Training Courses for Farmers

Embryonics are running the following local courses for farmers:

- Cheshire DIY AI course May 20-23
- DEFRA registered and Lantra approved small course for individual attention.
- Herdsmen Foot Trimming taught via 5 step Dutch method held in Winsford May 20-22 and again June 26-28 in Chelford
- Herdsmen Foot Trimming refresher day in Holmes Chapel June 13. This is an ideal way to keep you or your staff up to date. We will also discuss the latest lameness and foot disease knowledge to ensure you are up to date.
- Calf Management Workshop July 5
- Safe Use of Medicines July 26th

Our popular Professional foot trimming course with world renowned Peter Kooosterman July 8-11. Please book early to avoid disappointment as places are limited as attendees come from all over Europe.

- July 12th Dutch Diploma, internationally recognized formal qualification.
- Don’t forget our DIY AI 1 day refresher courses are available weekly on request

Please note that we also run private and bespoke courses to suit your individual needs either on a one to one basis or as a group.

We are always keen to develop new courses and workshops so if you have a particular subject you would like us to cover please do give us a call on 01565 723036 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

More information can be found on our website www.embryonicsltd.co.uk

Well done hot shot Laurence!

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Transition cow management is the crucial period for avoiding metabolic diseases in dairy cows. It is during this period, 3 weeks either side of calving, that the risk of ketosis, metritis, endometritis, LDA and cystic ovaries can either be reduced by good management or increased by sub-optimal management. As we discussed a couple of months ago in the newsletter the incidence of these conditions are an effective guide as to how well your cows are transitioning.

Ketosis is one of the key diseases to avoid in this period as it is often the gateway disease to many of the other fresh cow conditions we see. For instance the risk of having an LDA increases by 8 fold with ketosis, metritis risk increases by 3 fold and the risk of cystic ovaries increases by 6 fold. Typically we don’t think of ketosis as a costly disease in its own right but when you see what the other health consequences and add to the lost milk production cost the costs soon ramp up.

Ketosis is also known as slow fever, acetonaemia and nervous ketosis by vets and farmers. It is normal for cows to experience an energy gap in the period just after calving. This results in the cow mobilising her own body tissue reserves to fuel her milk production. If the rate of fat mobilisation is too fast for the cow’s liver to oxidise it to energy the liver becomes overwhelmed and the result is ketosis. The metabolic products of this process are known as ketones and include beta-hydroxybutyrate (BHB), acetone and acetoacetate.

Clinical ketosis is just the tip of the iceberg with many cases of sub clinical ketosis going undiagnosed. Blood, milk and urine are typically tested to measure BHB which is produced in ketosis either in the lab on farm using ketosis meters or milk test strips. In a recent European survey of 29 farms on various management systems, 33% of cows had ketosis at 7-14 days in milk. Another indicator used in practice are milk records for fresh calved cows where the milk fat:protein ratio can be assessed with propylene glycol (which the cow can readily convert into glucose), addressing any concurrent diseases, and encouraging the cow’s appetite and metabolism using

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A new approach to Ketosis

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injectable steroids and good husbandry. So now we know what the consequences are, how to measure it, how to treat it and even some basic biochemistry, that’s great and very interesting but I hear you ask “how can we stop it happening?”

Until now we have relied on good transition cow management to minimise the risk of ketosis but even in well managed herds, in good years and on good days some cows still get ketosis. We shouldn’t be discouraged as this is still the backbone of any strategy to combat ketosis. We do however have a new product to help in the battle against ketosis, Kexxtone boluses from Elanco Animal Health.

Kexxtone is a pulse release bolus containing monensin which is licenced in the UK to reduce the risk of ketosis in dairy cows around calving. The bolus encourages the production of glucose precursors by the rumen bugs, this reduces the risk of ketosis and helps maintain a better appetite around calving. Trial data collected from over 1300 cows showed that where cows had been treated with Kexxtone the incidence of ketosis was 8% compared to 32% in herds treated with a placebo, that’s a 74% reduction. The difference in milk yield alone associated with this reduction in Ketosis was huge with Kexxtone treated cows producing 1.22 kg more milk per day on average for the 125 day trial period (yield measured from 8-133 DIM) compared to the placebo group, that’s over 150 litres per cow by avoiding ketosis.

The challenge is to identify which cows are at much higher risk of ketosis and could benefit from a Kexxtone treatment. The recommended treatment regime involves bolusing dry cows around 3 weeks pre-calving and the bolus lasts for about 90 days. This timing gives the bolus time to modify the rumen function pre-calving and provides treatment for the first 70 days of the lactation during which most cow disease tends to strike. Not only do you recover the milk lost due to ketosis but you reduce the risk of metritis, LDAs, cysts and many other diseases which impact on cow welfare and profitability.

There are just a few things you need to remember if you are using Kexxtone boluses:

• Administer the bolus wings first into the cow with the gun provided
• Store boluses in a warm environment to avoid brittle plastic
• Record the bolus number against the cow number in case of regurgitation
• Keep boluses well away from other animals e.g. the farm dog. It is a small animal veterinary emergency if you find your dog chewing a bolus!
• Feel free to ask your vet to demonstrate their bolusing technique on a few cows for you!
• Measure your herd ketosis levels before treating and after

Ketosis is a common condition with expensive consequences so speak to your vet for further farm specific advice on transition cow management and the potential use of Kexxtone in your herd to minimise the impact of ketosis in your herd.

Turnout reminders

Turnout has happened already in many herds with low stocks of forage the norm this spring. The weather is slowly improving and the fields, trees and hedgerows are turning a decent shade of green at last. In the rush to get stock out it is easy to forget all your health protocols which will help keep stock healthy and efficient through the summer so here’s a shortlist of things to remember and take action on as required:

• Worming control strategy
• Lungworm protection
• Fluke control plan
• Herd vaccinations like BVD, Lepto and IBR
• Fly control
• Clandestine disease vaccinations

If you’re not sure where you’re up to or what you should be using this year then speak to one of the vets who will help you devise a practical plan to combat these issues.

What a load of bull!

Surveys from bulls around the world, within the UK and from our own data consistently tell us that around 1 in every 5 bulls are significantly sub fertile or even infertile. Problems come in all shapes and sizes and all breeds and ages. Often it’s not possible to tell just by looking at a bull that he is not fertile as they appear to mount and serve cows normally. Sub fertile bulls working as part of a team on farm can often have their efficiencies masked by the others.

We would encourage you to have your bull fertility tested before you need him to get your cows or heifers in calf. We can carry out a bull breeding soundness examination on your bull which will identify any problems and we can then advise on the best approach to get the bull back to work. Its best to test your bull about 2 months before you need him to perform so you have time to come up with plan B if required! Even if you are using your bull all year round it is worth MOT’ing him at least once a year. We have plenty of clients who can testify to the benefits of finding the dud bull and making alternative arrangements.

Congratulations in order . . .

The partners of the Willows Vet Group are delighted to welcome Emyr Rowlands to the farm partnership. Emyr, as he is known to us all, has been at the Willows since 2009 and is in his 10th year of veterinary practice. We know how highly his regular clients think of him and what a good job he does for you all so we decided he could stay a bit longer! We are confident that Emyr will be a positive addition to our partnership as we continue to provide you all with an excellent farm animal veterinary service. Congratulations Emyr!