Mastitis

Tailoring a control programme to your farm

By Phil Jones

We can all agree that the weather outside so far this year has been less than ideal, and with all the wind, rain and snow your cows have been pelted with you've probably noticed an increase in mastitis levels to go along with it!

All dairy farmers will experience mastitis at some point, especially at this time of year. The national target level is to aim for less than 30 cases per 100 cows per year. Incidence varies greatly from farm to farm, some will be as low 10 cases whilst others will be pushing 150 cases. On average, a case of mastitis costs around £250 - £300 which can amount to a massive loss with a serious outbreak.

More often than not, deciding on how best to approach mastitis on your farm can be a complicated issue. Are animals not responding to treatment like they usually do? Is your milk buyer putting pressure on you to use alternative therapies?

Have you had a spike in the number of cases when there haven't been any management changes? Thankfully, we as a practice have a service in place to help get to the bottom of the issue.

Prevention is always better than cure. We can never prevent 100% of cases developing but by tackling the issue at its source you can make treatment practices far more effective. Mastitis is broadly split into two types; contagious and environmental in cause. Most cases of mastitis used to be placed into either of these two categories, however as our understanding of the disease has improved over time, it’s become apparent that the lines between the two have become blurred. With contagious mastitis (e.g Staph aureus), the udder and teats are the reservoir of infection. Transmission occurs during the milking process as a result of poor udder preparation, contaminated hands, cloths and liners. With environmental mastitis (e.g E.coli) the environment is the reservoir of infection. Infection is transmitted onto the teats between milkings, usually from an unhygienic living environment, poorly scraped passageways, the list goes on. Strep uberis was historically known as an environmental pathogen but has been shown to act like a contagious pathogen too. This means that whatever protocol you put in place needs to comprehensively cover both types of reservoir.

MEET THE TEAM...

Phil Jones BVSc MRCVS

The son of a farm vet, Phil grew up in Cheshire with an interest in all things dairy. He graduated from the University of Bristol in 2011 and spent three years at a large farm practice in Wiltshire, where he lead the way with infectious disease control. In 2014, he completed a dairy season in New Zealand, learning more about grazing management and spring calving herds, before joining the Willows in 2015. At the practice, Phil is a key member of the infectious disease and fertility working groups, and has an enthusiasm for all things surgical. In the summer he plans to start his certificate in Cattle Health and Production. In his free time, Phil still enjoys a game of rugby and gets in a game whenever he can.

Go Karting

We are pleased to announce that we have booked this year’s event.

Tuesday 20th March - 7pm

Warrington Speedkarting

Please telephone Hartford to save your place on 01606 723200 SPACES LIMITED!
Dear UK Dairy Farmers

Please tell us what YOU want from YOUR farm vet… and you might WIN some pretty decent WELLIES!

The dairy industry has changed considerably over recent decades, and so too has the role of the farm animal vet. Hence we would like to hear your views with regards to what you would really like your vet to deliver. The following survey has been created to get YOUR opinions and suggestions relating to YOUR farm vet! It forms a part of a Masters research project being conducted by farm vet Edward Jefferson-Loveday in conjunction with the University of Liverpool. The survey is totally anonymous and your vets cannot see your answers.

What do farmers want from a new-graduate vet arriving at their first ever farm? Are farmers happy with the cattle fertility services currently offered by their vet? What do you like about your current vet(s), and why is this? What changes (if any!) would you like to see made to vets and their provision of fertility services on YOUR farm?

The survey is very straightforward to complete, and should take approximately 20 minutes to fill out. It is open to any UK dairy farmer who calves all-year-round. As a thank you, you have the option of entering a prize draw to win a pair of LE CHAMEAU WELLIES worth £170! So please make the most of this unique opportunity to HAVE YOUR SAY and help shape the next generation of vets arriving on your farm.

The survey link is:
www.surveymonkey.com/r/FARM-VETS

Thank you in advance and good luck with winning the wellies! Please fill out this online survey and let us know!

What do you want from your farm vet? Please fill out this online survey and let us know!

WIN A PAIR OF LE CHAMEAU WELLIES WORTH £170!

BVD tags

In the last year we have sold £10,000 BVD tags for ‘tag & test’ across the practice, with new people taking up tagging as a way to monitor BVD on farm and identify any persistently infected (PI) animals that need removing from the herd.

For those unfamiliar, tag & test uses special ear tags that take a small biopsy from the calf’s ear, this tissue sample can then be sent to the lab to check whether there is BVD virus present in the calf’s blood. BVD virus in a calf in the first few days of life is very likely to mean that the calf is a PI, in which case the animal should be removed from the herd to prevent it infecting other animals.

TOP TIPS FOR TAG & TEST:

• Tag the calf early, within the first few days of life
• Tag all animals on farm, including dairy bull calves and abortions / dead calves
• When ordering your tags, make sure that the cost of laboratory testing is included in the price of the tag. Some tags appear cheaper but actually cost more per calf once the cost of lab testing is added in
• If you find a PI homebred calf, check the dam too as there is a chance she could be a PI herself
• PI calves should be removed immediately, calves that come back positive can be re-checked 3 weeks later to make absolutely certain they are a PI, but they need to be completely isolated while waiting for a re-check
• If in doubt, please speak to your vet for advice.
• When sending off tags to the lab please add on our email address: LABREPORTS.WILLOWS@BTCONNECT.COM. This ensures we can keep up to date with the disease status on your farm
• Some tags are not recognised for accreditation (SRUC only recognise three companies for example) so if in doubt, speak to your vet

Tags can be ordered through BEESTON ANIMAL HEALTH on 01829 261361 please speak to Mark or Lisa for advice

HARTFORD OFFICE
267 Chester Road, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1LP
Tel: 01606 723200

ALSAGER OFFICE
The Point, Crewe Road, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent ST7 2GP
Tel: 01606 723200

MOLD OFFICE
Unit 16, Mold Business Park, Wrexham Road, Mold, Flintshire CH7 1XP
Tel: 01352 748525

HAMPTON VETS
Post Office Lane, Hampton Heath, Malpas SY14 8JQ
Tel: 01948 820345

MANOR COURT VETS
Church St, Tarvin, Chester, Cheshire CH3 8EB
Tel: 01829 740216

CHARTER FARM VETS
16 West Road, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 4ER
Tel: 01260 291037