



September 2018

## Welcome

to the autumn newsletter, which marks the end of our first year of trading. I had hoped that for the first time this year I'd not be talking about the weather, but the last 12 months seems to be the gift that keeps giving in that respect. The drought has certainly created some veterinary challenges this year ranging from increased parasite challenge on stock due to low grazing to the physical issues for us of PDing hundreds of cows in full waterproof and 35°C heat!

Now the heat has cooled off things have eased but many have been left with significant feed deficits. Whilst I don't think anyone is doing cartwheels currently, it is a big relief that all the clients seem to have secured enough forage for the winter. With a fair autumn we may even ease that situation further.



### BVD Funding announced

Defra has announced a new package of funding aimed to support farms with BVD eradication. Funding includes some subsidisation toward the cost of both testing and consultancy time. We'll be contacting you all in the coming weeks but if you want more info on the BVD stamp it out scheme speak to Dan or Dave

But enough about the weather! In this month's newsletter we turn our attention to the second big infectious disease, BVD. With the launch of a new national campaign targeted at BVD eradication Dan discusses some key topics in controlling this disease. Alongside our regular features there's also the next part of our youngstock series focusing on feeding young calves.

## BVD – old problem, new ideas

The launch last month of a new initiative to tackle BVD in England has brought this old and familiar adversary back into focus. So why all the interest?

Whilst BVD will be familiar to many of us as part of the annual grind of vaccinations, few probably have first hand experience of this disease or its impact in herds. Rewind the clock 20 years, however, horror stories of mass abortions and whole groups of heifers dying from mucosal disease were not uncommon.

Much of that loss of familiarity is due to the success of vaccination programs. With good herd protection the more devastating impacts of BVD have been controlled but that doesn't mean this disease has gone away. In fact the ability to persist within herds has always been one of BVD's talents.

Whilst BVD, like many diseases, is transmitted cow to cow the unusual aspect to this disease is what happens when cows are infected while in calf. If a cow that is not immune to BVD is infected in early pregnancy the virus passes to the fetus and produces what is called a per-

sistently infected (PI) calf. These animals carry the virus and shed it everyday of their life whilst their immune system never recognises it as foreign. At some point in life they enter an active stage of the disease where the virus begins to attack them and produces mucosal disease, a rapidly fatal and untreatable condition. Although the death of a PI is costly, it pales into insignificance in comparison to the damage these animals can do to the herd in the meantime.

Vaccination has proved an extremely effective tool in controlling BVD for many years but it never fully eliminates the cost of this disease. Whilst these programs are very successful at controlling fertility losses, ongoing presence of BVD in a group will lead to immunosuppression and increased levels of disease. With growing concern of antimicrobial use in livestock it should come as little surprise that BVD eradication has come back into focus.

With simple strategies to identify PIs, like tag and test technology, it is very straightforward to remove this reservoir from the herd. Used hand in hand with good biosecurity and vaccination eradicating the disease is very definitely achievable

What's more England is hardly at the forefront here, with several European countries having already eradicated the dis-

ease and some of our home nations already well engaged in this process, perhaps it is time to have another look at our BVD strategies?



**SUPPORTER**



## Calf health – Growing strong healthy calves

In our last article we concentrated on colostrum management and forming solid foundations for healthy calves. With those foundations set the next challenge becomes taking the first steps forward and getting the calves growing. So what should we feed and how much should we feed them?

The first decision is really whole milk or powder. Whilst there is no doubt that whole milk is the most natural and adapted feed for the calf, it is not without its issues. Pivotal considerations include consistency, which may vary day to day, cleanliness and the risk of disease transmission, particularly Johne's disease.

and targets.

There are however some good rules of thumb to remember.

To start with think about the natural constituents of your own cow's milk. The composition of most breeds milk and the calf's needs are generally well linked. Holstein calves tend to need a higher protein but leaner fat content, while channel island breeds actively need higher fat levels.

How much to feed really comes down to calf size and target growth rate.

As a minimum we should be aiming to double birth weight by weaning. It is also worth noting that calves will never have higher feed

conversion efficiency and that growth rate at this age dictates lifetime milk production.

Finally, the calf stomach is only adapted to digest milk at this age. Whilst we introduce water and creep immediately to begin rumen development, very little of this will be digested in the initial weeks because the stomach cannot effi-



cient process plant-based proteins. This is relevant when reviewing milk powders as higher proportions of milk constituents will likely produce better results whilst increased levels of cheap wheat may be a false economy.

Even armed with this information choosing the right solution can be tricky. Fortunately, AHDB produce an excellent modelling tool which allows you to plug in the constituents of different milk powders and assess the likely daily live weight gains they will deliver. Analysing the relative quantities of different powders that will be needed to achieve target gains can be quite revealing, sometimes making budget powders look quite expensive!

Last, but not least, remember to think about the temperature outside. In cold weather energy demands rise significantly so we need to provide calves additional feed to meet their needs once the temperature falls below 15°C.



Economically it is also often cheaper to sell good milk and buy in a high-quality powder.

All these factors mean that increasingly dairy farmers use milk powder, with almost 60% of now choosing this option for rearing calves. But which powder is the best option? Selecting the right milk powder really come down to your individual system





## UK Dairy Day 2018

It was another action packed day in Telford this week with what seemed like most of the dairy industry descending on the Telford convention centre. It's always great to catch up with both clients and old acquaintances. It's also a brilliant opportunity to see what's new in the industry and make new contacts

This year it was a particular privilege for us to be invited to contribute to the day's

knowledge stream, with Dave speaking on the use of data to drive herd performance and

Dan chairing the big debate on animal welfare.



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### Medicines update -

For once it's nice not to be reporting product supply problems! There is however plenty of changes to report.

First and foremost are the Red Tractor changes to farm antibiotic use. As has been reported before, the latest farm standards, which have now come into force, place increased restrictions on the use of the most critically important antibiotics to human health. Moving forward detailed lab testing will be required to support the use of antibiotics like Naxcel, Cephaguard, Cobactan and Marbocyl. This will undoubtedly cause concerns for some farmers but fortunately the work we've already done with most of you means we are well prepared for this move. Antimicrobial resistance is a serious concern and something as an industry we all have to face up to.

At Horizon our key focus has always been to reduce disease and minimise the need for antibiotic treatments but we fully support Red Tractor's move to curtail use of these most critical antibiotic classes and as a result we have taken the decision to stop stocking them.

The other big news this month is the launch of a new mastitis vaccine. Ubac is the first strep uberis vaccine and its development potentially offers in an new avenue for the control of this important mastitis pathogen. We're currently reviewing its effectiveness but if anyone wants more information speak to Dan