



THE
WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP

FARM NEWSLETTER MAY 2021



Grass Staggers – A Reminder

As we are experiencing nearly every type of weather in the course of each day including hail, rain and sun, grass growth is starting with the rising soil temperature but with high levels of moisture, grazing is extremely high risk for Grass Staggers or Hypomagnesaemia. We are also seeing Hypocalcaemia or Milk fever in later lactation cows where yield is not supported by this poor grass and rapid gut transit time. Do not rule out milk fever just because the cow isn't freshly calved – it can happen at peak yield and beyond.

Cattle require a daily dietary intake of Magnesium and use up a constant amount especially for milk production and oestrus activity. Check that cows are being supplemented with at least 60g/cow/day of calcined magnesite or Cal Mag. If supplemented in water troughs, restrict access to only treated tanks and higher doses will be required when grazing is very wet.

Flies – Plan to reduce the nuisance

As the sunnier weather arrives with initial silage cuts being mowed, the mass hatch of nuisance flies will not be far away. When the weather heats up, the combination of warmer weather and flies start to have a significant impact on livestock productivity due to reduced dry matter intakes, crowding in cooler areas of sheds and under trees and increased water intakes to regulate body temperature.

Livestock farms provide a mass of breeding environments for nuisance fly populations to increase. Muck heaps, slurry lagoons and stagnant water all provide the ideal environment for flies to breed including face, horn, head, stable and horse flies. All these species of fly then irritate livestock, bite and carry infection around our livestock often transmitting faecal bacteria into eyes and open wounds. Unfortunately, cases of summer mastitis in heifers and new forest eye disease in calves and cows are all extremely common and costly. Another annoying finding is the false identification of bulling activity in herds using tail paint or scratch cards. Constant tail swishing will create a convincing representation of bulling. Due to the constant irritation and associated diseases, nuisance flies can quickly become a welfare issue on farms.



The best way to reduce the costly impact of flies from associated diseases and reduced production is to:

- Use insect repellents/tags where possible to deter flies away from cattle
 - o Using repellents BEFORE a significant burden of flies is far more effective than waiting for flies to be a nuisance. We often see poor product response when they are applied too late into the fly season
- Fans in sheds will keep good air flow rates which not only help to keep temperatures below the metabolic heat stress levels for cows but will reduce fly activity

- Fine spray water systems in collecting yards and parlours often help to deter flies and reduce crowding in already warm sheds
- Manage the breeding environment to reduce the amount of flies around on farm

When selecting a product to apply to cows and calves, ensure it covers all the fly types of concern on your farm and that it has an achievable application frequency. Fly Ear Tags can also be useful if you have wooded areas or significant New Forest Eye problems. We increasingly hear reports of fly products not being as effective or lasting as long as stated and whilst resistance is developing amongst fly populations it is also vital to follow application guides very closely including the area of application on animals, dose and timing. It is also worth avoiding jobs such as castrates and dehornings in high-risk times for fly strike.

Managing the fly breeding environment is the most important factor to reduce the overall farm challenge to allow repellent treatments to work effectively. Moving muck heaps as far away from housed cattle and cow tracks out to fields will reduce the amount of fly interaction with cattle. Frequently cleaning out sheds also helps to remove the hatching environment away from cattle.

Clover friendly flies can also be used to reduce the fly population on farms. We are very excited to be using these two native species of parasitic wasp (they don't sting) that target all of the nuisance fly larvae whilst not harming pollinating species. We distribute the wasp larvae around the breeding environment on farms such as sheds, muck heaps and the edges of cow tracks. The wasps then hatch out and lay their eggs inside nuisance fly pupae and feed on the contents. This dramatically reduces the amount of flies hatching in a completely sustainable, natural way that is also compatible for organic standards. As the wasps do not bother cows or people, farms can continue to use hanging fly tapes and cow based repellent products whilst the wasps get established.



To get a handle on fly control this summer speak to us about your product choice and adding in Clover flies to your farm protocol. Don't forget our Vet Tech service includes fly product application, dehorning and vaccinating any animals ahead of summer turnout and Clover fly farm treatments.

Vaccination Reminder – Leptospirosis

A significant cause of abortion, milk drop and poor conception rate, it is key to remember to booster herd Lepto vaccination.

Ensure heifers receive a full starter course of:

- 2 doses 4-6 weeks apart prior to turnout

Order your vaccine today – ask about our vet tech vaccination service if you need help getting vaccinations done on time.

Training Courses

Want to start DIY AI or expand your existing AI team?

DEFRA approved AI Course

Please speak to the office to register for a place on the course today

largeanimal@woodvet.co.uk / 01452 543 999

Reminder of New Bank Details

For those of you who kindly send your payments to us by BACS, please be advised that our bank details have now changed. Please kindly pass on these new details to the person in charge of sending payments. Please see below the new details with immediate effect:

Bank: Natwest **Account Name:** Wood Vet Group **Account Number:** 55248454 **Sort Code:** 60-60-05