



New team member

Next month we have a new additional vet joining our farm team. Lauren Thomas is joining the practice in September having graduated from the University of Liverpool. Some of you may already be familiar with Lauren as she has spent many weeks with us as a student and made an excellent impression. Lauren will be splitting her time between the farm department and the small animal department; we are really looking forward to having her on board!

We are also delighted to announce that Keeley has accepted a permanent position with us.

Dairy Autumn Calving

Preparation is the key to successful block calving. The lead up to autumn block calving is arguably one of the most important times of year. If we can get this period optimised, lactating cows stand to be more productive in the next lactation, and calves stand to get a better start in life.

A few weeks prior to calving is when their nutritional demand will increase, due to the rapidly growing calf. Alongside this, dry matter intake will be dropping as the calf takes up space in the abdomen, limiting the amount of ruminal space. It is important to supply a moderately

energy dense diet, to make up for reduced feed intake and help meet the energy demands of the cow.

After calving, cows should be monitored closely for any retained cleansing. Normally this should pass within 12-24 hours of calving. It is a good idea to offer warm water to cows straight after calving, with the aim of getting them to drink at least 25L. At initial milking do not milk out fully, especially if she is an old cow, has had twins or the risk of milk fever is high.

The cow can now enter the milking herd and be observed for any signs of 'whites' as she's using the cubicle. If possible, heifers should be grouped separately to maximise their bulling activity and improve their conception rates.

Achieving a tight calving block is important in maximising profit levels. As the focus shifts from calving to serving cows, the 12 week period of serving will have a great impact on the farm for the next 18 months.

Prior to the start of service, it is recommended to record all heats from cows and bulling heifers at least 3 weeks beforehand. This can be used as a reference heat and allow you to estimate when her next heat will be; 85% of cows should have shown heat before the start of mating. Any cows not seen bulling should be checked over with an ultrasound scanner to ensure that the ovaries are cycling normally and to detect any endometritis cases. Change induces stress in cows and stress reduces conception rate and follicular quality. Therefore, it is key to get cows settled in the breeding environment for several weeks ahead of mating.

Heat detection is an important element to achieving a tight calving block. If using aids, then ensure that all staff on the farm are trained up in using the equipment/recognising heat. Combining more than one method of heat detection will give you the best results.

To discuss autumn calving further then please contact us on **01978 311444** and speak to one of the team.

Gwaredu Scab

The Gwaredu scab scheme is back up and running. The scheme offers all scab-infested flocks in Wales a free scab diagnosis by their vets and the coordination of treatment by approved mobile dipping contractors within hot spot areas.

Sheep scab is caused by a parasitic mite. It is a highly infectious disease which can cause significant welfare issues among flocks. If you suspect your flock has sheep scab, call the Gwaredu Scab team on **01554 748576** or email gwareduscab@colegsirgar.ac.uk



Ram fertility testing

A good quality ram is half of the solution to getting a high percentage of ewes in lamb quickly, creating a tight lambing period and helping to get lambs away early. He may also have cost a lot of money in the hope of either improving the genetics of the flock or producing better lambs for sale. However, too often his ability to mate ewes and get them in lamb is taken for granted, often until it is too late and ewes are returning. A pre-breeding exam and testing a sample of semen to confirm fertility can help is recommended prior to breeding. To discuss further with one of our vets, please contact us on **01978 311444**.