THE WOOD VETERINARY GROUP

With a turbulent time both with weather and politics the autumn has felt rather harder than normal. The weather will dictate when cattle ultimately must come inside to avoid excessive damage to the grazing platform. As such, it always pays to be prepared with sheds cleaned and readied for housing. Clipping backs in young and fat cattle can be very rewarding ahead of housing or for finishing cattle to reduce the sweating and subsequent pneumonia. Another job that is usefully done now 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 in 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
- In flying herds or those with increased risks from new cattle or neighbouring farms we recommend staying at 6m boosters to avoid outbreaks

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!

Wire Disease (Traumatic reticulopericarditis)

We have recently seen a flurry of suspect 'Wire' diseases around the practice and one case in an adult dairy cow that was of particular interest. After failing to respond to treatment, a post-mortem was performed which revealed pericarditis (infection of the sac surrounding the heart) and secondary pneumonia. So, what exactly is this condition and how can we help prevent it?

Traumatic reticulopericarditis (also known as 'wire' or 'hardware' disease) is a condition seen in cattle who inadvertently ingest pieces of metal. Common causes include using tyres on silage clamps where, over time, the tyres degrade and fragments of metal fall into the silage. We can also see increased issues when there has been building work on farm or repairs that leave metal debris around. Cows are non-selective eaters and have very insensitive lips- so they don't realise what they are eating! These sharp fragments of metal enter the reticulum and can penetrate the wall to make their way into other structures such as the heart. This can lead to localised infections or a more generalised peritonitis.

Clinical signs commonly include
- insidious drop in milk yield
- dullness
- inappetence
- Affected cows have moderate to severe abdominal pain and are often seen standing with their back 'arched' and move stiffly and reluctantly
- A raised temperature, bloat and dehydration can also occur
- Breathing is often shallow and rapid
- If a secondary infection of the heart occurs, heart rate and rhythm will also be altered

As vets we have specific signs and 'reactions' we look for on clinical exam that can, along with history, give us a presumptive diagnosis of wire disease. Often the only way to definitively diagnose wire is by post-mortem which means we often treat based on clinical suspicion alone…

Treatment is usually supportive and includes pain relief (NSAIDS), antibiotics and fluids. We can administer a magnet bolus into the rumen in the hope to hold the wire in situ and prevent it causing further damage. Unfortunately, in many cases where wire has resulted in a clinically sick animal, a magnet is too late, and the wire has already gone 'too far'.

For this reason, we tend to recommend magnet blousing to pre-calving heifers going forward to try and prevent future cases. In certain case-by-case bases, rumenotomy can also be performed to try and retrieve the wire but this is not always successful. Routine blousing of the adult herd is another job that will be easier with cattle now housed.

Avoiding the use of tyres on silage is advised where possible, consider the use of sand bags instead. If tyres are still in use make sure to audit them regularly and remove them as soon as wear is evident. Nowadays, most forage harvesters and TMR feeders will have metal detectors fitted which is an added layer of protection but it is amazing what they collect and they will only remove items nearby meaning significant amounts can still get past into TMR.

Keep vigilant for cases of wire disease in your herd. Please get in touch if you have concerns and want some more advice.

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