Daleside Veterinary Group

FARM NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2023

Winter feeding

As we prepare for over-winter housing, it is crucial that we formulate and feed the optimum diet for cow health. Grass silage is the core of most diets, with additional supplements designed to balance out deficiencies. Therefore, knowing your silage quality must be the starting point in planning your winter feed when making cost effective decisions on concentrate supplementation.

Taking silage samples

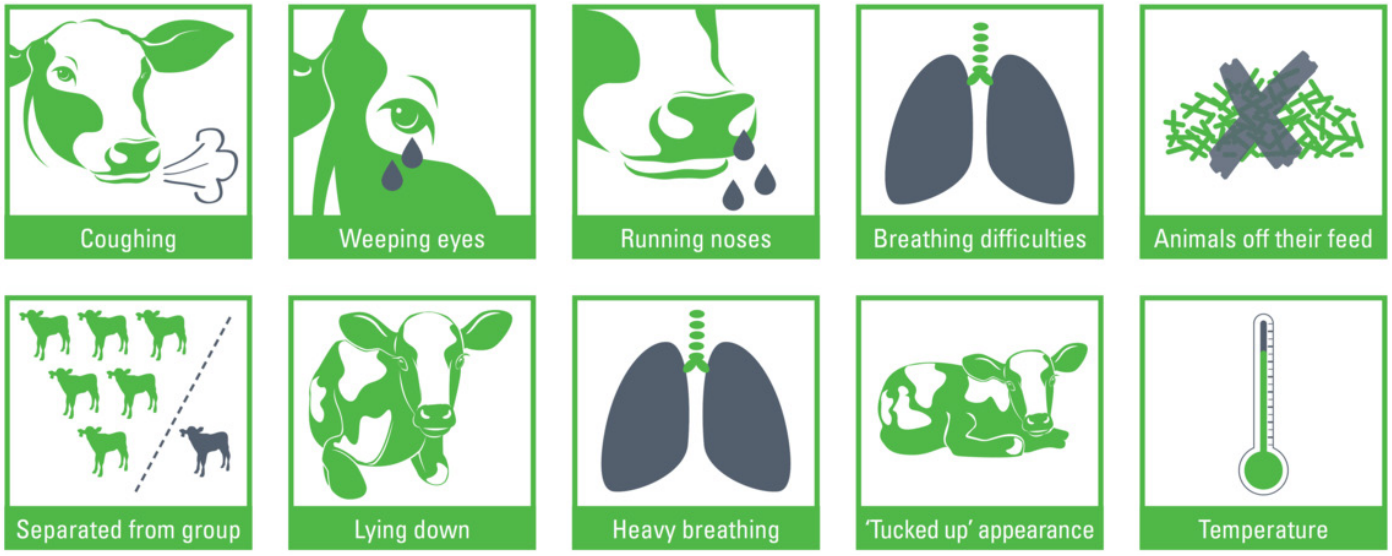
1. Wait until six weeks after harvest
2. Take several cores across the clamp at least 1.5m deep, or from five bales of the same batch to make it representative. Sample different cuts and fields separately
3. Pack into a polythene bag and squeeze air out before sealing tightly
4. Give the laboratory as much information as possible, e.g. grass only, red clover, first or second, bale or clamp, additives used

After receiving your analysis report it can be challenging to interpret, here are some of the key nutritional parameters;

- Dry matter (%) – a measure of what silage water content
  - If silage is too wet (less than 25% DM), it can be difficult for animals to eat enough to meet their needs
- D-value (%) – a measure of feed digestibility
  - The higher the D-value the less concentrates will be needed to balance a ration
- Metabolisable energy (ME MJ/kg DM) – a measure of the usable energy available to the animal when fed
- Crude Protein (%) – a measure of the protein content
  - It is important to provide enough protein in supplementary feeds to make up any shortfall in the forage
- pH – a measure of acidity
  - Target pH vary with the DM% of silage but generally we aim for between 3 and 5
- Ash (%) – a measure of mineral and trace element content
  - For grass silage a maximum of 8% should be the target. Any higher than this reduces the ME and indicates soil contamination or poor fermentation.

Calf pneumonia

Calf pneumonia is a complex disease which results in inflammation and permanent damage to the lungs and airways. It is the most common reason for poor performance and death in growing calves. So, what causes pneumonia in my calves? The cause of pneumonia can vary farm to farm, from viral, bacterial and parasitic in origin. It is important to ascertain the cause of the pneumonia in order to formulate a health plan to reduce the risk. Some of the pathogens live in the calf's respiratory tract without causing disease, but when a calf is stressed or immunocompromised, they can become pathogenic, causing pneumonia.



The early signs of pneumonia can be difficult to spot, here are some of the most common signs to look out for. We consider a temperature of 39.3 and above to be elevated.

As mentioned above, when it comes to reducing the incidence of pneumonia it is important to understand which bug is causing the disease. There are various methods we can use to ascertain what the causative pathogen is, and from there develop a health plan which will look at management methods and whether vaccination could be used. Speak to one of our vets about the impact of pneumonia on your farm.

Farming connect advisory service

The Farming Connect Advisory Service grants are now open. The service consists of advice tailored to your farm and can be used to fund a range of health and welfare investigations, such as the pneumonia investigations mentioned above. One-to-one advice is 70% funded. In order to access the grant money you'll be required to be farming connect registered which can be done for free online or contact via phone on 03456 000 813.

Reducing our environmental impact

Here at Daleside we are always looking at where we can change, to reduce our environmental impact. Some of you might have seen the latest updates from our Pen-y-ffordd branch which include solar panels and air-source heating pumps. We have also recently switched to a renewable energy tariff in a bid to reduce our carbon footprint. Guy has completed a 'Carbon Literacy' course and would be happy to discuss how positive changes can be made to your farming practices to reduce your carbon footprint.