

ISSUE 68 Autumn/Winter 2019

Livestock NEWS

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ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

Staff News

Congratulations to Charlotte, Matt and Oliver Fisher on the birth of Edward Robert Fisher on the 18th October weighing in at a healthy 8lb 4oz.



Red Tractor
Farm Assurance

Changes to Red Tractor Dairy Standards from October 2019

As many of you may be aware there are multiple changes to the Dairy Red Tractor Standards from 1st October 2019.

The recommendation that 'at least one person who is responsible for administering medicines has undertaken training and holds a certificate of competence/attendance from training undertaken since October 2016' has now become a full standard.

For dairy farmers we are recommending that Milksure training course is undertaken. Milksure meets the requirements of Red Tractor as well as focusing on important topics of best practice in medicine use and reducing the risk of medicine residues in milk. For more information look up www.milksure.co.uk or speak to one of our vets.

Handling Facilities



By Anne Abbs

Having done a lot (!) of TB Testing, I have seen many handling systems in operation. There are lots of fancy races and crushes on the market which can cost an arm and a leg, but a few simple principles can make even the most basic of facilities work quickly and efficiently. Some of you may have heard of or even seen Temple Grandin, an American woman with a keen interest in bovine behaviour and it's definitely worth reading articles by her if you are designing a new handling system.

Cows like to walk uphill if possible, so a level or gently rising race works best - downhill is much slower as they fear slipping so are more cautious. On that note, make sure the crush floor is non-slip as a cow that slides as she comes into the crush will dance about in an attempt to secure her footing. Checker plate is good but wood can be fine - it can get slippery when wet so cross braces for the front and back feet make the cow feel more secure. They also like to go back to where they came from (hence the use of circular races) and some of the quickest systems I know are purely down to the race and crush facing towards the housing!

Cattle love to walk towards a light, so point the crush towards daylight or have a light just in front of the crush. A light at the tail end may be great for doing feet etc but cows don't like to cross a beam and will tend to stop at the back of the crush if that is where the strongest light is. If cows randomly stop in the race and are hard to move forward it can help to walk up the crush yourself checking for stray light beams falling across the race which can then be blocked.

The best races are those with a backing gate. There is nothing more frustrating than loading the race finding that the back few cows reverse out and then refuse to come back in because they know something is up! Sliding gates in the race are better than swinging gates and it really helps if the cow behind the gate can see the front cow escape - she is more likely to rush forward when the partition is opened.

Lastly, make sure there is enough head room for cows in crushes with a gate and separate yoke. Many newer crushes have the gate well in front of the yoke or the gate is bowed in the middle which allows the cow to stretch her neck out and the yoke still closes behind her ears. If she has to bend her head down in order to shut the yoke you could be wasting time on each animal.

<https://www.grandinlivestockhandlingsystems.com/>

Mobility



Did you know the most significant welfare issue in dairy farming is lameness?

So what is lameness? Lameness is any abnormality affecting the cows **By Karen McNeil**

gait. This can be caused by a variety of feet and leg conditions. Most farmers are under the perception a cow is only lame if she has an issue with her feet but a cow is still classed as lame if she is slightly stiff as this could also be causing her significant pain.

Lame cows cost time and money. On average poor mobility in dairy cows can cost the farmer £180 per case through reduced milk yield (as a lame cow will be reluctant to get up and feed), treatments and productivity i.e. longevity. If you want to work out your cost of lameness you can do so at www.cattle-lameness.org.uk using their cost calculator.

Many factors can cause lameness the most coming being infectious diseases, poor quality floors in housing, poorly designed cubicles, uneven cow tracks and irregular or ineffective foot trimming. Early detection of lameness is key to controlling mobility problems. The most effective way to achieve this is through regular mobility scoring, the score system can detect lameness early thus resulting in treatment before the problem becomes a major issue.

Detecting and treating a lame cow early also maximises the chance of that cow becoming sound again. Mobility scoring has a scoring range from 0 -3. For the cow to be a score 0 she will have good mobility and bear weight evenly on all four feet, Score 1 she will have imperfect mobility a shortened stride but the affected limb is not immediately identifiable, Score 2 impaired mobility uneven weight bearing with a limb that is immediately identifiable, Score 3 severe impaired mobility unable to keep up with a healthy herd (dog lame).

Benefits of mobility scoring

- Early Detection
- Improved animal welfare
- Suitable for all herd types
- Increased performance
- Monitor and benchmark trends

To get the most out of mobility scoring, a score of the herd should be carried out regularly ideally every 3 months by the same scorer so the results are consistent. Particular attention should be paid to the area where the scoring takes place, the surface should be even and non - slip and enable a side and rear view of about 10 paces.

One of the measures in place to help improve lameness in UK dairy herds is the register of mobility scorers (ROMS) this register helps to standardise mobility scoring and all scorers are trained and accredited enabling them to provide a high and consistent standard of scoring. Dan Griffiths and Karen McNeil are both ROMS accredited scorers.

