

South Wales Farm Vets

Ty Newydd

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Our Team



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Living And Working In Your Community

March 2022

Hello and welcome to the March Newsletter. If January was largely calm and dry, February made up for it! I hope you didn't have too much damage, and that you are all ok.

We have had another coronavirus warning in the last week – this time for the type that causes winter dysentery in housed, largely dairy herds. As the name suggests, it can cause a nasty bloody diarrhoea, milk drop and general malaise. It tends to spread through a herd in a few days and is transitory with spontaneous recovery. If you have any concerns, please phone.

In February we saw what we believe to be a Schmallenberg case in a calf. The mother tested positive. Just to remind you, Schmallenberg virus is spread by insects (mainly midges) and if a previously uninfected dam becomes infected for the first time during pregnancy, it can cause malformations in the lamb/calf/kid such as bent limbs, fused joints and twisted spine. It is very unlikely to be a disease that affects your farm but if you have any queries, just phone.

Apologies for not having anything cheerful to report this month! Hope you all have a good March, fingers crossed for some decent weather.

Mary

Caesarean section in the cow

We tend to think of a caesarean as a routine procedure in cows, when actually it is a major surgery requiring both the surgeon and farmer working closely together for best outcomes. It is essential that good aftercare can be provided for both cow and calf. The procedure is associated with an increased risk of infertility and culling of the dam as well as post-operative complications. When you consider that we perform this major surgery with the cow stood tied up in a cowshed it's amazing that we don't see more complications.

Aftercare of the cow

Following surgery the cow should be kept in a clean dry area with free access to food and water. Ideally she should be kept separate from other cows for at least 24 hours to allow close monitoring.

Things to observe include:

- Is she drinking and eating as normal?
- Signs of restlessness or discomfort
- Appearance of the surgical wound – any swelling or discharge, sutures intact?

If you have any concerns at this stage it always best to ring and speak to one of the vets.

Once the animal is put back with other members of the herd it is important to continue to monitor her general health, demeanour and appetite.

Common problems seen after surgery are:

Wound infections/wound breakdown - Following surgery there may be breakdown of the sutures or development of swellings around the incision. If an abscess forms then this can be lanced or the bottom most sutures can be removed to permit drainage. If you notice a problem with the wound please contact the practice.

Retained foetal membranes (cleansing) - In cases of dystocia, including those resulting in caesarean section, the incidence of RFM can be as high as 50%. If the cow is not sick it is advisable to leave the



Sian Fuller



Dom Day



Jimmy Jackson



Sian Lloyd



Helen Dando



Tracey Huntley

membranes for 5-7 days, early attempts at manual extraction may result in tearing of the membranes, damaging the uterus lining or leaving some behind.

Metritis - Caused by bacterial colonisation of the uterus, generally occurs within first few days following a caesarean. Infection can be severe, in the worst cases causing death.

Endometritis (whites) - Infection of the first layers of uterus (endometrium), occurs from 21 days post calving. It does not have the same severe effects on the cow as metritis.

Peritonitis - A bacterial infection of the abdominal cavity. It can be a localized infection and be contained by the tissue that surrounds the abdominal organs, or it may be diffuse and lead to a septic peritonitis (which can be fatal).

Septicaemia - Caused by the presence of bacteria and their toxins within the bloodstream. Can be secondary to peritonitis, metritis or retained foetal membranes as well as other infections not related to surgery.

Skin emphysema - Following surgery air may leak into the spaces between muscles layers or beneath the skin. This can be painful and make the cow look miserable but tends to spontaneously resolve.

Signs to watch out for

- Excessive swelling around the wound
- Reduced appetite and/or drinking: seen as reduced gut fill and sunken eyes
- Dull depressed demeanor
- Pain: standing with an arched back or a reluctance to move
- Fetid, watery red/brown vaginal discharge
- Raised temperature: May feel warm to touch or check the temperature if you have a thermometer
- Sharp rapid breathing



The risk of many of these complications can be reduced if you have good facilities for cow restraint during the operation and somewhere suitable to house them afterwards however if you notice any of these signs it is best to contact the practice for advice and medication or a visit as needed.

What to do if your ewe aborts

If you are concerned that you have ewes aborting (this may mean weak lambs born alive but before time then dying as well) then it is worth investigating the cause. In order to do this we need to get samples from the aborted lambs to the laboratory as clean and fresh as possible.

Best practice is to remove the **lambs and the placenta** from the ewe into a clean plastic bag as soon as you find them. Mark the ewe and isolate her from the rest of the flock in case the cause is something infectious. Remember to wash your hands well as salmonella can be a cause of sheep abortion and you don't want that at lambing time!

Once you've ensured you have the appropriate samples safe give the practice a ring to arrange for us to collect the necessary samples from the foetuses. This is usually done at the surgery to save a visit fee, with samples couriered to the lab overnight. Results will start to come back to us after 2-3 days but can take 7-10 days for some of the less common causes.



Office opening hours

Monday – Friday

8.30am - 5.30pm

Emergency out of hours service

Weeknights 5.30pm - 8.30am

Saturday & Sunday all day