

Newsletter August 2017



The autumn is on its way! Unfortunately with it comes the usual issues; this year we have encountered Lungworm (Husk) over a much longer period, with our first cases in the practice in May. We are now though heading into the main Lungworm season and as such all unvaccinated cattle are susceptible. Modern worming practices mean that it is now not uncommon to see outbreaks in adult cows; particularly with the advent of long acting worming preparations. If you see cattle coughing at grass especially when stimulated then the most likely cause is lungworm. It can take a week or so from the onset of coughing to finding larvae in the faeces so we do not always reach a definitive diagnosis but blood tests can also be useful. When treating severely affected cattle, care is needed as the rapid death of worms in the airways can lead to respiratory distress and sudden death. Ideally a wormer containing levamisole should be used as this initially paralyses the worms giving a more steady release of worms into the airways. If you are experiencing lungworm issues then it is extremely important to review your worming protocol for youngstock to help alleviate future issues. Affected stock will not thrive and fulfil their productive potential.

We continue to see TB breakdowns with alarming regularity. Some of which are affecting a large number of reactors; it is now not uncommon to have breakdowns in excess of thirty cattle. Whilst eliminating the source of infection is not always possible there are some precautions that can be implemented to help reduce the scale of an outbreak. Housed cattle represent a big risk as there are a large number of susceptible animals in a small area so one infected visitor (badger) has the ability to come into contact with a large number of cattle whereas at pasture, contact will be more of a chance occurrence. Protecting your livestock by using sheeted gates to ground level is always a sensible step as well as ensuring feed stores are secure and not attracting badgers to your farm and allowing them to survive and thrive. If you have latrines and setts in your fields then consider restricting cattle access, latrines are particularly risky as TB bacteria concentrate in the urine and faeces of the badger. Waste milk feeding to calves is also a very risky practice. We have seen several instances where large numbers of calves have been fed infected milk from a cow resulting in horrific consequences. A pasteuriser will reduce this risk significantly as well as reducing risk of Johne's disease spread and enhancing calf growth rates. If you are buying cattle and are currently TB free then consider the history of the herd that you are buying from. I realise that there is perhaps a better solution to TB control but there are some simple steps that can help your individual situation and reduce the impact of TB if it does arrive at your door. The level of current TB breakdowns means that our diary is very busy and so we ask that you can organise your test in sufficient time to allow flexibility.

Lame sheep are often an on-going problem on many sheep farms. We are pleased to hear of the licensing of Zactran injection for sheep use. This product has been used for a while off license but prescribing is now a little easier. We would recommend using a long acting Alamycin injection as 1st line treatment for foot-rot and CODD. We would reserve Zactran as a second line treatment. Where both of these fail to cure, we would recommend that the sheep is selected for culling. Sheep affected with lameness should ideally be isolated from the flock to help prevent spread to the others in the group. It will also allow you to better assess recovery.

Lets hope the weather improves so that everyone can crack on with the harvest!