Bull fertility

The start of the year has once again produced a vast number of calves from both beef suckler and dairy herds. In order to ensure the same success next year, we need to consider the vital ingredients despite the inevitable calving fatigue.

As they say ‘it takes two to tango’ so let’s start with a few cow factors to consider. Ensure infectious diseases are not going to eat away at your in-calf rate by getting up to date with herd vaccines for BVD and Lepto. Avoid periods of negative energy balance in the fresh cow period to encourage a return to normal ovarian function. Supplement trace elements as required to ensure adequate levels of minerals such as Copper, Selenium and Iodine, several options are available including mineral drenches and boluses. Control lameness, research has clearly demonstrated that lame cows are significantly more difficult to get back in-calf, one session with the foot trimmer could have a massive impact on the success of the upcoming breeding period.

The second half of the equation to consider is the bull. Whether you are using natural mating or AI the principles are the same. Good quality semen needs to be available at the right stage in the cow’s oestrus cycle to achieve fertilisation and pregnancy. With AI this requires a structured approach to heat detection and an action plan for animals not observed in heat, one thing we can guarantee in reproduction is that cows which aren’t served won’t get pregnant! Ensure all the elements of your AI technique are correct especially the thawing water and semen handling procedures. If you are relying on bulls and natural mating then mobility is key. The winter period is typically high risk for bull lameness so ensure his feet are sound and correct. UK surveys consistently report that around 20% or 1 in every 5 bulls is significantly sub fertile or infertile. The best way to identify this pre-breeding is by doing a breeding soundness examination which includes semen collection and assessment. Aim for a BCS of 3.5 for your bulls at the start of the breeding period, bulls which are too fat have reduced libido, the target is for the bull to be fit but not fat! Don’t forget to include the bull in your herd vaccinations for BVD and Lepto too.

Inevitably there are elements of fertility performance that are beyond our control but taking the measures outlined above will give the best chances of success.

Go Karting

A great evening was had by everyone that made it along to the annual Willows gokarting event. Congratulations to Chris Woodcock who came first, Rob Norcott who came second and also got the fastest lap of the night, and Dom Matthews who came third. A huge ‘thank you’ to Steve Sheridan from Merial pharmaceutical who sponsored the pizzas. Look forward to seeing you there next year!
The most effective way to limit the potential impact of parasites in your livestock is to have a good plan in place and carry it out through the year. Experts are predicting a heavy burden on pasture early in the season after a mild winter in the region. Now is the time to generate the plan and get started with control if you haven’t already done so.

- Huskvac has been around for years and is a great way to reduce the impact of lungworm in cattle. The first dose needs to be administered about 6 weeks before the planned date of turnout.
- Consider the worming options for various groups of cattle, is a bolus or long acting formulation suitable? These reduce the need to handle stock as much through the summer.
- After 3 weeks at pasture parasite burdens in cattle and sheep can be monitored by faecal egg counts. This help to determine the need for treatments and follow-up counts help to assess treatment success and ensure there isn’t a resistance issue developing.

Although it may still seem a long way off before stock are being troubled by flies now is good time to consider your fly control strategy. Having a plan in place that kills flies early in the season before they reproduce has a massive impact on the fly population in peak and late season.

Did you know it is now a legal requirement to have you dog microchipped?
No doubt this will be news to some of you, but worry not we have a plan! Microchipping is a simple and straightforward procedure that we can do for you on farm as long as you can safely restrain your dog. For the next 3 months we can microchip your farm dogs for £10 + VAT each

Contact Steve Austin on: 01606 723200

£10 +VAT each

Just give your usual surgery a call to arrange microchipping next time you have a vet out to the farm

Parasite control

Speak to one of the vets or Mark Pass at Beeston for more farm specific advice on parasite control.

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