Vet's Viewpoint - Izzy

As we head into Autumn and the weather is finally changing, who would've thought a year ago we would be so happy to see some long-awaited rain..! As we approach Autumn housing and calving, as well as getting ready for calves to drop on the floor themselves; it is also a good time to think ahead about bull breeding soundness examinations (BBSE) in plenty of time for their next service period. A sub-fertile or infertile bull can have massive consequences on your calving pattern, productivity, number of in-calf cows and lack of replacement heifers joining the herd for next year. One way to reduce this is to ensure your bull is working adequately well in advance of breeding. Semen quality and quantity can be affected by stressors in the 6 weeks prior to service – so any lameness should be treated early and we would advise a BBSE at least 6-8 weeks before he is due to go in. This allows you time to make another plan if we find he is sub-fertile or infertile. BBSE are particularly of use for:

- New or young bulls being used for the first time
- If you are aiming for a tight calving block
- Multi-sire groups where sub-fertility may be masked by others in the group
- Older bulls to ensure they are as fertile as possible

Another useful tool to establish and maximise fertility is booking in early PD scanning. We can scan from around >30d post-service, so the earlier you book in PDs the earlier we can detect any problems. Likewise as we approach housing, now is a good time to book in spring calving PD scanning if you haven't already. Suckler Health Club members get a 10% discount on breeding soundness exams and herd related vet time.

If you wish to book a BBSE or any PDs, or would like any more information on the Suckler Health Club please call the farm office on: 01491 651479

Sheep and Goats

- Vaccination remains the only practicable approach for most farmers to reduce the risk that bluetongue poses to their herd/flock. Please contact the practice to order your vaccine (due to the regulations that surround it, please provide your CPH number).
- Monthly pooled worm egg counts are a great way to monitor worm burden in lambs. Please hand us 10 fresh faecal samples from each group of lambs (15 if the group is >150 lambs), and request a FWEC pooled by group. You might be surprised at who needs treating and who does not!
- There will doubtless be thin ewes at weaning, but if yours seem to be thinner than you would expect or there are more very thin animals, then a thin ewe screen to investigate the reason behind it is worth pursuing.
- As we start to get a bit more rain in September then the risk of flystrike will increase (as will the risk of worms).
- GOATS: goats do not develop such good immunity as sheep after vaccination against clostridial disease, so we recommend six monthly boosters for non-breeding animals and four monthly boosters for breeding females and young animals. As most animals get a booster in the spring, the time for the next booster is upon us! Contact us if you need advice.

Beef Cattle

Calf pneumonia, also known as bovine respiratory disease (BRD), is one of the most common and costly illnesses affecting young cattle in the UK. It is caused by a combination of viral and bacterial pathogens, often triggered by stressors such as weaning, housing, transportation, or sudden weather changes —particularly common in the autumn months. Effective vaccination is a cornerstone of BRD prevention, and a tailored autumn vaccination regime can help protect calves during this high-risk period.

Autumn vaccination strategies typically focus on protecting against the key viral agents—Bovine Respiratory Syncytial Virus (BRSV), Parainfluenza-3 (PI3), Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR)—and bacterial pathogens such as Pasteurella multocida and Mannheimia haemolytica.

The most common vaccines are outlined in the table below, the choice of which will depend on your individual set up and any problems with pneumonia you may have experienced in the past.

An effective autumn regime usually involves vaccinating calves 3 and 6 weeks before the anticipated stress of housing or weaning. Intranasal vaccines are often preferred for young calves due to ease of use and quick protection, however offer a shorter period of immunity compared to injectable vaccines.

Timing, correct administration, and good management practices—such as adequate colostrum intake, minimizing stress, and good ventilation—are essential to ensure vaccine efficacy. A proactive, vaccine-led approach significantly reduces BRD incidence, improves calf health, and ensures better long-term productivity. If you have any questions about which vaccine would be best suited to you, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Vaccine	Route	Onset of Immunity	Length of Immunity	Number of Doses	Protective against
Bovalto Intranasal	Intranasal	10 days	3 months	1x dose from 10 days of age	BRSV, PI3
Bovalto Respi 3	Subcutaneous	3 weeks	6 months	2x doses, 3 weeks apart from 2 weeks of age	BRSV, PI3, Mannheimia haemolytica
Bovalto Respi 4	Subcutaneous	3 weeks	6 months	2x doses, 3 weeks apart from 2 weeks of age	BRSV, PI3, Mannheimia haemolytica and reduces viral excretion of bovine viral diarrhoea virus

News from the Office Team

In August we changed our Practice Management System - this means that our accounts will look a little different to previously. Please give us a call if you have any questions.

