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## Vet's Viewpoint - Sara



Crisp mornings and the trees putting on their annual show, it's a lovely time to be out on farm. With shorter days and cooler temperatures, now is the opportunity to focus on winter housing preparations to keep stock healthy and productive through the months ahead - check sheds for ventilation, leaks, and cleanliness before animals are brought in. Poor air quality and damp bedding are key contributors to respiratory disease, especially in calves. Good drainage, regular mucking out, and well-maintained ventilation systems will go a long way in keeping animals healthy.

Body condition scoring (BCS) should be a priority across all livestock. For sheep, assessing ewes and rams pre-tupping can make a big difference to fertility and lambing percentages. Aim for a BCS of 3.0–3.5 in ewes, and 3.5-4.0 in rams (fit, not fat!). In cattle, autumn is a great time to identify thin cows that may need extra attention before winter.

One seasonal risk we're seeing more of this year is acorn toxicity especially due to the dry summer. Acorns are highly palatable but can be deadly, particularly to cattle, causing kidney and liver damage. Keep stock away from high-risk areas and watch for early signs like inappetence and depression, animals often get constipation before progressing to diarrhoea. Call us immediately if you suspect exposure.

## Sheep and Goats

- Enzootic abortion of ewes is the number one cause of abortion in the UK. All flocks that buy in female replacements (unless sourced solely from accredited-free sources) are at risk. There are two vaccines:
  1. - a live vaccine (Cevac Chlamydia) that is one injection in a lifetime but must be given at least 1 month prior to tupping, so if you aren't tupping until mid-November there is still time.
  2. - an inactivated vaccine (Inmeva) that is a two injection initial course, with annual boosters required, but it can be given to pregnant ewes, so if you "missed the boat" for Cevac, it doesn't mean you have to do without protection.
- With the wetter weather and lower levels of light, and after people have bought in sheep, now is the beginning of the sheep scab season! However, lice also become more common over the winter. Don't treat blindly, it wastes time, money and harms the environment. Ask us to investigate itchy sheep.
- This is also the season for lameness, as scald, footrot and CODD spread better in the wetter conditions. A lameness prevalence of 2% is achievable, good for sheep welfare and good for your productivity, profit and peace of mind. Ask us about a tailored lameness control plan for your flock.
- While the ideal time to perform pre-breeding examinations on rams is 10 weeks prior to the start of tupping, there is still time to do one, and check that your rams are "firing on all cylinders" prior to tupping.
- 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!



## Beef Cattle



As we move into October, and following on from the focus on respiratory vaccines last month, we should now be mindful of the seasonal challenges that can impact herd health and performance. With housing season approaching, now is the time to review ventilation, bedding, and biosecurity protocols to minimise the risk of respiratory disease, particularly in youngstock. Nutrition also deserves close attention, as fluctuating forage quality and supply this year may require ration adjustments to maintain growth rates and body condition. It would also be wise to run routine checks for parasites, especially liver fluke in wetter grazing areas. Any autumn calving suckler

herds could also consider vaccinating breeding animals for BTV3 prior to bulling in order to protect pregnancy and fertility. For any further information give your vet a call at the practice.

## Save the Date!

Our annual Christmas Quiz will be on **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> of December**. More details coming soon!





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## Dairy Cattle

Check out AHDB for the upcoming meetings on Johnes management – profit through prevention. Whole team meetings to take the next step in Johnes disease control – see <https://ahdb.org.uk/healthy-herds> for details.

Do you know the cost of rearing your heifers? – there is a massive difference between different farms – from £500 to £2000. Think about the cost of your heifers.

Obviously the longer the heifer survival rate the fewer heifers are needed as replacements (and so more profitable beef cows can be bred). A good analogy is that the heifer is like a teenager with a credit card bill – they need to pay back their rearing costs and if they die before they do this then the rest of the group needs to take on their costs.

Maximum yield is at 5th Lactation so any heifer not surviving to 5th lactation is costing money. The cost of a case of diarrhoea or pneumonia is massive if you take into account the reduction in future yield.

Think of the growth of the heifer as the income and wastage in heifer rearing as the things we need to reduce (poor daily liveweight gain, mortality, low fertility).

Good targets to think about are

- Growth targets – weighing heifers is cheap and very useful
- Survival of heifers in the herd: both rearing efficiency and heifer effectiveness:
  1. Rearing efficiency: % heifers born alive that calve at or below the target age at first calving - target >85%
  2. Heifer effectiveness: % heifers born alive that calve at or below the target age at first calving and complete THREE lactations

Target >75%

Give us call if you'd like some help.



## Pigs- ASF contingency planning

Last month we were joined by AHDB, NPA and Livetec to discuss how best to prepare if ASF was to arrive in the UK including on our own or our neighbour's farms. Although a very sobering thought, giving time and consideration to what would happen and how things would be managed is important to do.

On all units there needs to be a refocus on biosecurity. ASF is not wind borne (more than a few metres) so spread is most likely through:

1. Direct contact between healthy pigs and the blood, saliva, urine, or faeces of infected pigs.
2. Contaminated pork / meat products – this is a major risk. The virus can survive in meat products for months – years depending on storage. Care should be taken to avoid any scraps being fed to pigs e.g. from walkers, tradesmen, own staff.
3. Contaminated materials (fomites). The virus can survive for long periods on clothing, boots, tools, vehicles, bedding, etc. Make sure you control your farm access, clean and disinfect and provide farm specific boots and clothing at designated entry points etc.

If you would like more information do speak to one of the team at your next vet visit.

## Medicine Updates



- Alamylin LA 300 - Due late Oct
- Betamox RTU - awaiting stock
- Heptavac 100/250/500 ml - OOS
- Lambivac 50/100ml - OOS

*Please note that all bit.ly links are case sensitive*