

Farm Animal Practice News

Langford Vets 

 University of
BRISTOL

Farmer
Spring/Summer 2023

Welcome to the Farm Animal Practice

As spring turns into summer, within the practice we will be shifting our attentions and workload from the more 'reactive' work at lambing and calving to disease prevention and health planning.

This is a great time of year for us all to make use of the possibly lighter summer workload. Take some time to reflect on the successes and challenges of the winter months, as well as to make plans for preventative healthcare by updating herd and flock health plans and thinking ahead to pasture and parasite management.

On that theme, thanks to all that came along to the preventative parasite management in cattle lunch talk we held in partnership with Noorbrook. I hope you enjoyed the informative talk, and enjoyed the lunch!

As the year moves on, a few changes will be happening around the practice. We will see changes in student numbers spending time in the practice as part of their final year rotations and we have some staffing changes in both the vet and admin team.

Throughout the summer we look forward to seeing you at the various events we have planned within the practice, as well as out and about.



Page 2: Staffing Update | Student Update | Animal Health and Welfare Pathway

Page 3: Flockcheck Bloods | Thinking about the Dung Beetles

Page 4: What's in a Milk Powder?

Client Events

- **Tackling Redmite in Poultry**
1 June 2023 7pm
- **Free Stomach Pump Service and Repair Clinic** - 7 June 2023 11am-1pm
- **Sustainability in Farming (Kite Consulting)** - 27 June 2023 7pm
- **The Role of Footbathing in Cattle Lameness** - July 2023 12pm (CEVA Sponsored)
Lunch Provided
- **Red Tractor Medicines Training and Certification** - 25 July 2023 1pm

www.langfordvets.co.uk/events

01934 852 650



Check
out our
Instagram

Follow us on social media!



@langfordfarmvets



@langfordvetsfarm



Opening Hours: Mon - Fri 8.30am - 5pm

Telephone: 01934 852 650
24 hour emergency cover

Email us: farmpractice@langfordvets.co.uk

Web: langfordvets.co.uk/farm

Farm Animal Practice, Langford Vets,
Langford House, Langford, BS40 5DU

Staffing Update

We will be saying Goodbye to Izzi in mid-July; since she initially only joined the practice on a 1 year contract we were lucky to keep her for two, but now she will be moving on to pastures new (New Zealand pastures in fact!) and we wish her all the best in her career as a farm vet.

As a result of Izzi's departure Sarah Wood will be doing more work for the practice so keep an eye out for her out on your farms and holdings a bit more going forwards!

Receptionist Maddy will be going on maternity leave starting in July (congratulations to her and her partner Rob!). As a result we are recruiting a maternity leave cover for Maddy's full time role in the practice.

Student Update

As part of a change in curriculum (which requires students to see more 'first opinion' practice) all final year students will spend more time on farm animal rotations. To support this, students will not only be spending time with the Langford team but also with other practices in the local area. As a result the numbers of students seeing practice with our farm practice will reduce from 8 to 6 on any given day.



Despite this change the number of weeks the students spend in farm animal practices in their final year is still relatively small and so we, and they, really appreciate all opportunities for learning that you help us provide with the cases we see on your farms and holdings.

The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (AH&WP): paying farmers to improve animal health and welfare of their livestock

The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway is a government funded scheme to encourage farmers to work with vets to reduce endemic disease (regularly occurring within an area or

community) and improve animal health and welfare. This scheme is a result of the end of the UK's involvement in the EU's common agricultural policy (CAP). The money has been re-directed to different agriculture programmes including the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway by which eligible farms will claim a set lump sum to pay for 2 – 3 hours of vet time to discuss and agree on implementable plans to improve animal health and welfare and to carry out certain specified disease testing.



During the visit, your vet can discuss your issues or concerns regarding the health and welfare of your animals and provide you with personalised advice. They can also discuss biosecurity on your farm or medicines use. This visit will not be able to be used to complete or sign off health plans. The vet will carry out some specific diagnostic testing around endemic diseases:

- bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) in cattle,
- porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) in pigs
- test the effectiveness of worming treatments in sheep

After the review you'll receive a report and the test results. The full report will not be shared with APHA, however some information regarding health and welfare of your animals, including test results, will be. You will not be penalised in any way regarding the results of these visits. Once you have received the report from the vet you will be eligible to receive the payment.

You can register your interest at:

www.apply-for-an-annual-health-and-welfare-review.defra.gov.uk/apply/register-your-interest

It should be noted that once accepted, the AH&WP visit must happen within 6 months and so it is important to consider the timing of this visit with regards to activities on the farm and when it could be most beneficial. If you would like to discuss this, or any other aspect of the AH&WP with us please give the practice a call on:

01934 852 650

Flockcheck Bloods

Once again, this year MSD are running their Flockcheck blood sampling scheme. This is suitable for flocks that have had issues with abortions or high barren rates this year. You must have over 100 breeding ewes to be eligible for the subsidised testing, with MSD covering the cost of the lab fees. They test for enzootic abortion and toxoplasmosis, which are the two most commonly isolated causes of abortion.

Enzootic abortion is caused by *Chlamydia abortus* and is mainly transmitted by infected sheep shedding the organism in birthing fluids. It causes abortion by causing inflammation of the placenta compromising the lambs blood supply. Enzootic abortion also results in barren ewes, mummified lambs, stillbirth or weak lambs that fail to thrive. Infection can commonly be brought in through purchase of new breeding ewes that are infected and then infect naïve sheep in your flock. Prompt disposal of any aborted material is essential to minimise risk of spreading infection.

