

South Wales Farm Vets

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Living And Working In Your Community

October 2020

Hello and welcome to October – we enjoyed some late and welcome sunshine at the end of September, but autumn is well and truly here now.

We are continuing to see some very unusual, unseasonal and very high worm egg counts in sheep. Please continue to consider worms as a significant cause of disease. We are also starting to see fluke. Of course, we can check for both in faecal samples.

This month we are launching a new service for our sheep and beef farmers – a new nutritional service aimed at helping to balance the ration over the housing and lambing period. Russell explains later.

We are in for a difficult 6 months with coronavirus affecting all our lives. We are committed to continuing to provide our excellent service while looking after our clients as well as your stock. Please let us know about shielding or vulnerable people on your farm before we come out – we are all equipped with masks, visors and gloves and are very prepared to wear them.

Mary

South Wales Farm Vets Nutrition Advisory Service

As you will know all too well, feeding stock is both important and expensive. The most variable part of any ration will always be the forage, as each growing season will be different and there is no guarantee of being able to mow at the right time. Despite this, many farms will feed the same quantity of the same purchased feed every year, when there may be the option of a cheaper or better alternative.

Forage analysis is quick and easy to do but provides valuable information regarding the energy and protein content of the silage sample. The feed requirements of animals are well established and so it is easy to work out how much, and what additional feed is needed, either as cake or as a home mix e.g. protein plus barley. Mineral analysis can be performed on the sample at the same time, to check trace elements.



Over and underfeeding can both be harmful. Underfeeding energy to ewes before lambing will result in twin lamb disease, along with reduced milk production from the ewe as she has lost her body reserves. Similarly, underfeeding protein will result in poor colostrum quality, which will impact lamb health.

Overfeeding dry cows before calving will result in the cow becoming fat, and the calf becoming oversized, which will result in calving difficulties. As with ewes, underfed cows will have less milk but will also struggle to get back in calf after calving.

Growing stock require the correct ratio of energy to protein to achieve the maximum growth. If either is lacking, this will reduce growth correspondingly. Large imbalances can also end up with cattle fattening before they should or growing upwards, without ever filling out.

This year we will be starting a nutrition advisory service, initially to cover ewes, suckler cows and growing cattle. Three levels will be available, which, in a burst of originality, will be called Gold, Silver and Bronze.



Sian Fuller



Rachel Davies



Laura Grey



Sian Lloyd



Helen Dando



Tracey Huntley

Bronze: 3 silage samples, with rations formulated based on the result of each e.g. ‘your ewes will need 0.5kg each of 16% crude protein cake’

Silver: 6 silage samples, with rations, plus membership of our nutrition discussion groups for beef and sheep, which, covid rules allowing, will be held on farm

Gold: All the benefits of Silver membership, plus metabolic blood profiles on your sheep, sucklers or youngstock.



The samples can be carried out at any point during the winter—sheep farms may want to cluster their analysis around lambing time, whilst suckler farms will want to know silage quality even before housing to be able to set a ration up to feed all winter.

Blood profiles allow any changes to be made to the ration before problems e.g. twin lamb, are noticed clinically, as well as being able to monitor trace element status. This should allow stock performance to be maintained whilst they are under maximum metabolic pressure.

We understand that many of you will have silage analysis carried out by your feed supplier. However, if you still want to use parts of our service, e.g. growing dairy heifers, then get in touch as we would like to include you somehow.

If you are interested, please contact the surgery, or speak to one of the vets and we will be able to give you more details, as I’ve been told that I only have limited space in this month’s newsletter.

Russell

Bovine respiratory disease

As the days get shorter we are fast approaching housing time, so are you ready for it?

Respiratory disease has been estimated to cost the UK cattle industry £80 million annually affecting both the dairy and beef industry.

Dairy farm	Beef farm
Treatment cost	Treatment cost
Delay to first calving	Moderate case: 72g reduction in daily live-weight gain (DLWG)
4% reduction in 1 st lactation yield	Severe case: 202g reduction in DLWG
8% reduction in 2 nd lactation yield	

Exact costs of cases are difficult to predict as they depend on milk price and feed costs for the dairy outbreaks and beef cattle are affected by feed costs and carcass quality/grading, in addition to the initial treatment costs and any deaths.

Usually pneumonia is caused primarily by viruses which cause initial damage then allowing bacteria to invade in a second wave. The animal’s environment will also be a major contributing factor - we are all aware that bad weather and poor ventilation are significant risks for an outbreak of pneumonia.

There are no treatments specifically for virus infections, although we can treat the bacterial infection with antibiotics and help reduce the symptoms with anti-inflammatories. For this reason prevention is the best policy using a combination of vaccination and improved ventilation/housing and appropriate stocking density.

To discuss pneumonia vaccination, or ventilation, contact us at the practice.

