

## Congratulations Lara!

Over the past two years Lara has been studying hard towards the Diploma in Bovine Reproduction.

As the name suggest the course is based on reproduction in cattle and aims to achieve a deep understanding of bovine reproduction which can then be applied on farm level. We are delighted to say that she has now completed the course and passed with flying colours! We would like to take the opportunity to thank the farms which have been involved over the past two years allowing Lara to examine cows and collect data and samples for her research.

Lara then went onto present her work at the World Buiatrics Conference, a global conference for cattle vets which was held in Madrid. This was a fantastic opportunity to present her dissertation findings which looked into the impact of Digital dermatitis on the performance of maiden heifers. Once again congratulations Lara!



## Mastering Medicine Course

We will be hosting another mastering medicine course on Wednesday 23rd November. For Red Tractor and FAWL farm assurance schemes it is now necessary for at least one member of the farm team to have completed a course on delivering medicine safely.

For more information, or to book your place, please contact the office on 01978 311444.

# Meeting – Transition Cow Management

The period immediately before and after calving is arguably the most important period in the lactation of a dairy cow. If you get it right, good health and performance for the rest of the lactation is so much easier to achieve.

We will be running a meeting focusing on management of the transition dairy cow next month. Keep your eyes open on social media and the next newsletter for more details.

## Pneumonia in calves

Bovine respiratory disease (BRD) or pneumonia causes inflammation of the lung tissue and airways. Damage is often irreversible and is the most common reason for death and poor performance in young cattle from weaning to 10 months of age.

As with all diseases, prevention is better than cure. The main target areas to reduce then number of cases are calf housing, calf immunity and reducing stress as well as good recognition to treat any disease present. Studies have shown that when 30 per cent of cattle in a group show actual signs of respiratory disease, a further 40% can exhibit lung damage at slaughter. Therefore, it is likely that many cases go unnoticed, which brings us on to how much is it costing you?

A large proportion of the costs caused by pneumonia are hidden, such as reduced liveweight gain and feed conversion efficiency. Costs range between £30–£80 per sick calf with an added cost of around £30 per calf for the rest of the in-contact group, the figure increases to £500 or more if an animal dies because of the disease.

There are several causes of pneumonia in calves, ranging from viral in origin to bacterial. As previously mentioned, the environment and the immune status of the calf will play a huge part in the disease. The quality and quantity of colostrum a calf consumes can affect its ability to fight off disease, as can time of weaning and breed differences. Stresses such as mixing groups, movement and poor housing conditions can also affect immune status. The only way to know what is causing disease in your herd is to test. This is particularly useful when you have a disease outbreak and want to find the

best response or to design future vaccination strategies.

There are various methods of on farm testing depending on stage of infection. For cases of historical infections or those who have undergone treatment, then taking blood samples may be the best approach in order to see what antibodies are present which then allows us to get an idea of which pathogens the calves have been exposed to. For any active pneumonia then we can consider a different approach in the form of Nasal swabs or Bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL). Bronchoalveolar lavage is considered to be the gold standard approach in diagnosing pneumonia in calves. This process involves introducing a small volume of fluid into the lungs and then collecting the sample. The advantage of using this technique over nasal swabs is that we can evaluate what is going on in the lungs rather than in the nasal cavity as some pneumonia causing bacteria will be present in small numbers in a healthy calf's nasal cavity. When we have performed BALs they have enabled us to take action and implement an effective vaccine protocol targeting the right pathogens. The true cost of pneumonia is difficult to evaluate due to the complex nature of future effects such as reduced milk yields and reduce growth, but what we do know is that it can have detrimental effects on future performance and therefore, the profitability of those animals. Discussing pneumonia issues on your farm with one of our vets is a great starting point and so if this is something of concern for you then please don't hesitate in getting in touch.

