Daleside Veterinary Group

FARM NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2023

Christmas Party 2023

Our annual Christmas Party will be held on Tuesday 12th December at 7:30pm at The Wrexham Rugby Club, It would be great to see you all there!

Congratulations Charlotte

Some of you might have seen Charlotte out and about over the last few months TB testing alongside our vets. We are pleased to say that she has now passed her theory and practical exams and is a fully qualified Approved Tuberculin Tester (ATT).

Routine anti-inflammatory use at calving and its effects on heifer mobility

A recent study has identified the benefits of routinely using non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) in heifers at their first and subsequent calvings. Taken alongside other measures, it's helping to address lameness on one dairy unit. Mobility challenges are one of the most significant problems facing the dairy industry worldwide, having a major impact on cattle welfare, health and production, leading to substantial economic losses.

Within the UK, the mean herd lameness prevalence (the number of cows lame at any one time) was recently found to be around 30%. Claw horn lesions are one of the most common causes of mobility issues in dairy cows, and recent veterinary advances have identified the importance of inflammation in the cause and development of foot diseases. In addition, using NSAIDs at calving and whenever a cow or heifer is identified as lame, alongside a therapeutic trim and a hoof block (as required), has shown significant benefits.

David Bacon from Gleadthorpe Grange Farm, Nottinghamshire, has a 530-cow pedigree Holstein herd which was used in the 34-month study. It assessed 528 dairy heifers to investigate the effects of routine treatment with an NSAID at calving and following any diagnosis of lameness. The overall incidence of lameness across the group was monitored, as well as the future culling level.

Cows were monitored for the duration of the study and probability of lameness was assessed by a lameness outcome score collected every 14 days. Data on culling was also extracted from farm records. 438 animals were included in the final analysis which revealed that giving a three day course of NSAIDs at calving and when treated for lameness, led to an absolute reduction in lameness of approximately 10% and severe lameness of 3%, compared with animals that only received a therapeutic trim and hoof block when identified as lame.

David Bacon, whose dairy herd was used in the study, says: "We were really surprised with the outcome of the study, but what surprised us the most was the long-term effects on heifers and how administering a 3-day course of a NSAID routinely 24 to 36 hours after calving, and as and when required in conjunction with a therapeutic trim and hoof block, dramatically reduced lameness and increased life expectancy."

Speak to one of the vets about the possibility of implementing a similar protocol on your farm.

Bluetongue and Epizootic Haemorrhagic Disease Viruses

Some of you will be aware of the developments within Europe regarding Bluetongue virus (BTV) and Epizootic Haemorrhagic Disease virus (EHD). Both viruses are circulating in European countries, including some of those closest to the UK and is a real threat to UK livestock.

The virus is spread when midges feed from an infected animal, the virus can reproduce within the midge which can then spread EHD or BTV to other animals for the rest of its life, making the disease difficult to control once it is circulating. Epizootic haemorrhagic disease (EHD) was confirmed for the first time in Europe in October 2022 in Italy. It has since spread to Portugal, Spain and the south of France. EHD affects deer most severely, but clinical cases have been reported in cattle at multiple farms in these countries.

BTV has been circulating in European countries for some time. However, on 5 September 2023 the Netherlands reported their first outbreak of Bluetongue (BT) since 2009. There are now nearly 800 confirmed outbreaks, and more are expected as we are still in the vector season. This has been confirmed to be BTV-3. Additionally, on 21 September 2023 French authorities confirmed the presence of new strain of BTV-8 which is causing more severe clinical signs in cattle and sheep.

Now that the disease is confirmed to be circulating in more neighbouring countries, infected midges could be blown across the channel to the UK and pose a risk to livestock and deer. The south and east coast of England are at greatest risk.

Vaccination remains the most effective way to protect your herd or flock against BTV serotypes 1,2,4 and 8. Keepers should consider vaccinating their susceptible animals against BTV-8 and, BTV-4 in particular, as these strains are circulating widely in France.

While vaccines exist for some BTV strains, there are currently no commercially available vaccines for BTV-3 or EHD. We therefore urge our clients to remain vigilant to the signs and symptoms of these diseases and report suspicion of disease at the earliest opportunity to enable a swift response and greatest chance of limiting the impacts. You should also take particular care when importing live animals, making sure that you know where the animals originated from and that they meet all the export healthy certificate requirements.

Clinical signs of EHD in ruminants

- Fever and weakness
- Difficulty swallowing leading to drooling
- Skin rash on the udder
- Bleeding (skin and internal tissues)
- Swollen red skin near hooves
- Swollen lining of the mouth and ulcers
- Difficulty breathing
- Sudden death (particularly in deer)

Clinical signs of Bluetongue

In sheep and goats

- Ulcers in the mouth
- Discharge of mucus and drooling from mouth and nose
- Swelling of the mouth, head and neck and the coronary band (where the skin of the leg meets the horn of the foot)

In cattle

- Lethargy
- Crusty erosions around the nostrils and muzzle
- Redness of the mouth, eyes, nose
- Reddening of the skin above the hoof
- Nasal discharge
- Reddening and erosions on the teats
- Elevated temperature
- Milk drop
- Not eating

Most adult animals show only mild clinical signs, or show no signs of disease at all.

Calves can become infected with bluetongue (BTV-8) before birth, if the mother is infected while pregnant.

Signs of infection include:

- calves born small, weak, deformed or blind
- death of calves within a few days of birth
- abortions