Healthy Livestock Initiative – Don’t miss out

To date >100 clients have benefitted from the funding available through the healthy livestock initiative. Funding has been available to raise awareness, improve understanding, assess disease risk and to partly subsidise disease investigations for key infectious diseases BVD and Johnes’ in both beef and dairy herds, mastitis and lameness in dairy herds, pneumonia in beef herds and parasite control in flocks. The initiative has been granted an extension enabling clients to benefit until Autumn 2013.

Recent Changes:
Johnes’ Workstream - Recent changes to the project now mean that those who benefitted from the Johnes’ workstream are now eligible for a follow up review visit. We will be contacting you shortly to schedule visits as they become due.

Mastitis – Dairy Co Mastitis Control Plan: Those who have undertaken the mastitis analysis and control plan are also now eligible for a follow up data analysis and review visit. Once again we will be scheduling these visits as they become due.

If you attended one of our meetings over the last 12 months but have not progressed through the work-streams, we will contact you to ensure you are given the opportunity to do so.

We will also be running additional farmer meetings for all work-streams early in the new year. The following have been scheduled. See our website for more details.

Pneumonia Meeting (beef and dairy)
- January 15th 2012
Dairy Herds - Mastitis
- Week commencing February 11th 2012.

Nature’s free Immunisation—Are your animals making the most of it?

Nobody could sell anything that is as valuable to a newborn calf as a good dose of colostrum.

A good dose of colostrum in the first 6 hours of a calf’s life provides vital antibodies to give protection against a host of diseases to which they may be exposed.

The colostrum of a beef cow tends to be much more concentrated, however, on a cold wet day a newborn calf may still not consume enough. A dairy cow’s colostrum quality quickly deteriorates as she produces more milk post calving, the calf needs to get there quickly and enthusiastically or be helped with a tube or bottle. We recommend that everybody keeps some in the freezer in small doses for quick defrosting (in warm water).

Our initial calf screens have shown that there is room for improvement on many farms.

Please contact your surgery to book your first calf health visit today and have your calves’ antibody levels checked.

December 2012

Common causes of weight loss in adult sheep
- don’t hesitate to get in contact with your vet to investigate unexplained weight loss.

Listed below are common and less common causes of weight loss in adult sheep.

**Fluke**—chronic liver fluke can cause significant production losses in your flock. Successive wet summers have created the perfect environment for fluke and their intermediate host, the mud snail.

**Haemonchus**—unlike other gut worms can affect both growing lambs and adults, with outbreaks becoming more and more common. The blood sucking nature of the worm will lead to anaemia. Acute infections can be a cause of weakness and sudden death, with animals often in good body condition. Scouring is a not a feature of haemonchus infection. Chronic infection can resemble fluke with weight loss, bottle jaw, anaemia and weakness. Faecal egg counts with haemonchus infection are often very high, with counts over 10,000 eggs per gram, not uncommon.

**Johnes**—the level of Johne’s disease is under estimated, but is a common problem in the UK. Infected flocks can have a mortality rate annually of up to 5%. Johne’s presents as chronic weight loss in adult sheep with normal dentition and on adequate nutrition. Unlike cattle, diarrhoea is not a common feature.

**Dental Problems**

**Nutrition**

**Lameness**

**Less common causes:**

Maedi-Visna
Scrapie
Intestinal tumours
CLA (Caseous lymphadenitis)
SPA (Sheep pulmonary adenomatosis)/(Jaagsiekte)
Liver Fluke Alert – High Risk 2012/13
Forecast of a high risk of disease due to liver fluke in autumn/winter 2012/13 has been issued by SCOPS and NADIS.
This comes as no surprise after having the wettest April to June period on record and the wettest summer for 100 years.

Check your Herd Status Now
We will continue to provide subsidised screening for dairy and beef herds for December

Our Results so far: Dairy Herd: 66% either high or moderate levels of infections.
Suckler Cows: 85% herds affected and 33% of cows tested were infected.

Acute disease in sheep is likely to be more common and may occur on some farms for the first time.
On high risk pastures repeat treatments may be necessary to prevent outbreaks.

Chronic disease is likely to be common in untreated animals and may occur on farms for the first time.
Chronic liver fluke disease causes more insidious losses due to the feeding of adult fluke in the bile ducts and may be seen as poor production in dairy cattle and poor condition in adult sheep and beef cattle, poor weight gain in growing lambs and calves and the condemnation of affected livers at the slaughterhouse.

How do you assess the risk on your own farm?
Not every farm is affected by fluke so it is worth investigating prior to treatment.

- Do you have ‘flukey’ pastures/habitats – the intermediate stages of the fluke and the intermediate ‘mud’ snail host require water to develop and multiply. Springs or ‘rushes’ in, or bordering, your fields indicate ‘flukey’ habitat are present – most farms in North Devon have at risk habitats.
- Use feedback from the abattoir
- Investigate deaths
- Ask your usual vet about liver fluke tests – subsidised tests on bloods from beef cattle or milk for dairy cattle are available. For sheep the best tests are post mortems or dung examinations.
- Unexplained weight loss in a group, poor production (weight gain, milk yield etc) – may be the first indication of a fluke problem and should prompt an investigation by your vet.

What are the treatment and control options?
The key is to choose the right flukicide for the stage of liver fluke (early immature, immature or adult) which you need to treat. Appropriate treatment should also reduce contamination of pasture in the following year.

In the autumn and winter early immature fluke are likely to be present so choose a product containing triclabendazole (TCBZ) (unless TCBZ resistance has been proven). The oral formulation of TCBZ is active against all stages of fluke > 2 days old in sheep and all stages > 2 week old in cattle.
During the housing period, when later immature and adult fluke are more likely to be present choose a different product such as closantel (eg “Flukiver”), nitroxynil (eg “Trodax”)
In late spring consider an adult flukicide at the “fluke dose rate” such as albendazole (eg “Valbazen SC”) or ricobendazole (eg “Rycoben SC”).

Is resistance to flukicides common?
Resistance whilst relatively uncommon, has been reported to several of the classes of drug active against liver fluke, so if you suspect a flukicide has not been effective please contact your vet as soon as possible for advice and further investigation.

How often should you need to treat?
This is very dependent upon your farm risk but between one and four times per year, consult your vet.

Are there practical management options to control liver fluke disease?
Management options are aimed at preventing stock grazing ‘flukey’ pastures or accessing the wet, boggy areas during high risk periods.

- not grazing ‘flukey’ pastures during high risk periods
- fencing off ‘flukey’ areas such as springs, streams & bogs
- installing water troughs
- housing cattle to prevent re-infection
Unfortunately In many situations these are impractical and so control relies upon long-term, well planned strategic treatments of stock with flukicides active against immature fluke. Please talk to us so we can help you to formulate an effective approach.