Dairy Cattle - Bluetongue

The Bluetongue Hub has had a lot added to it – check it out - https://ruminanthw.org.uk/bluetongue-virus-hub/

If you click on the box "information for farmers" there is now a really good tool to work out the cost of bluetongue (on the right hand side of the page) called BTV-3 vaccination finance calculator (dairy) AHDB.

You can then put in the milk ppl, average yield, number of cows etc and then it shows you if you got a mild infection in the herd (2% yield drop 3 months) moderate, or severe (8% yeild 6 months) how much just the milk drop would cost you. It does the same for Mortality (1-6%) and fertility (0-50%). The fertility drop is more like 0-30% if you use AI, as the 50% marker is a bull getting infected.

The program them lets you put in the cost of the vaccine (which is less than £3 per dose but 2 doses are needed in cattle 3w apart) and then shows you how much vaccination would save you.

If you have beef or sheep there are calculators to work out the cost of infection for your enterprise against the cost of vaccination. Have a look – the potential losses are eyewatering.

Pigs- Seasonal Infertility in Sows

Many herds see a dip in breeding performance in the mid to late summer often linked to periods of heat stress. This can have a negative impact on the sow's reproductive cycle as well as affecting boar libido / semen quality. From mid-September into the autumn, seasonal infertility issues can occur, often triggered by the reducing day length and drop in temperature. Historically pigs were seasonal breeders and although this is no longer the case in modern pig production, there is known to be a biological dampening on reproductive success going into the winter months.

Typical signs of seasonal infertility include:

- Longer wean-to-service intervals
- Silent or weak heats
- Lower conception rates
- Increased regular and irregular returns and increased abortions
- Gilts / younger sows are more likely to be affected than older animals

Control can be challenging especially in outdoor herds. Indoors good lighting can help maximise day length. It is important to maintain sow condition with a lift in feed levels as the temperatures drop. Increased boar exposure and excellent heat detection are also key in maximising conception rates during this time.

ASF Contingency Planning Workshop Friday 19th September 11am - 2pm (lunch provided). Larkmead Vets, OX10 with AHDB (No charge)

This workshop will be focused on helping producers identify clinical signs of ASF, understand routes of spread, and facilitate the co-development of strategic farm-specific disease management and contingency plans.

Please come and join us and make the time to consider this important issue. At a recent workshop it was reported that "It seems one of the biggest eye-openers for many was the importance of safeguarding personal property and homes from movement restrictions – highlighting the need for strategic boundary planning on farms to mitigate risks."

Gamebirds

With avian flu on the rise the APHA have released a heightened "Avian Influenza Risk Warning to Bird Keepers and Gamebird Rearers" for those running a shoot or gamebird rearing. The Avian Influenza Prevention Zone with mandatory biosecurity measures remains across GB but has been updated to include additional biosecurity measures to protect your birds and limit the risk of further outbreaks.

The changes for gamebird keepers include:

- Disinfecting any vehicles upon first entry to the site and each day they are in use
- Providing one feeding station per 60 released gamebirds
- Cleaning feeding and watering stations daily to remove faecal matter, feathers and spilled food
- Covering feeding and where possible, watering stations to avoid contamination from wild bird droppings
- Placed pheasants in release pens should not be fed within 50m of a water body frequented by ducks or other wildfowl
- Placed gamebirds in release pens should not be fed within 500m of any poultry or kept birds
- During the open season, checking placed gamebirds in release pens daily for any signs of avian influenza (a list of these can be found on the APHA website)
- Conducting a daily search of the area within and up to a 50m radius surrounding the perimeter of release pens for carcases of dead gamebirds and dead wild birds.
- Reporting dead wild birds to DEFRA using the dead wild bird reporting tool and disposing of carcasses "appropriately"
- Keeping detailed records of all visitors on site (including deliveries and collections)

The APHA request you report any suspected cases immediately to them as it is a notifiable disease and prompt action is important to prevent wider spread. Please contact us if you need any information or advice.

Medicine Updates

- Betamox RTU- Still in quarantine
- Gletvax 10d/ 50ml- OOS. 20d available.
- Heptavac 50ml available. 100/250/500ml- OOS.
- Lambivac 100ml available. 50ml- OOS
- Ovivac 100ml - due September
- Solantel Cattle Pour On 2.5l - due October
- Solantel Oral Sheep 2.5l and 5l - due October
- Spirovac 25d- OOS
- Zactran 100ml - due late Sept

Please note that all bit.ly links are case sensitive