

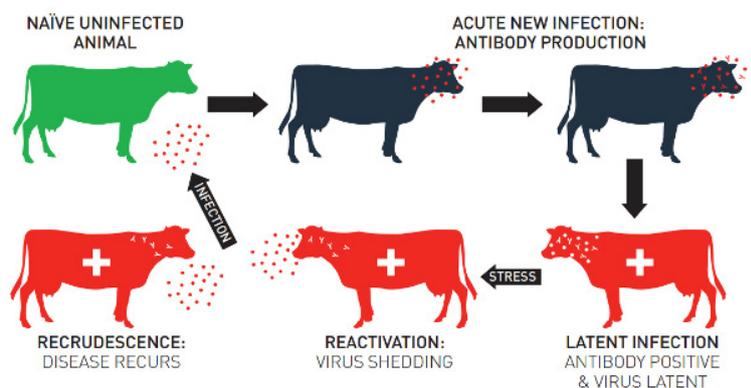
Bulk milk testing

This October sees the launch of our free bulk milk testing, kindly sponsored by MSD animal health. The promotion consists of testing for IBR and Leptospirosis to determine the health status of your herd, enabling us to devise protocols specifically for your farm. We shall be sending out sample pots to our dairy clients and would appreciate it if these could be either returned to the practice or be handed to a vet when on a visit.

When taking a bulk milk sample, it is vital that you do not use the sample pot to collect milk directly from the tank. The sample pot contains a preservative and would make the milk in the tank worthless if it were to be contaminated. Collect the milk in a jug or bottle and then transfer to the sample pot.

Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) is a viral disease causing upper respiratory tract infections. As a disease, it can spread readily between cattle, and so biosecurity measures and vaccination are implemented to minimise the risk from IBR. Most infected cattle will develop a latent IBR infection, and periods of stress

can induce virus shedding from these animals. The virus can readily spread to naïve cattle through direct contact, airborne infection and contaminated materials and equipment. Sub-clinically infected cattle have been proven to produce 173 litres less milk per year which poses a real threat to herd profitability with the annual cost to the industry estimated to be at £36.6 million. Knowing your IBR herd status will enable us to work with you to implement an IBR control programme, either to reduce to risk of introducing a costly disease to your naïve herd or to reduce clinical cases and reduce the risk of spreading the disease to purchased and in-contact animals.



The winter diet

As we prepare for over-winter housing, it is crucial that we formulate and feed the optimum diet for cow health and ultimately milk production. Grass silage is the core of any diet, 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

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

Understanding the numbers

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 is not water
- 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.



Maintaining a healthy clamp face

- The key to maintaining a healthy clamp face is minimising the amount of silage exposed to the air. Exposure to air will encourage yeast growth and cause an increase in the pH. As a result, heat is generated. This heat provides the perfect environment for the growth of mould, which can produce harmful mycotoxins. We can minimise spoilage by following three simple steps
- Expose only the silage needed each day i.e. tomorrow's silage should remain in the clamp
- Use narrow clamps. The aim is to get across the face in three days to avoid excessively exposing the silage to air
- Use a shear grab and sharpen regularly. A sharp grab reduces the disruption to the remaining silage on the clamp face

Parasite control at housing

As our summers grow increasingly wetter and warmer the threat of Fluke to our ruminants is becoming more of a reality. Calves and yearling are most affected, but there is limited development of immunity to fluke and so animals of all ages are potentially at risk of fluke infection. Pasture is highest risk between late summer and autumn due to the summer infection of snails with fluke, leading to clinical disease autumn onwards through winter.

Control and prevention are based around pasture management, monitoring infection and the use of flukicides. The timing of flukicidal drenches is very important. Different products target different ages of fluke and so using the appropriate product for your farm is vital. Combination products are often used; however, the timings do not often coincide for effective worm and fluke treatment, resulting in reduced efficacy and can promote resistance in your herd.

Please get in touch for advice on flukicidal treatment or any of the control and prevention strategies.