Fluke in Sheep



By Charlie Bradshaw

The fluke forecast for this autumn is showing high risk for us in the North West. The risk will, however, be farm dependent. The more wet and muddy ground the higher the risk as there is likely to be more snails which carry the parasite.

So, the important question is what to do?

Firstly, monitor your stock carefully for signs of disease such as loss of condition, bottle jaw, anaemia and investigate any sudden deaths. Secondly do some testing. There are a number of ways we can test for Fluke:

- Muck sample: at this time of year we need to look for enzyme rather than the fluke eggs but be aware early in infection this can still be negative.
- Blood testing: this can show exposure to fluke and is useful in young animals such as this years lambs.
- Post mortem examination - very useful in acute outbreaks where animals die.

Treatment once fluke has been confirmed involves using a triclabendazole product at this time of year. It is strongly advised that you check for resistance to triclabendazole by testing a muck sample 2 weeks after dosing. Resistance is becoming more common and it is important to know if the drug is doing its job on your farm. Additionally, to help control fluke later in the year and slow down resistance we recommend dosing with a closantel product (such as Solantel) in January or February.

If you need further advice on controlling fluke, please speak to your vet.

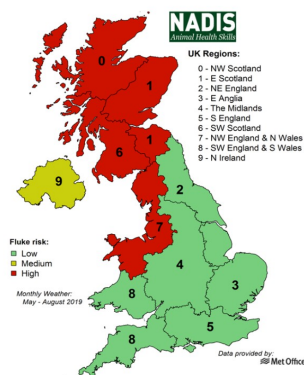


Figure 3: Provisional 2019 UK Autumn fluke risk forecast by region.



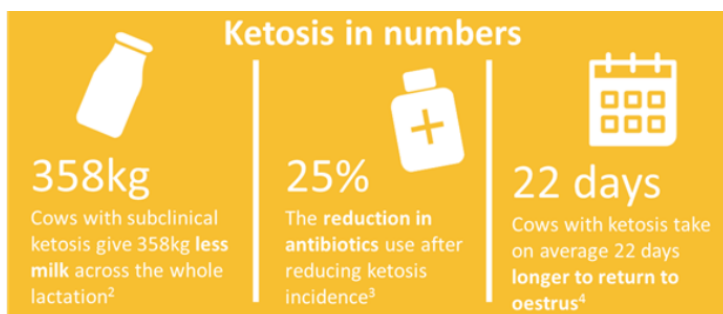


Transition Cow

Mike Overton, global dairy informatics with Elanco spoke at our farmers meeting on 16th October. Mike looked at the impact of transition cow management and how getting this step wrong can lead onto numerous problems on the farm. We looked at :

- The potential impact of under-recording disease and as a result of this the under estimation of the loss attributed to that disease on your farm.
- The changes that occur around transition and calving and the steps we can take to minimise the impact of this on farm. Simple steps and assessments of environment and animals themselves to highlight areas for attention.
- Cost of transition diseases.
- Risk factors associated with Ketosis and cost benefit of minimising this.
- The importance of heifer replacements and their adequate growth prior to calving for maximal productivity.
- Highlighting the need and benefits of carrying out a healthy start checklist on your farm. Looking at the transition cow system in place on the farm and finding areas, whether cow comfort or feed space, that could be improved.

As part of this, Elanco are offering a free Transition Cow management assessment for your farm. This will look at how different management changes can help reduce the impact of the dry period. Please speak to your vet or Karen McNeil to organise a visit.



Change in Practice Computer System

Those of you who have waited at the front desk for your medicine orders to be put up will appreciate that our current Practice Management System (PMS) is grinding to a standstill which is not only frustrating our clients but also our staff and our efficiency.

Updates were going to cost a fortune for no additional functionality so we have taken the decision to change to a new PMS which we trust will not only be faster but also bring a great deal more functionality and with that improved efficiency.

We are aiming to switch over at the beginning of December and we hope to keep any disruption and change to an absolute minimum however there are a few things we would appreciate you bear in mind:-

- We will implement extensive staff training before we 'go live' however adjusting to any new system will take a little time so we ask you bear with us and our staff as we get to grips with a new system.
- We would be grateful if you tried to minimise large medicine orders between 2nd and 6th December. If you particularly need a large order at the start of the month please put this in with our staff the week before the end of November.
- We plan on keeping charging and pricing very similar to current although billing and invoicing will obviously look slightly different. Some selling narrative will also look different.
- We hope disruption will be minimal however if you have any questions or queries please don't hesitate to contact the practice.

Thanks for your understanding and support and we trust this will bring mutual benefits in the future.

Dates for your diary

Dalston Farmers Christmas Drinks

Wednesday 18th December at 7-7.30pm

@ The Bridge End Dalston

RSVP by 13th December

Newbiggin Farmers Christmas Drinks

Thursday 19th December at 7-7.30pm

@ Lowther Castle Inn Hackthorpe

RSVP by 13th December

Courses

3 Day DIY AI AND CATTLE FERTILITY—[11th Nov](#) - [13th Nov](#) spaces still available

MILKSURE COURSE

2 DAY FOOT TRIMMING COURSE

MASTERING MEDICINES COURSE

Please get in touch to register



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