



THE
WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP

FARM NEWSLETTER MAY 2024

Spray, Tag or Wasp – it's time to pick your weapon

Whilst the sun has only just begun to show a consistent presence in the sky, soil temperatures are rocketing. This is of course the ideal situation for all those germinating crops and grass growth, but it also means the flies are imminent.

Why act now?

Adult flies that have overwintered will be emerging from hibernation ready to start mass populating your farms all over again. Flies live for 15-25 days with the females laying hundreds of eggs per day by 12 days of age. This means that every 12 days the population of flies jumps massively with each fly capable of laying 500 viable eggs. This is often why we see a mass arrival of nuisance flies. Now is the time to be discussing your fly prevention of choice. By acting now when the number of adults is low and targeting all parts of the life cycle we can stop this year from being a bad fly year on your farm.

Speak to us about pour on's, ear tags which suit woodland and grazing stock and Clover Friendly Flies and which choice will work best for you. Fly tapes will tell you how many flies are in the shed or parlour but won't make much of an impact on overall fly population.



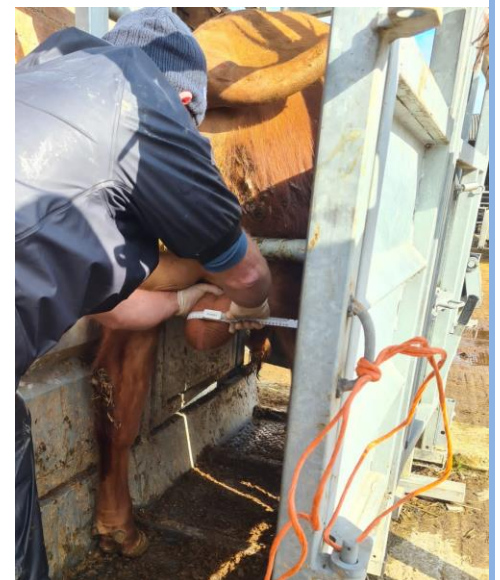
Clover Friendly flies can be started throughout the season but the sooner the better so get in touch to discuss a farm parasite plan

Beef Pre-Breed Decisions

A fully fertile bull run with 40-50 cows should achieve an average pregnancy rate to each service of 60%. This would result in 94% of cows being pregnant in a 9-week block. However, a sub-fertile bull that is achieving only a 40% pregnancy rate to each service, would result in only 78% of cows being pregnant in 9 weeks. Unfortunately, whilst it is rare to see full infertility, when tested over 30% of bulls are found to be sub-fertile from either poor sperm quality or volume.

As beef suckler units measure production success based on kilos of beef weaned per number of cows put to the bull it is vital that both the cows and bulls are performing at peak levels. Reduced fertility will often result in either an extended calving block, with associated costs and labour issues or increased barren rates for that year. Any inflammatory processes e.g. lameness or a fever can damage sperm leading to a sub-fertile bull. Establishing breeding soundness prior to the season will ensure the greatest chance of success.

We recommend having all bulls tested, 6-10 weeks prior to the start of the service period every year. This allows time for bulls to be treated/recover from any issues and re-tested as the whole cycle of sperm production can take up to 60 days. Or worst-case scenario for any replacement bulls to be sourced and quarantined. Younger, new, and older bulls are especially high risk for performance issues so should be prioritised for checking. When purchasing new bulls, it is well worth investing in a fertility examination, but best practice is to test all bulls prior to every season.



A breeding soundness exam includes checking:

- Feet, legs, and locomotion (fundamental for service)
- Body condition score (aim for 3 - 3.5)
- Health treatments are up to date (vaccinations, blood samples for new purchases/accreditation, parasite control)
- Internal and external sexual organs (including testicle size/consistency)
- Semen quality (volume, density, motility and abnormalities). These parameters are assessed both on farm looking at progressive motility and using stained smears to look at sperm counts and abnormalities



Buying a new bull is a big investment and he needs to stay fit and fertile for at least 6 years to be cost effective. This allows him to pass on the genetic traits he was picked for and produce healthy, viable calves. Therefore, we need to make sure we always look after our bulls to get the best return. A breeding soundness exam will help identify issues early on as well as using information such as EBVs to select for desirable traits.

Early PD sessions at 4-6 weeks into the service window are also invaluable to highlight issues early on while some salvage procedures can be implemented. By scanning cows and heifers early in the breeding block we can make sure we are getting expected pregnancy rates and if needs be remove pregnant animals to reduce the challenge left for the last part of the block. We can also measure heifer's pelvic area at 13 months of age to identify those that are better suited to breeding, reducing the likely risk of caesareans and calving difficulty. If you are interested in either breeding soundness services, speak to us at the practice.

Welcome Back Louise

After a flurry of new and returning faces we have one more familiar face back at WVG. Louise has been completing her keeping in touch days with the team and out with some of you on farm over the last few weeks. Louise is back at work after her maternity leave a little later this month and she can't wait to catch up with you all, maybe over some PDs, pelvic measuring or a bull fertility exam or two.



COW SIGNALS[®] Diamond course – 11th June 2024 TRAINING COMPANY

Join us on 11th June for the first of the **CowSignals**[®] training courses. This course is ideally suited to every level of herdsman with even very experienced farmers finding it changes the way they can understand their cows. The course, lead by Andrew Jones will include a theory session including the **CowSignals**[®] founding techniques, followed by a practical farm walk to reinforce the new skills acquired to apply on your farms with your cows.

By kind permission of the Burcher family, this course will be held at:

Puckpool farm, High Street, Arlingham, GL2 7JN

Thursday 11th June

10am - 4pm with lunch provided

Invites to follow – Please ring 01452 543 999 or email farmteam@woodvet.co.uk to book your place



Wood Vets Farm Team



@woodvetsfarmteam