THE WOOD VETERINARY GROUP

After the driest summer and warmest start to autumn for a long time, the long-awaited rain and colder weather has now arrived, and thoughts must turn to housing preparation and all the jobs we can do to ease this transition. With a shortage of forages, especially having fed hard over the late summer, most farms will be looking to keep cattle grazing for as long as possible into the winter months. However, as always, the weather will dictate when cattle ultimately must come inside. As such, it always pays to be prepared with sheds cleaned and readied for housing. Clipping backs can be very rewarding ahead of housing or for finishing cattle to reduce the sweating and subsequent pneumonia. Another job that is usefully done ahead of housing is herd vaccinations.

Vaccinations

Housing offers an ideal opportunity to vaccinate cattle without adding in an extra handling event or stress whilst utilising the same labour. It is also a great time to boost immunity ahead of the high-risk period caused by increasing stocking density and mixing age groups at housing. All vaccines have a lag phase between the injection of the vaccine and full immunity being established and these differ between each vaccine type. There are different vaccines available with a range of properties and so it is important to decide which regime is best for your farm.

IBR

Bovilis IBR marker Live – Single vaccination intranasally or intramuscularly

- The vaccine gives 6-month cover against Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis – a disease that still has devastating effects on adult cattle and young stock alike. (It also has a licence to be given 12 monthly once a cow has had the first two doses given 6 months apart – not always easy to keep track of but worth it long term. Just vaccinate heifers 6 months prior to the annual herd booster)
- Use the vaccine in the autumn period before housing and weather conditions which are more likely to produce disease
- Give vaccine intranasally under 3 months of age or older cattle in the face of an outbreak – slows spread of disease through a herd
- Give vaccine in the muscle for animals over 3 months old

BVD

1) **Bovela** – Single dose starter course

This vaccine contains two strains of BVD, one of which is European – very useful if you import cattle.

- 12 months cover from a single injection
- Heifers must be vaccinated three weeks before full cover is required i.e. 3 weeks or more prior to first service

2) **Bovilis BVD** – Three dose starter course

It should be given before the start of breeding to ensure the pregnancy is protected. Given that most herds calve all year round the best advice is: -

- Youngstock should be fully vaccinated at least 4 weeks before being bred. Two injections 4-6 weeks apart as the full starter course followed by a 6 month booster – 12 month boosters from then on.
- Boost the adult herd with a single injection annually – one year max. after their starter course

Ellie our VetTech has been working hard to make a vaccine calendar so she can remind farms when they need to do their annual doses. She can also come along and administer the vaccines for you too!

Parasites at Housing

Housing also offers the ideal time to target known internal and external parasites including fluke by manipulating normal parasitic lifecycles once animals are no longer grazing.

When cattle have been out grazing, they can come into the housing period with large parasite burden of worms, fluke or both. Wet pastures are high risk for fluke environment, but it is not always obvious what burden animals are carrying. Whilst wormer products often have an extended action and give some cover against lice (Macrocyclic lactone wormers i.e. Avermectin types), fluke products have no persistence (working only on that day) and so timing is key.

- Use wormers at the start of housing to remove gastrointestinal worms giving maximum benefit to growth rates and lice.
- Do not use worm and fluke combination products at housing as one of the products is being used at completely the wrong time, wasting money and risking major disease impacts.

As you can see from the table below, you need to wait a number of weeks after housing before treating for fluke to ensure that it removes all of the life stages i.e. wait for all fluke to be the minimum age of kill according to the active ingredient of the product you are using. Correct product timing stops adult fluke being overwintered in the liver causing chronic damage. When fluke are overwintered they mature into adults and are ready to shed masses of eggs onto pasture in the spring. By preventing this maturation of fluke during housing it reduces the fluke risk for the following grazing season.
Dairy units are limited to using products within the dry period due to lengthy milk withdrawals but there are ways to target the peak fluke burden with correct product selection.
Please speak to us about product selection for exact cases but use the below table of active ingredients for a starting guide:

Active Ingredient		Minimum Age of Fluke Killed
Triclabendazole	(Oral)	2 weeks
Triclabendazole	(Pour On)	6-8 weeks
Closantel	(Injection/Pour On)	7 weeks
Nitroxynil	(Injection)	8 weeks
Albendazole Clorsulon Oxyclosanide	(Oral) (Injection) (Oral)	10 weeks

Avian Influenza

Unfortunately, the Avian Influenza outbreak starting in October 2021 never successfully came under control and we are now seeing a rapid and widespread rise in cases again. This is of course contributed to by the increase of poultry ready for Christmas and normal migratory patterns. Whilst our area hasn't been hit yet it is merely a case of when not if. As such we have been under a Protection Order since mid-October requiring additional disinfection and restriction of wild bird access to domestic poultry and feeds.

However as of Monday 7th November 00:01, mandatory housing measures are being introduced for all poultry and captive birds across England. This housing measure legally requires all bird keepers to keep their birds indoors regardless of type and size of flocks. Keep up to date with the latest advice and guidance on https://www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu

Wood Vets Farm Team @woodvetsfarmteam