

## Seasons greetings!

Doesn't time fly – it's almost been a year since I've become part of Horizon. It has been great catching up with old friends and making new friends on the farms that I haven't worked with previously. I very much look forward to working with you over 2020.

In this issue we discuss a couple of topics. Firstly, following a spate of issues on farm, Dan has put together a timely guide to troubleshooting bactoscan problems. Also with a number of herds having recently invested in technology to help identify sick cows early there are some tips on how best to manage these cases.

Looking toward next year we will continue to proactively provide training such as 'Milksure' and 'Safe Handling of Medicines'. We will also be delivering 'Milksure top up' which are an annual requirement to retain accreditation of this important industry initiative. Additionally, we will be running several practical on-farm courses to cover key topics such as managing the sick cow, optimal calf rearing, and

best practice in parlour management. If you have specific training topics that you'd like us to help with, please let us know and we'll build a program to meet your needs.

Last but not least, all three of us would like to thank every one of our clients for their support over the past year. With this support the practice has gone from strength to strength and we aim to continue to develop ways in which we can better support you to drive your business' forward. Have a great Christmas and a prosperous 2020!



### Upcoming training courses

#### **29/1/20 – Sick cow management**

Ever been unsure what is wrong with a cow? Unsure how to identify health problems. This practical course will guide you through common health problems and how to manage them

#### **20/2/20 – Infectious disease control –**

As part of the BVD stamp it our campaign we are running another free meeting centring on the control of Johne's disease and BVD at herd level. This meeting also gives herds not yet enrolled in the scheme the opportunity to access funding for BVD control.

## Parlour Problems – Battling the bactoscan

Over the last few years there's been an increasing focus on milk quality by the processors, and an important component of your milk quality 'score' is the bactoscan result. Bactoscan problems are a common challenge on farms, and in this article Dan discusses some of the first things to consider when faced with a bactoscan count higher than you'd like.

A bactoscan result refers to the number of bacteria that are present in the bulk tank milk. So, a Bactoscan of '20' is actually 20,000 bacteria per millilitre of milk. However, this result does not tell us exactly what bacteria we are dealing with and so without further information we cannot pinpoint where they have come from or implement the most effective improvements. As such, a useful first step in solving a Bactoscan problem is identifying the type of bacteria we are dealing with by requesting further analysis of a bulk milk sample by the laboratory.

If we find a high Bactoscan is largely due to **Coliforms** (the E coli family) then usually the source of the problem is down to contamination in the milking parlour. These causes include inadequate pre-milking teat disinfection, poor teat skin condition, excessive num-

bers of 'kick-offs' during milking, or inappropriate muck management in the parlour.



**Thermoduric** bacteria are resistant to higher temperatures than most bacteria. If a bulk milk sample highlights a high thermoduric count the problem is due to poor plant cleaning - particularly where the water/cleaning fluid is not maintained at the correct temperature throughout the whole cleaning cycle. How often do we monitor the temperature at both the start and finish of the hot wash? Are we using the right temperature for the current choice of chemical? Some of you will be very aware that some processors are reporting and have penalty thresholds in place for thermoduric counts.

The other commonly seen group of bacteria are **Psychotrophs**. These bugs are also a sign of poor plant cleaning, although we also see an increase in Psychotrophs when the milk

is not being cooled quickly enough. In this case it is sensible to check your bulk tank and plate-cooler function, as well as checking that the correct amount of chemical (at the correct concentration and temperature) is being used. Of course, the wash chemical only works on the areas of the parlour that it contacts, so we often see Bactoscan problems in parlours where washing air injection is not sufficient to get good 'slug

formation' of chemical to circulate through all the pipework. Another common problem is insufficient wash volume – the wash volume usually being dictated solely by the size of the wash tank! Milk-stone build up may also lead to 'spikes' in Psychotrophs.

In some cases, all three types of bacteria may be high, suggesting more complex problems that may require more detailed investigation. However, all bactoscan problems will benefit for a methodical and logical approach to the investigation and determining which type of bacteria are involved is an important first step to fixing the problem.