Toxoplasmosis is a protozoa that is transmitted via cat faeces and can survive on pasture or feed for a very long time. It does not transmit directly between sheep. It causes issues when sheep are infected for the first time whilst pregnant. It results in barren ewes if infected within the first 60 days of pregnancy. If infected later in pregnancy, there are abortions with mummified foetuses, still births or weak lambs that are sickly.



Both these diseases can be diagnosed by testing on aborted foetuses and placenta or by taking blood samples from ewes looking for antibodies. This is where MSD can help you out with the testing costs. Taking bloods from 6 barren ewes, or ones that have aborted, allows you to gain the knowledge about what is going on in your flock. Luckily for us, there are vaccines available for enzootic abortion and toxoplasmosis that could be enacted prior to tupping next year.

Thinking about the Dung Beetles

Dung beetles are the fantastic little workers who depend on sources of animal dung to survive, but are also on your side to improve dung breakdown and transport organic fertiliser (dung!) down into soil in a far more efficient way than weathering. This has been shown to improve soil health and plant nutrients, reduce fly and worm populations and increase biodiversity. It had been estimated that dung beetles save the UK cattle industry approx. £367m each year! (Beynon et al. 2015)



There are 60 species of dung beetle in the UK of which >50% are deemed scarce or threatened (Lane and Mann, 2016). As land use has changed for development, arable only or increased rotational pasture, dung beetles have become far more threatened as their food source is disappearing from some areas. Dung beetles heavily depend on livestock farmers to survive.

Unfortunately, the use of certain anti-parasite treatments can have a detrimental effect on insects within our environments, including dung beetles and their larvae. Clear wormers (Avermectins/Macrocylic Lactones) and certain fly products (pyrethroids) are insecticides which of course work well on our targets such as gut worms and mites, but also are shown to be toxic to insects in the wider environment (Finch et al. 2020). Ivermectin, for example, remained very stable and is not broken down by the body. Regardless of what route of administration is used, much of the drug is passed in the dung unchanged (62-90% dependent on study, Canga et al. 2007) which is where it will affect our friend the dung beetle the most!

Animal welfare remains our top priority and we still need to worm our animals, but let's treat our livestock while thinking about sustainable and responsible worming:

- **Prevent** – using a farm specific prevention plan to reduce overall worm burden on your farm and therefore reducing wormer use. This could vary from improved nutrition, vaccination for lungworm and other disease to improve stock health, incorporating tannin dense plants such as chicory into pastures and longer sward lengths.

- **Assess** – know that you have a worm burden before treatment. Unnecessary treatment of animals with low to no burden is bad for wormer resistance, your pocket, your time and environmental insects. Regular worm egg counts, monitoring growth rates and blood testing can all be used as data to support whether to treat.

- **Treat** – Once we know we need to treat, try to choose a product with less impact. Long acting products should be avoided. White and yellow wormers appear to have less impact on environmental insects than clear wormers. Talk to your vet!

If you would like to do some further reading about dung beetles and how you can help, more information can be found on:

www.DungBeetlesForFarmers.co.uk

What's in a Milk Powder?

Sometimes, you end up with orphaned lambs or calves for many reasons. They need feeding so you reluctantly trudge to your local agricultural store and start browsing the milk powder options. But with so many different products available, how do you know which one is best? Firstly, we'll start by having a look at the main ingredients within different products:

- **Crude protein** - Aim for 20-26% for calves and 23% for lambs. Proteins are essential for muscle development in growing animals.
- **Crude oils and fats** - Aim for 16-20% for calves and 30% for lambs. These provide energy.
- **Crude ash** - aim for <8% in both lambs and calves. This indicates the overall levels of minerals. Any higher than this can affect digestibility and how tasty it is.
- **Crude fibre** - aim for <0.2% in calves. In lambs, it should be no higher than 0.5%. This indicates protein quality. If higher than this, it suggests high levels of plant proteins are included which are less easily digested by ruminants younger than 3 weeks.
- **Vitamins and Minerals** - these should be included in all milk replacers and generally do not vary hugely between products.

So, check the labels on what milk replacer you are considering and ensure they meet these requirements at a minimum. If fitting these criteria, generally, the powders will be more digestible meaning better growth.



Another thing to consider is skim vs whey milk powders. Whole milk from the cow or ewe is digested by forming a clot in the abomasum, one of ruminants' four stomachs. Skimmed milk powders do this too, so they're digested similarly. Whey powders don't form this milk clot and are digested in the small intestine. Traditionally, it was believed that milk powders that form a clot are preferable and cause less scour.

Recent studies have shown this is not necessarily the case. What matters more is directly what ingredients are within the powder. Whey powders are often supplemented with plant-based proteins to achieve crude protein values similar to skimmed powders. Ruminants less than 3 weeks old struggle to digest plant-based proteins so this can result in poorer growth rates. Once calves are older than 3 weeks, vegetable fats have a similar level of digestibility as milk fats.



Whatever product you select, ensure you mix as per packet instructions adding the powder first then the water to this, so it is the correct concentration. If it is too diluted, it can result in scours and the milk clot will not form properly. Aiming to be consistent is key. This involves using the same milk powder made up to the same concentrations, at the same temperature and feeding this at the same times every day. Any adjustments to the volumes fed should be made gradually. Enjoyed this? This is just the start! Join us next quarter where we further discuss volumes of milk to be fed and when to wean.