Lameness

Lameness is a significant issue for both beef and dairy farms, causing losses from reduced production (average loss of 400l/lame cow, with yields dropping up to two months before the cow goes visibly lame), lost body condition, poor fertility, increased treatment costs, increased labour and increased culling.

Roger highlighted the importance of digital dermatitis and in particular those carrier cows that may be difficult to spot without having a good look at your cows’ feet. A heifer infected with digital dermatitis before she calves is five times more likely to become lame during lactation. This emphasises the importance of foot bathing heifers pre-calving - not forgetting dry cows as well. We appreciate this isn’t practical during the summer months, but winter is approaching, and with all stock soon to be housed, this becomes a far easier task.

The latest thinking is to consider digital dermatitis as you would mastitis, and so foot bathing daily will show markedly improved results when compared to every other or twice weekly - if done correctly. Know the volume of your foot bath to ensure correct dilution and effective treatment. There is a vast array of products available - speak to your vet if you would like advice on a practical and effective foot bathing plan.

Roger’s presentation at the end of the day focussed on recent findings in lameness research. One important finding demonstrated to us was the changes to the pedal bone (the bone that sits in the hoof) that are apparent in chronically lame cows. Those cows that suffer with recurrent conditions, such as white line and sole ulcers, form new bone, often in the form of sharp spicules, in the area adjacent to the area of infection. This new bone undoubtedly causes discomfort, and through the damage it causes to the corium (the layer that is responsible for horn production), hinders the development of new healthy horn, predisposing her to further episodes of lameness. Cows that have already formed this new bone are likely to be those cows that seem not to respond despite frequent treatment and blocking. In this situation, amputation of the digit would be the best.

It was great to see so many faces at our lameness day last month. Special thanks to Roger Blowey for updating us on the latest advances in lameness research, in an interactive way that kept us all entertained! I’m sure everybody found something useful to take away with them.

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Lameness

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course of action. This therefore highlights that prevention is better than cure, but also the importance of early detection and treatment, and reminds us of the role of mobility scoring. The focus of mobility scoring should be to concentrate on treating those number 2s before they become 3s. Mobility scoring shouldn’t become one of those worthless exercises we go through to satisfy a milk processor or supermarket. Again, speak to your vet if you would like to learn more about mobility scoring or if you would like your herd scored and results explained.

Finally, we must remember that lameness is painful, and the use of a non-steroidal as part of your treatment protocol can help aid recovery and minimise losses in addition to improving animal welfare. There are a range of suitable NSAID drugs available and you should get vet advice as to which is most appropriate for you.

Liver fluke

It’s that time of year again when we start talking about liver fluke. This is relevant whether you have beef, sheep, dairy cows or just young stock. Animals which are grazed on contaminated pasture are at risk regardless of age.

If you have had liver fluke identified in recent years or months then it’s time to review your control plan with your vet. If you haven’t had problems recently then continue to be vigilant. There are a variety of options we can use to continue to monitor for liver fluke. In dairy cows we can look for fluke antibody in the bulk tank to indicate exposure. In cattle and sheep we can also look for antibody in bloods and look for fluke eggs in faeces.

There are a large number of products for treating liver fluke in cattle and sheep. It is vital that you choose the right product if you are to stay in control of fluke on your farm. Speak to your vet or to Mark Pass at Beeston Animal Health for more information about the tag options.

FOOT TRIMMING

Contact Steve Austin
01565 723036

Visit per cow
£12 – 4 feet £10 – 2 feet
Bandage – £2.50
No Call out fee for 12 or more cows

BVD check tags

Many of you have started using these since our awareness campaign earlier this year. We continue to encounter BVD PIs in some herds which have a huge impact on the growth rate and health of their pier group. For a couple of quid more than a normal ear tag you can use the BVD check tag as part of the calf’s normal identification requirement. In return you get to know if that calf is a PI before you spend money on rearing it and its pen mates. In addition if a calf is negative then we can assume its dam is also negative. Speak to your vet or Mark Pass at Beeston Animal Health for more information about the tag options.

WILLOWS FARM ANIMAL VETERINARY PRACTICE

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