

**June 2017 Newsletter**



As I write, the wind is howling and it doesn't feel too much like summer! That said, the year is progressing and seasonally calving herds are preparing to put the bulls in. We are performing more pre-breeding checks each year on bulls with a surprising number of bulls being identified as infertile and sub-fertile. The consequences of an infertile bull are obvious but the consequences of a sub-fertile bull can be very costly. A protracted calving period will not only be frustrating in terms of time management but diseases such as scours will build over time, calves will be smaller at weaning and of mixed weights, there will also be fewer well grown replacement heifers to pick from. The bull testing procedure is fairly straightforward, we just need a crush with side access and somewhere with power and shelter for the microscope. Please give us a call to book in your bull.

A concentrated lambing period also has similar advantages. Using a vasectomised 'teaser' ram is a method of synchronising oestrus to give a peak lambing period over two and half weeks. It can also be used to encourage ewes to cycle a few weeks earlier than the normal breeding season. 'The chosen one' must be fit, healthy and virile, and ideally have served ewes before so he knows what he is doing as he will be expected to 'serve' them (without causing fertilisation.) The ewes must be away from sight and sound of any ram for 4-6 weeks prior to the teaser being introduced. Fertile rams should replace teasers approximately 2 weeks after the teasers were introduced and should be used at a ratio of 1 per 20-30 ewes. The cost of a ram vasectomy is £70.00 + VAT including all drugs and can be done at the surgery to avoid a visit charge. We recommend that the operation is carried out well in advance of when you plan to use the ram in case of any rare surgical complications. If you are interested in have a ram vasectomised then please call the Redhill Office.

During the summer months, heifers and dry cows are the most susceptible animals to summer mastitis ('August bag'). Flying insects are linked to the spread of the two main bacteria responsible for this, *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* and *Trueperella pyogenes*. It's important to note that once a quarter is infected, spread can occur to other quarters through transfer of infectious secretions. As with most cases of mastitis, you may notice a swollen and painful teat or quarter; affected animals are often lame or stiff-legged and can rapidly develop a depressed demeanour. There is a high possibility that the quarter will be lost entirely due to extensive and irreversible tissue damage and the animal may become systemically ill if left untreated due to the bacterial toxins, which can lead to death. Prompt treatment gives the best chance of preventing systemic illness and gives a chance of saving the quarter. In light of this, treatment usually involves systemic/injectable antibiotic treatment plus anti-inflammatories and regular stripping of the quarter to remove as much of the infected material as possible. Wearing disposable gloves whilst doing this is advisable to help prevent spread, as will isolating any affected animals if possible. Use of intra-mammary lactating cow tubes is frequently of questionable benefit in summer mastitis cases. The use of insecticide pour-on is fundamental in preventing outbreaks. Smothering teats in fly-repellents can also be useful.