



THE
WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP

FARM NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2023

New Forest Eye Disease (NFD)

With a sporadic and delayed summer we are seeing big peaks in fly burdens and as a result it has been a difficult year for fly related diseases. A major cattle disease caused by flies is New Forest Eye Disease. Also known as Infectious Bovine Keratoconjunctivitis, it is a bacterial infection of the outer layer of the cornea. It is caused by *Moraxella bovis* and is spread by flies but also by direct contact between animals. It produces a painful and aggressive ulcer on the surface of the eye.



The infection produces:

- Excessive tear production causing staining of the side of the face. This attracts yet more flies
- Partial or full closing of the eye due to pain. They will seek out shade to get out of the bright sunlight which exacerbates the pain
- A white or cloudy spot on the surface of the eye or in severe cases a hole on the eye surface
- Apparent blindness or unwillingness to move unless in a group of cattle

Treatment is straightforward and very effective if done in the early stages of the disease:

- Topical ophthalmic ointments - usually 2 treatments 48 hours apart (Orbenin/Opticlox ointment)
- NSAID injection (anti-inflammatory product such as Metacam or Ketofen dependent on milk withdrawal requirement) to reduce pain and tear production and speed up healing
- Antibiotic injections can be used depending on the severity but speak to us about each case

The healing process looks a lot worse before it looks better. A normal cornea is clear and has no blood vessels in it, so for healing to occur blood capillaries must grow in from the edge of the cornea and this makes the surface of the eye look angry and bright red with a red ring around the eye (see picture). Eventually these vessels start to regress and form a ring around a central white scar. The following signs indicate the eye is healing: Tear production reduces or ceases, eye opens fully, a red ring present.

If treatment is delayed, then the eye may never fully heal and leave the animal with varying degrees of visual impairment or complete blindness. If the surface of the eye ruptures then it will need the eye to be removed as it can lead to fatal meningitis due to the short connection between the eye and the brain. Any rapid swelling/craters also need to be seen as they can be from injuries or cancerous growths not just NFD.

It is very important to continue repeating fly repellent products will into September and avoid grazing paddocks near stagnant water or muck heaps. If you have struggled with NFE, summer mastitis and poor performance from fly worrying then chat to us about a more comprehensive approach to flies for 2024 as it is never too early to start looking after your future.

MEDICINES UPDATE -

RCVS Changes

You may have seen some press relating to the prescription and dispensing of certain medication types and how it is changing in September relating especially to Antibiotics. We will be releasing the fine details of



how these changes will affect different farms and what adjustments will occur in the coming weeks. It is important to protect the antibiotics and anthelmintics we have available to us, and this means an industry wide effort to use less product but also use it in the right dose, frequency and route each time every time.

LA vs Daily Doses

We often have conversations about the right antibiotics or cases where animals don't seem to have responded to treatment but upon further discussion the antibiotic used, or the regime was what caused a failure of treatment. One of the commonest of these is daily vs LA. Most antibiotics require daily administration for a minimum of 3 days. It is extremely important that where it states 3 days, we administer at least 3 daily doses to avoid bacterial resistance and insufficient antibiotic levels to cure the infection. Where LA is in the name it means a single dose is correct: examples such as Alamycin LA, Trymox LA or Engemycin 10% using the Persistent Action or PA dose. All of the information required to know how much to give and how often is printed on the label and in the data sheet, so you don't have to remember.

New Farm Team Members

Roma Wyllie

We are really pleased that Roma is joining us as this year's new graduate farm vet in the middle of this month. Roma qualified from the University of Liverpool this summer. Having grown up with pedigree beef she has a real passion for production animal welfare and performance and will be a brilliant addition to the team. She is relocating to Gloucestershire so be sure to welcome her to the area and to woods when you see her on farm in the coming weeks.



Natalie Hopkins

We also welcome onboard Nat as the newest member of our Approved TB Tester team. Nat is local to the area and is well used to livestock and TB testing already. She will be out training on tests with our vets from the middle of September so please give her a warm welcome to the TB team.



Calf Housing Grant

The majority of farms would still benefit from bespoke calf and youngstock housing to maximise health and welfare and minimise labour and disease incidence – and some fantastic news is there is a new round of the Farming Transformation Fund for England to support exactly this:

English Pathway Calf Housing

- Minimum £15,000 up to £500,000 per business at 40% of costs incurred
- See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/calf-housing-for-health-and-welfare-2023> more information
- Applications that are supported by an Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (AHWP) report from us recommending new buildings should be more successful

Applications for the AHWP are also open again to discuss endemic disease (BVD), reducing medicine usage and health and welfare. Obviously improved environment is one of the cornerstones of reducing disease incidence alongside other management changes and biosecurity.

Making use of these grants will reduce the economic burden of projects that ultimately need to be done to make farming businesses sustainable so spend a bit of time looking into getting paperwork submitted.



Wood Vets Farm Team



@woodvetsfarmteam