



THE  
WOOD  
VETERINARY  
GROUP

# FARM NEWSLETTER JUNE 2023



## Teen Pregnancies and Castrations

Young heifers that accidentally get pregnant can be costly, detrimental to genetic improvement and often fatal for the heifer if they go undetected.



Markets impose heavy fines for animals that are sold as stores and are found to be pregnant, but it is just as costly when it is a homebred replacement heifer or fat animal on a high energy ration. These animals often require a caesarean section due to the poor development of their pelvic canal and the calf is often not viable or is a fairly poor specimen. The heifer's growth is nearly always stunted by the pregnancy, and they never seem to have much milk for their calf either so if it's alive then you waste hours bottle feeding it.

There are two sides to every story and in this case both the adult stock bull and young un-castrated or rig bull calves can be to blame. Heifers can, depending a little upon breed and weight, happily **conceive a pregnancy as young as 5 months old**. Trust us, we've done the caesareans!



When misalliances are identified we can either abort pregnancies early on or induce heifers to calve early to keep the foetus size to a minimum – whilst this reduces the viability of the calf it is far better than damaging the heifer. In the last few weeks pre-calving, the injections have less impact so detection is key. The earlier a pregnancy is removed the better:

1. Heifers can be injected with a prostaglandin (PG) if pregnant less than 100 days – ideally pregnancies found and removed at 5-6 weeks post service cause the least impact on the heifer
2. Heifers in calf more than 100 days need a course of corticosteroid injections – most animals respond in 36 hours to the first injection

## How can we prevent this?

### Stock Bulls

- Tight removal of the stock bull after breeding the cows is essential. Most of you are achieving tight 8-10 week calving blocks - leaving the bull in after calves are 4 months old is just asking for trouble

### Bull calves

- Bull calves become sexually mature very early and so need to be castrated before 6 months of age to prevent them serving as well as reducing the risks of castrating them
- **There is no difference in the age that castration is done on weight at weaning or final kill weight but...**
- The 'check' that occurs from castration is far less if done by rubber ring under 7 days old (trained member of staff and with good clean technique – make sure there are two testicles beyond the ring). If possible, this can be done within 24 hrs of birth at tagging to make it a simple and quick procedure.
- The next best option is open castration by vet under 3 months of age
- The abattoirs are pushing most customers for castrated males now and there is very little premium to be had for bull beef anymore



## Heifers

- If bull calves have been missed or your stock bull is Houdini then the earlier we sort the situation the better
- We can **inject heifers 14 days after removal from the bull** if you know about an 'escape' but not before. Heifers will come on bulling again so need to be well away from potential males
- If there is any chance of later pregnancies, heifers need to be scanned first and then the appropriate treatment selected depending upon the age of the pregnancy.

## Nuisance Fly Control

Not applied your fly repellent yet? With warm and wet spells inbound fly burdens are set to rocket. By applying repellent products now be it a pour on or ear tag, it will reduce the burden of flies that hatch on your farm. The earlier the product is applied the less flies will complete their breeding cycle.

Don't forget it needs to be a comprehensive all-round approach – or battle depending on how mad they drive you:

- Fly tapes and traps help to reduce irritation of people when milking etc. but don't change the population significantly
- 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
- Manage the breeding environment to reduce the number of flies around on farm. Move muck heaps as far from cattle grazing or housed as possible
- Apply Clover Friendly flies around hatching areas that cannot be moved – they disrupt the hatching cycle of nuisance flies and establish their own natural population on your farm for subsequent years



**Speak to us about how best to reduce nuisance fly issues on your farm this summer. Don't forget our Vet Tech service also includes fly repellent application, dehorning and vaccinating any animals ahead of summer turnout as well as Clover fly farm management**

## TBAS Visits

Right now most of you are flat out with silage and field work now that it is finally dry enough but soon enough the rain may well come in and this will provide an opportunity to review and take stock. Using this time to review your TB defences both physically and within your business strategy will help the farm to head into the autumn well prepared. Often these visits highlight some small changes to farm layout, structure, or daily routine that, when adjusted can produce significant improvements in TB infection rates in the herd's future. It also can highlight where another strategy can reduce the stress that comes with TB testing and results day.



Contact the office today to book in your initial free visit – set aside a couple of hours at least to really have a good look around the farm and discuss your concerns and ideas

Georgia Thresh has joined the team as an experienced farm vet over the summer and is very much looking forward to meeting you all. She is new to Gloucestershire as well as Woods so please give her a warm welcome to the area.



Wood Vets Farm Team



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