## Managing sick cows

The level of success when managing sick cows depends on three key factors. Firstly, you need to understand what is wrong with the cow. Guess work rarely pays off but a methodical approach to examining the cow yields benefits.

Secondly, time is critical and the earlier treatment is instigated the better for both the cows welfare and prognosis. Finally, implementation of an appropriate treatment plan is vital. Unfortunately, the 'magic injection' that cures all ailments doesn't exist! Thankfully that is where we come in to set the right protocols on farm..

Nursing of sick cows is often underestimated but is critical to recovery. For most conditions pain management is a must and we are always pleased when clients contact us to discuss a case that anti-inflammatory medicines have already been administered.

The recovery environment is also important and the provision of a clean soft bed in a stocked dedicated sick area. This helps to minimise competition and stress on the sick animal. It should also be remembered that

these animals are often infectious, shedding bugs that could infect health stock. As such keeping them isolated, particularly from youngstock and calving cows, is a good idea.



Physiotherapy can also be useful in aiding animals to recovery mobility. To avoid "bed sores" and to encourage good peripheral blood circulation downer cows should be moved regularly.

Hip hoists are widely used, daily use can bruise the hip area. To get around this, more people are successfully using slings as an alternative.

The provision of feed and water sounds obvious however unless intakes meet the needs of the cow, lack of strength and dehydration will significantly reduce the chances of success. Remember that a sick cow won't

necessarily feel like or be able to go to the trough so we need to ensure that we take feed and water to her. Even healthy well hydrated cows require 60-100L water per day. To achieve this, pumping sick cows with water is often essential. It's also worthwhile using nutritional support products containing electrolytes and sources of energy if the feed intake of the individual is low.

To achieve all of this is not easy. So realistically if the appropriate level of nursing care is going to happen, it must be given high priority and staff must be provided with ample time. Infrastructure and equipment must also be appropriate to make life it achievable on a busy farm. For example, if the sick pen is in a shed with a low roof, lifting a downer is nigh on impossible.

In summary, prevention is always better than cure but despite our best efforts things do still go wrong. When they do being well set up with the right tools and mental attitude make an enormous difference to the likely outcome. The treatment of sick animals is very much a joined effort and we are always here to help be it through training, phone advice or a second opinion if you are really struggling.



## What else have we been up to this month

Autumn marks the anniversary of the practice's establishment and with it a number of annual client review meetings to ensure maximal return on animal health investments. Having been operating now for two years it's great to have herds at every level from those who joined us on day one and are really starting to see the return on investments through to those who have been with us around a year and are just beginning the process. It's also been exciting to welcome

some new clients to the practice over recent weeks.

On a more innovative front we've begun working with a couple of herds on selective mastitis therapy. Essentially a good number of mastitis cases, specifically those caused by bugs like e.Coli, are self limiting and do not benefit from antibiotics. The idea behind selective mastitis

therapy is to put in place protocols to support the cow while screening tests are performed. With growing interest in reducing antibiotic use on farm this approach may prove valuable to many herds.

Finally the autumn marks the new academic year so Dave has once more been in action lecturing at Harper Adams. It can't all be fun at university!



### Contact us -

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### Medicines update - It' was obviously too much to hope to go two consecutive

newsletters without news of medicine supply problems! Again the pharmaceutical industry has covered itself with glory with a number of notable products unavailable. The only one which we commonly use within the practice is Norodine. At present we have a small amount of stock left but have sourced an alternative, Duphatrim S, as a replacement. Roll on Brexit!

Following last years significant shortages of lepto vaccine we will be coordinating orders early this year to try and ensure everyone gets enough vaccine. We are not aware of any specific concerns with vaccine supply but we feel it is probably better to be safe than sorry.

Finally for those of you who use Resflor for calf pneumonia we have been trialing a new product called Xyleris. It contains the same antibiotic but in combination with meloxicam rather than flunixin to increase the duration of pain relief and symptomatic relief. Feedback has been very good so we will be discussing with relevant units adjusting treatment protocols.

