



Happy New Year!

We hope you all had a good Christmas. It was great to see so many of you at the Christmas party, a great way to round up the year!

As well as welcoming in the new year, this January we will be welcoming new staff to the team. Lara will be re-joining us after her maternity leave. Additionally, Llinos Jones will be starting with us in early January as a TB tester, Llinos has experience with dairy cattle and has previously spent a few years in Australia on various cattle ranches. Welcome to the team!

Understanding BVD

On Tuesday 11th February we will be hosting a meeting discussing all things BVD, 7.30PM at Wrexham Rugby Club. New regulations for Welsh farms will be coming into force this July, the meeting will be a chance for you to get a better understanding of what BVD is and what needs to be done to be compliant with the new regulations. Additionally for our English clients, we will be discussing your options after the discontinuation of the BVD free England scheme. Please contact the office if you are intending on attending.



Calf Thoracic Ultrasound Scanning Study

Throughout most of 2024 we were involved in a study looking at ultrasound scanning calf lungs. The main aim of the study was to truly understand the effects of pneumonia on group of calves and to establish whether this is something we can practically do on farm and offer as a service to our clients.

Eight dairy farms took part, 3 of these spring block calving and the other 5 all year-round calving herds. The dairy heifer calves were first weighed using a weigh tape at 2-6 weeks of age, 4 weeks later they were re-weighed, and a thoracic ultrasound examination was performed to assess the lungs for lesions. The calves were assigned a score of 0 to 5 based on what we saw on the scan, with 0 and 1 considered normal and up to 5, where 3 or more of the lung lobes were affected. The calves were then revisited 4 weeks later at the age of 10-14 weeks and re-weighed for a final time, anything with an abnormal lung appearance on the first ultrasound scan were re-scanned to see the progression of the pneumonia.

Alongside the practical element of the study, we wanted to see how these compared with treatment decisions and assess how accurate was pneumonia being detected. To do this we were asking each farm involved to use a calf health score card and score the calves based on this, this included assessing lacrimal discharge, nasal discharge and rectal temperature. Treatment records were also looked at to see if there was a match between what we were seeing on the ultrasound and what the farmer was treating.

In total, 270 calves were involved in the study, however a number of calves had to be excluded from the dataset due to missing data, calves being sold and/ or death, resulting in a complete data set of 256 calves over the study period.

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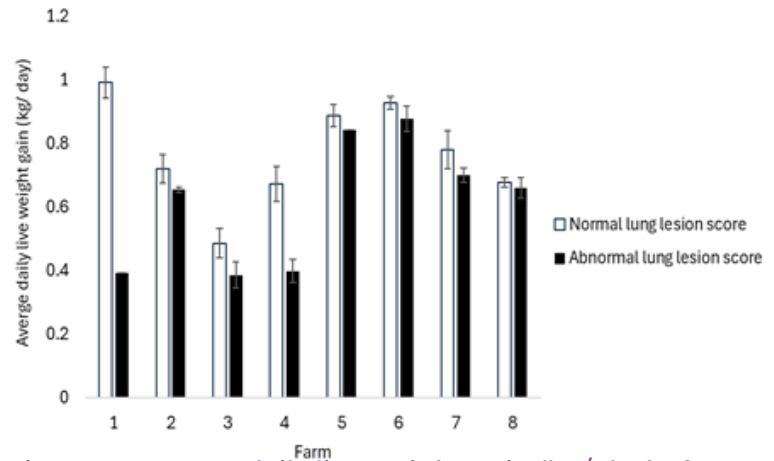



Figure 1: Average daily live weight gain (kg/ day) of calves across the study period with normal (≤ 1) or abnormal (>1) lung lesion scores as determined by thoracic ultrasound examination

Of the 256 calves, 21.1% (n=54) of calves were recorded as having abnormal lung lesion scores at the second visit and the remaining 78.9% (n=202) of calves were recorded to have normal lung lesion scores. The 54 calves that had abnormal lung lesion scores were re-examined four weeks later to monitor disease progression. The results of the examinations demonstrated 50% of calves to have normal lung lesion scores the remaining 50% of calves to still have abnormal lung lesion scores.

The significantly lower growth rate highlights the importance of pneumonia in the early life of calves and that even with treatment and apparent response the growth rates are still sub-par. To discuss how lung scanning could be of benefit on your farm please contact the office on 01978 311444 where one of our vets will be happy to assist you.


Each individual farm's treatment records were investigated to determine which calves had been treated with antimicrobials for pneumonia. Treatment records revealed 33.3% of the calves that had abnormal lung lesion scores to have shown clinical symptoms (cough, nasal discharge, ocular discharge, blowing, high temperature, drooping ears, depression) for pneumonia, either before or on the day of the ultrasound lung scan and as such were treated with antimicrobials. Whereas, the remaining 66.7% of the calves did not receive any antimicrobial treatment despite having abnormal lung lesion scores, suggesting symptoms to be sub-clinical. Of the calves that had normal lung lesion scores, 8.4% of calves were treated with antimicrobials for BRD.


The average daily live-weight gain (ADLWG) of the calves over the study period was calculated and calves were grouped as either having normal or abnormal lung lesion scores (Figure. 1). The analysis of the data revealed calves with abnormal lung lesion scores to have lower ADLWG on average by 0.17 kg/ day in comparison to calves that had normal lung lesion scores ($p < 0.001$).




LATEST UPDATE

New cases confirmed







Avian Influenza Update

Highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 has been confirmed at a number of sites over the UK. Currently the outbreaks have not been near the Wrexham area, but all bird keepers should remain vigilant and follow stringent biosecurity measures to prevent future outbreaks.

Please remember that it is a legal requirement to register within one month of keeping poultry or other captive birds at any premises in England and Wales. This includes any birds you keep as pets.

For the latest updates please check the APHA website.

