A ‘United’ team is key to efficiency continued...

As Richard Branson says ‘train your staff well enough that they can leave, treat them well enough they don’t want to.’ All staff are a key component of business efficiency. They carry out the actions your business decisions demand, whether that is vaccinating your herd for improved health, or pre-dipping cows to reduce mastitis, these procedures can be completed in an effective, or ineffective manner. Following appropriate training, staff compliance is required to adhere to a strict protocol.

It is easy to shy away from more difficult issues such as staffing, but this will limit success and ultimate profitability. For example, concentrating on the details of mastitis, these procedures can be completed in an effective, or ineffective manner. Following appropriate training, staff compliance is required to adhere to a strict protocol.

As Richard Branson says ‘train your staff well enough that they can leave, treat them well enough they don’t want to.’

During my trip to America I was exposed to a new strategy of building a working environment designed to motivate employees. I shadowed Nial O’Boyle, the Den Dulk Dairies veterinary advisor, who had initiated the project on three of the farms under his management. His close contact to staff was an important part of gaining trust from all members of the team, and his persistence in rolling out the campaign ensured momentum was not lost.

These new campaigns are becoming increasingly common amongst large dairy teams. Training staff in new techniques, and allowing them to gain broader roles on the farm, provided both good long term with employees to develop a good working relationship, and also permit career progression. They hope that allowing good members of staff to learn new skills will aid retention and improving proficiency on farm. Not only do employees gain from further training, but time with staff allows you to highlight key personality attributes which lend individuals well to particular jobs.

Regular meetings with staff, gave great opportunity for the team to speak up and highlight any current issues on the farm. There was already a perceived success at generating an improved team ethos amongst the 35 members of staff on one farm alone, and the decision to extend this approach to all of the dairies was made. Many of the larger dairy businesses have similar projects underway, and this approach has been taken from other industries who are successfully generating reliable and skilled workforces.

It is important to remember that there is not one correct approach to solving staffing issues, and by no means have the American dairies got it cracked! However, they recognise that this is not a problem that will subside, and their efforts seem to make. Many of the larger dairy businesses have similar projects underway, and this approach has been taken from other industries who are successfully generating reliable and skilled workforces.

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Calf scour prevention

Typically calves born during the housed period are at greater risk from the bugs which commonly cause diarrhoea. Most commonly these include E.coli, Rotavirus and Coronavirus although others can be implicated. These bugs are present in cow faeces and usually cause problems in the first two weeks of life. Good hygiene and good transfer of immunity via colostrum are the main means of reducing the risk of disease from these bugs. The antibody protection from colostrum can also be significantly boosted by vaccinating the dam with RotavacCorona. Often the most convenient time to do this is at drying off as the window for vaccination is 3-12 weeks before calving. Consider the impact of a few scouring calves on your working day as you struggle to keep them from dehydration. Add to this the cost of treatments and a few losses from dead calves and you quickly have a good case for using RotavacCorona. For more information or a general calf health audit just speak to any of the vets.

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Genomic testing with a difference

We are very excited to announce that we are now able to offer a complete and comprehensive genomic testing package for your dairy females. We believe that it’s important you access this technology in an independent and holistic way which uses your herd genetics to their full potential. We are able to offer the Clarifide dairy genomic test. This test has been used on over 1 million cattle in the USA and has just been launched in the U.K. and compares favourably with anything else you will find on the market. Speak to Darrell or Owen if you would like to know more about this exciting opportunity.

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PARASITE PROBLEMS

The weather this grazing season in our region has proved particularly favourable for many of the parasites we battle within our livestock.

We are seeing huge numbers of problems with blowfly strike in cattle and sheep even in recent weeks. We recommend Spoton for animals found with fly strike and where required get a good fly control plan in place for next year.

Many beef and dairy herds are struggling with lung worm problems. These are presenting as respiratory disease in adults and young stock but also as sub optimal herd level performance with many herds struggling for milk yield and milk proteins. If this sounds familiar then speak to your vet or talk to Mark Pass at Beeston Animal Health.

Forage analysis is essential to determine what trace elements and how much is available in the diet

- Complex interactions - can muddy the waters, therefore...
- Investigation at animal level needed for appropriate supplementation - Blood samples and liver samples can be used
- Be mindful of toxicity - can over-do supplementation - Monitor with animals sampling
- Bolus not always suitable - May provide unnecessary elements
- Not all boluses are created equal

Cosecure boluses are unique in that they are a solid glass based bolus that slowly dissolves at a consistent rate over the course of 6 months. They contain a form of copper unaffected by interactions with molybdenum. If you want to discuss any trace element issues, sample some of your stock or want advice on supplementation options and timing please get in touch with one of our vets or talk to Mark Pass at Beeston Animal Health.

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A ‘United’ team is key to efficiency

From my recent trip to North America, attention to detail was highlighted as a translatable and crucial element of an efficient and profitable dairy business.

Key performance indicators (KPI’s), on accurate data sources, provide a useful benchmarking tool to highlight areas of greatest shortfall in your system and give good indication of those areas requiring attention. Operators achieving the highest KPI’s across the board, have greater attention to detail across the entire farm system.

The American approach to staff management and recording/use of data, was impressive, and are areas we can learn from. Recruiting, retaining, training and retraining staff, are some of the greatest issues faced by most producers, in all corners of the globe. Whilst the U.S. have not got all the answers, they recognsie this key pinch point in the system and are working hard to find solutions. Whether your workforce comprises of one co-worker, a part-time local contractor, or a team of 20 personnel, this is important.

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