



# Larkmead Veterinary Group

## Farm Animal Newsletter

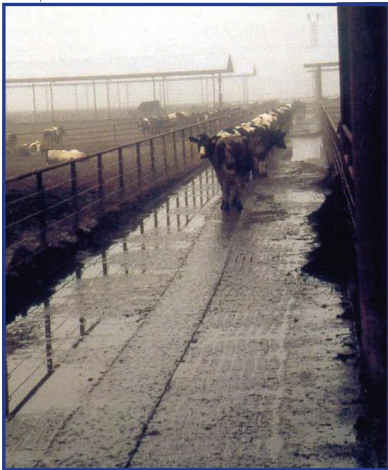
May 2006

### Glad News and Sad News

Tom will be marrying Laura, his childhood sweetheart, this August and has told us that they wish to travel the world for a while before settling down. This unfortunately means that Tom will be leaving us at the end of July—first stop New Zealand where he hopes to find a job in a cattle practice to broaden his experience. We are heartbroken of course, but wish him well and hope that we may be able to tempt him back to the Thames Valley and Larkmead when he has worked the wanderlust out of his system.

In what may be seen as an antipodean exchange, Tom will be replaced by Graeme, who hails originally from Australia, but is now permanently settled in the UK. Many of you will remember Graeme from his time working for both Larkmead and Hall Place between 1999 and 2002. In truth, he is hard to forget as he has the rare distinction of being ever larger than Tom. Apart from his time with us, "big G" has worked in Africa for a year and also back in Oz, where he worked in intensive cattle practice in New South Wales. Now married to Sarah, big G is back in the UK to settle with his young family and we are sure you will welcome him to the team.

Evan went on holiday to San Francisco, California, in April and spent a morning on fertility routines with local farm vets to see what was going on across the pond. Farms are increasing in size; 700 cows being the average, producing 10,000 – 11,000 litres/cow/year. However, that has come at a cost as conception rates to first service are 30%, calving intervals are averaging around 430 to 450 days, and most importantly, replacement rates are over 30%. At the moment milk price is low, \$15.00 per 100 pounds of milk, which equates to about 14 ppl, but there is plenty of cheap labour from south of the border.



Farmers are also trying to decrease losses from lameness by the use of rubber strips in passage ways and next to the feed face. This has been successful in decreasing lameness problems and UK farmers building new housing should consider the use of these strips.

### Turning out cows

Turning out stock has brought some problems both for the dairy and beef farmers.

On the dairy side, we have seen an increase in SCC, clinical mastitis, foul in the foot, and metabolic problems (ketosis, fatty livers, twisted guts, weight loss) especially to fresh calvers. With weather so wet, cold and windy some farmers have had to re-house their cows as intakes fell. Autumn calving herds seem to have weathered the storm except for a drop in butter fats with all the lush grass about.



Beef farmers have welcomed the move out to grass. Calves have done well with their mothers who have plenty of milk and have come bulling quickly (which should be good for this years conception rates). However beware of suckler cows still to calve becoming too fat, potentially causing calving problems and prolapsed uteruses. We have also seen hypomagnesemia due to lush grass – don't expect the cows to drink mag chloride in the water when they are getting enough water from the grass. Rumenal boluses with magnesium are the only sure way of protecting beef cows out in this weather. Already we are being asked for eye ointment to treat ulcers. With all the recent rain we expect the fly problems to worsen as the weather warms up. 'Spot On' seems to be the best product out at the moment to prevent fly problems.

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Quality Service Providing Peace of Mind from a Caring Team

## Drying off

Many autumn calving cows will be 'dried off' shortly. With the aid of *Herd Companion* and *Interherd* this is a great time to sample some of the high SCC cows. Finding out which bacteria are causing the high SCC will help us advise you on the best intramammary and injectable Dry Cow Therapy. The use of Orbeseal has become a very effective way of preventing cows picking up infections in the dry period, calving down with mastitis and then developing clinical mastitis in the first 40 days of lactation. When administering Orbeseal and other Dry Cow Therapies, teat cleaning procedures need to be perfect. We found that pieces of cotton wool soaked in surgical spirit are a great way to get teats (and most importantly teat ends) spotless. Those of you who came to the meeting at Woodend Farm (Mr. William Barnett's) about mastitis will remember the practical session with Jon Huxley. We have some plastic pots and can supply the cotton wool and surgical spirit for those interested in cleaning teats using this method. There is nothing worse than losing a cow to *E.coli* mastitis due to poor hygiene at drying off.

## Grass silage

Many of you are starting to make grass silage – so we are hoping for some dry days. It is very important not to have the grass chopped too short and don't over-mix it in the mixer wagon before feeding it as its structure is destroyed. The grass silage should be cut at 4-5cm to ensure good fermentation, as long as some straw is mixed in the ration to prevent acidosis. When the chop length is greater than 10cm, the cows can select out the long fibre and are then more prone to acidosis.

## Maize Silage

It is worth asking contractors to ensure adequate chop length (1.25cm minimum). Long fibre must be present to form the fibre mat which floats on top of the liquid rumen contents. The mat performs a vital role in rumen function by physically trapping food particles and allowing controlled breakdown of food, so promoting a healthy rumen and preventing acidosis. Maize silage no longer needs to be chopped very short to enable processing of the maize grain because modern machines cut the plant and crack the grains independently, ensuring a reasonable chop length ( absolute minimum 9mm, adequate length 1.25cm).

## Looking at a total mixed ration

Healthy rations are "open" i.e. they spring open when squeezed – this reflects their effective fibre content and the "scratch factor" as well as the rations dry matter percentage. Rations less than 40% dry matter tend to ball up in the hand ( a bad sign).

## Game Birds

The new medicine regulations have re-classified anthelmintics and coccidiostats as POM-V (Prescription-Only-Medicines), and we are already writing prescriptions for these in game feed. Evan David is taking on the game bird side of the practice for this season and will be contacting you soon to talk over your requirements. Solulyte, Multivit Plus and Spectrum are all in stock and competitively priced.



## "Interherd" Training Day

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2006 11am at Larkmead, Cholsey**

For interested dairy client's we will be hosting another "Interherd" training day run by NMR with lectures and practical sessions by James Hanks. This session will focus on fertility parameters in the dairy herd.

NMR are kindly supplying computers and paying for lunch, so please let us know if you can come by faxing the practice on 01491-652072 or phoning Martha on 01491-651479. The session starts at 11am so please come at 10:45 for coffee, lunch will be at 1pm so that everyone can get back for milking if necessary.