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Livestock NEWS

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ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

Staff News

Welcome

Gus Cassie



Gus qualified in 2019, first working in farm practice in Kendal and then doing locum work in northern England, southern Scotland and the Orkney isles. More recently he has been working at the vet school at Edinburgh University doing practical teaching with students. He has a particular interest in infectious diseases and is looking forward to meeting the Paragon clients!

Emily Cartmell



Emily graduated from Bristol in 2026, having previously studied Biology in Edinburgh. She grew up on a fell farm Nr Keswick, which has given her a particular interest in all aspects of sheep work, as well as a keen interest in surgery and youngstock health.
Outside of work Emily enjoys fell-walking and running with her dogs, playing touch rugby and helping out on the family farm.

Dana Beck



Dana joined Paragon in August as a Farm Vet Tech/ Administrator, having previously worked as a Veterinary Care Assistant for several years. Dana is enjoying the varied nature of her role and the opportunity to support both the vets and farmers. Alongside this, she also helps with evening milkings on a local dairy farm.
Outside of work, Dana enjoys exploring the Lake District with her spaniel Barney, going to the gym and spending time with friends.

Bluetongue Update: Considering Tup Fertility



By India Hoey

As we head towards the end of the bluetongue risk period, it's worth thinking about what the disease could mean for our flocks and herds in the months ahead. We've been seeing cases of Bluetongue in Cumbria and our local area for a while now, and although it's still too early to know the full picture, concerns are starting to emerge across the country about the possible longer-term effects of infection.

One area that's attracting attention is tup fertility. Colleagues in other parts of the UK have reported smaller, softer testicles and poorer semen quality in tups that have had bluetongue. Semen samples have shown watery ejaculates with low sperm counts and sperm with poor movement, or even a high proportion of dead sperm. We're still learning more about how widespread these problems might be and how long they could last, but with tupping underway on many farms, it's something worth bearing in mind now. If your tups have already gone out, or you're just getting them ready, it's worth keeping an eye on their condition and performance. A tup can look fit and healthy however it takes a minimum of 100 days for fertility to return after infection with bluetongue. Meaning animals infected, way back in July could still be experiencing fertility problems. If you've had bluetongue on your farm, or you're concerned about a tup, fertility testing can help identify potential issues. We carry out testing at the practice, so get in touch if you'd like to discuss whether it would be useful for your flock.



Photo Credit Farmers Guardian

As midge activity drops with the colder weather, the immediate risk of infection should reduce, but the effects of bluetongue may continue to be seen for some time. Not every infected animal will have shown obvious clinical signs, and some may appear to have recovered well. Keep an eye on animals that were affected earlier in the season and make a note of any ongoing health or performance concerns.

Good records of affected animals and groups could prove useful if fertility problems, unexpected scanning results or drops in production crop up later. With tups working now on many farms, it's worth thinking ahead and keeping bluetongue in mind when assessing how the breeding season is going.

There have also been some changes to bluetongue reporting. If, after examining affected animals, the clinical signs are clearly consistent with bluetongue, vets can now diagnose the disease based on those signs and report it directly to APHA using the new online reporting form. Bluetongue remains a notifiable disease, so any suspected or confirmed cases must still be reported, even where the diagnosis is made on clinical signs alone.

Bluetongue won't be responsible for every fertility problem we see, but keeping track of any concerns now could help us understand its true impact on tup performance in the coming year.

Extended Colostrum Feeding in Calves



By Mollie Kirkwood

The benefits of colostrum feeding to newborn calves are well understood, and most farmers understand the 5 "Q"s of colostrum management (Quality, Quantity, Quickly, Quietly, sQueaky clean). The aim is to get enough high-quality colostrum into calves as quickly as possible after birth. This means that the newborn calf will absorb sufficient antibodies into the bloodstream before gut closure. However, feeding colostrum after the first 24 hours of life can also be beneficial in dairy calves as it supports calf health, growth, and future productivity.

Extended colostrum feeding may refer to feeding true colostrum (from the first milking) or 'transition' milk (from the 2nd to 8th milkings after calving) or adding colostrum or colostrum replacer to milk replacer or whole milk for a minimum of 4 up to 14 days after being born.

