support us in our social distancing but keeping a 2m distance on farm. We are still receiving orders every other day so please allow plenty of notice for medicine collections and delivery on farm visits.

We ask that farms that are having to undergo a period of self-isolation due to disease please inform us prior to any visits to allow for a risk assessment to be done and liaise with the office regards an extension to any upcoming TB tests. Thank you for all your efforts to support the food chain and stay safe.

