



Daleside
Veterinary Group

FARM NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2021



Helens Half Marathon Record

Since January, Helen has been very busy attempting to break the Guinness World Record for the number of consecutive half marathons run.

The current record by a female stands at 75 consecutive half marathons. However, Helen is aiming for the sky and has run a half marathon every day for 111 consecutive half marathons. The challenge was completed at the end of May and Helen is now awaiting official confirmation from Guinness World Record! Most of her runs have been round the Wrexham area and has passed many of our clients' farms, luckily, she knows the backroads very well from the drug drop offs! Fingers crossed it will get approved by the official body and Helen will be a Guinness World Record Holder.

A massive congratulations Helen, what a great achievement!

Manipulating sheep breeding

It may seem like lambing has just finished, but for December born lambs its time to start planning the next breeding season again. Progesterone sponges and PMSG injection can advance the breeding season by up to six weeks and synchronise mating. Using the sponges in combination with the PMSG injection can increase the ovulation rate resulting in a higher lambing percentage, although this is affected by numerous other factors:

Factors influencing ovulation rate

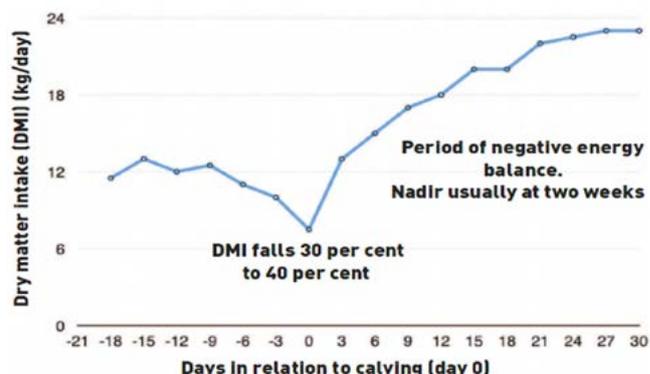
- Stage in breeding season
- Body condition score
- Breed
- Age
- PMSG injection

Another option to advance the breeding season is using a CIDR. These deliver progesterone hormone just like the sponges. However, due to the difference in material, the plastic CIDR has proven to have less removal issues compared to the sponges along with significantly less sheep having vaginal discharge when removing. As mentioned in last months newsletter, vasectomised rams are a great way to synchronise oestrus and achieve a more compact lambing period. The introduction of vasectomised rams can also bring the breeding season forward by 2 weeks compared with 6 weeks with progesterone devices. If you are considering using progesterone-based devices to advance the breeding season, please get in touch to discuss the best option for you.





- Negative energy balance – fresh calved cows have a huge energy demand for milk production and often this is made worse by reduced appetite around calving and so reduced feed intake



Managing the transition period of Dairy cows

The transition period is arguably the most important time in the lactation of a dairy cow. It is during this time that we see common disorders such as milk fever, clinical ketosis, displaced abomasum, mastitis, metritis and endometritis and so getting the management and diet right is crucial.

The transition period usually refers to the three weeks before and the three weeks after calving, the feeding and management before calving has a large influence on post-partum health.

Why is the early lactation period such a high risk?

- Open cervix and open teats – maintaining a hygienic calving area is vital
- Reduced immunity – around the time of calving, immunity is reduced and therefore, so is the cow's ability to respond to new infections

As mentioned previously reduced feed intake are inevitable around calving (figure 1) but our aim during the transition period is to minimise that reduction in feed intake and to ensure the rumen is working efficiently. The rumen takes 2-3 weeks to adapt to a new diet, so the diet fed to the transition cows in the 3 weeks pre calving should contain similar ingredients to the milking cow diet, but with additional fibre to reduce the energy density of the diet and keep the rumen full. It is also important to get the mineral balance right to reduce the risk of milk fever.

It's important to ensure these cows have access to plenty of feed space, and plenty of feed available. They should be fed at least once a day, and the feed should be pushed up regularly throughout the day to ensure they never run out. Food that's left over should be cleaned away before fresh feed is given.

Body condition scores should be monitored throughout lactation with the aim of drying cows off at BCS 2.5 – 3.5 (Holstein). This score should be maintained throughout the dry period to calving. Adjusting BCS during the dry period can be risky and may lead to increased metabolic disorders, especially when trying to get cows to put on weight.



- The main risks of being too fat at calving
- More calving difficulties
- Greater risk of vaginal tear at calving and haemorrhage
- Greater risk of milk fever
- Greater risk of ketosis and left displacement of the abomasum
- Greater immune suppression post calving
- Greater risk of weight loss and poorer fertility in the next lactation
- Greater risk of retained foetal membranes
- The main risks of being too thin at calving
- Greater risk of lameness
- Greater risk of retained foetal membranes
- Greater risk of poorer fertility and production

Ideally cows should be body condition scored at drying off, mid-way through the dry period, at calving and during early lactation. This information should be used to make informed decisions to correct the diet for future cows.

The UK dairy industry is very diverse in farm types, and this is also true about our clients and when it comes to dry cow management there is no 'all size fits all'. To discuss what strategy would fit best for your farm or for any other transition period related questions please speak to one of the team.

Fly control

Flies multiply fast and efficiently when conditions are favourable, one fly can lay thousands of eggs which in just 10 days are mature and are ready to lay eggs themselves. Therefore, keeping on top of the fly population at the start of the season is very important.

Flies are not just an irritant for cows and farmers, they can also affect productivity by reducing feed intakes of grazing cattle and sheep. Flies also spread diseases such as summer mastitis, New Forest eye and blow fly strike particularly in sheep and lambs.

Pregnancy diagnosis of TB reactors in Wales

During the peak of the corona virus outbreak it was not compulsory for TB reactor cows to have a pregnancy diagnosis performed by the vet before their valuation. However, as things are returning to normal once again this requirement will be resumed on the 1st July.