Colostrum is more than just IgG antibodies. It contains considerably more protein and fat than regular milk, as well as antibodies, immune cells, cytokines, antimicrobial compounds, growth factors, and oligosaccharides. These components have been shown to promote gut health and development in calves, improve daily liveweight gain and reduce calf treatments and deaths (from both diarrhoea and respiratory disease).

Potential benefits of extended colostrum feeding can include:

- **Increased energy provision**
- **Increased serum IgG concentrations**

  Calves' guts may still have some permeability to IgG molecules beyond 12 hours of life, so a second (or third) feed at 12-24 hours can further increase the transfer of passive immunity.

- **Reduced calf illness and mortality death**

  Several studies have shown reduced disease (especially scour) and death rates in calves given extended colostrum feeds.
  As well as the colostrum helping to provide the extra energy that a sick calf needs, the antibodies it contains bind to bacteria and viruses in the gut, providing 'local' gut immunity. Feeding colostrum to scouring calves for up to 2 weeks of age can be one aspect of their treatment – think of it as a medicine!

- **Reduced antimicrobial use**

  Healthier calves = fewer antibiotics.

- **Increased immune protection for specific dam-vaccinated pathogens**
- **Improving intestinal development**

  Feeding colostrum or transition milk may have beneficial effects over whole milk on the metabolic and hormonal profiles of neonatal calves, and it may promote gastrointestinal development by increasing intestinal villi height and therefore the surface area for nutrient absorption

- **Improved average daily weight gain**

  Research has shown improved pre- and/or post-weaning average daily gain in calves fed colostrum for two weeks, resulting in greater final bodyweight.

- **Improved reproductive and lactation outcomes.**

  Research suggests that the knock-on effect of extended colostrum feeding could last into adulthood.

However, extended colostrum feeding requires careful attention to hygiene, availability, herd health and cost. Other downsides include:

- **Disease transfer**
  Pooling milk from several cows can increase disease-transmission risks i.e. Johne's, mycoplasma and salmonella. Pasteurisation of colostrum may help but it won't eliminate the risk.
- **Practicalities**

  It might be hard to manage - proper storage, pasteurization, freezing, or commercial replacers are important management considerations
- **Availability**

  Lack of first-milking colostrum available on farm to spare. See below for ways round this...

Practical ideas for extended colostrum feeding:

Please note the following ideas are not designed to replace the initial feeds, and they assume that calves already have adequate passive transfer through proper colostrum management during the first six hours of life.

1. **Mix first-milking "true" colostrum into whole milk or milk replacer in a 1:1 mix and feed for at least 5 days.**
2. **Feed transition milk for 3-5 days.**

- Transition milk must be stored correctly (4°C for 2-3 days; or frozen at -20°C) to prevent bacterial multiplication. Alternatively, feed the transition milk immediately.
- Always test transition milk quality using a Brix refractometer.
- Target the youngest calves first, especially if there is not enough surplus colostrum available.
- Beware transition milk can be a major risk for the transmission of diseases such as Mycoplasma bovis and Johne's Disease. Pasteurisation at 60°C for 60 minutes will reduce but not eliminate these risks.
- DO NOT feed waste milk from cows with mastitis or under treatment to your calves.

3. **Add two or three large (50ml) ice cubes of frozen first-milking colostrum to each milk replacer feed for a minimum of 5 days.**

- This will provide at least 7.5g IgG per feed, assuming that the first milking colostrum is >50g/l IgG (22%).

4. **Add colostrum replacer (providing at least 100g IgG) to each milk replacer feed for at least 5 days**.

LEVEL 1 FOOT TRIMMING COURSE

25th & 26th November

Course includes:

- Practical hands-on experience
- Dutch 5 step method review
- Identification, treatment & prevention of common foot lesions
- Knife management
- 1-to-1 teaching

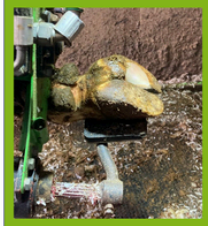
If you are interested please speak to a member of the farm team

Cost £350 + VAT

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