

Herd health

For many people a Herd Health Plan is an extra hoop to jump through and is a lengthy document that just sits in the office between inspections. Some vets from the British Cattle Veterinary Society (BCVA) have developed a system to make this process more useful. The system is **based on the internet** and called **MyHealthyHerd**. The system is designed for both **Beef and Dairy farms**, and even includes some sheep functionality.

www.myhealthyherd.com

- **Up to date Herd health planning**

We have been using the service to produce health plans for a while now but the system has a lot more scope than this. One of the key benefits is that it is web-based. This means **both parties (you and us) are able to access all the information and keep it updated all year round**. The website will store your whole Herd Health Plan, which should **meet all the requirements of the various farm assurance** bodies.

- **Disease control and surveillance strategies, tailored to your farm**

The service also includes a lot of infectious disease management. We can use the software to generate a **control strategy and surveillance program** for most of the common infectious diseases. The system will **remind you when testing or vaccinating is due**. You can also use the system to keep track of which groups of animals have been vaccinated.

- **Access to laboratory results**

We will upload all the infectious disease lab reports that we receive; the system files them by disease and date for easy access. It is all very easy to use with a clear traffic light coding system so you can see at a glance

what is going well and what isn't.

- **Health declaration documents**

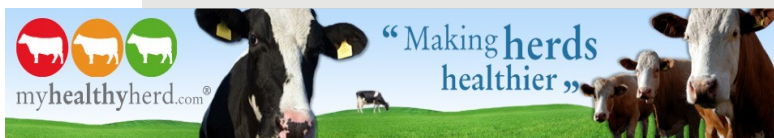
You are also able to print these out directly from the website, this will provide a summary of your **farms status for the diseases** you select which may help answer potential buyers questions. There is also a wealth of information on infectious disease and what to look out for when buying in new stock.

- **Costings tools**

Another service available is the 'health evaluator' this is a **costing tool** where you put in details about your herds performance and what your target would be and the health evaluator will calculate the likely economic benefit of reaching your target. This is much more useful than generic cost calculators which only tell you how much something is costing rather than how much it cost compared to a realistic target for your farm.

We are finding that the more we use this tool the more we find it can do. We strongly recommend that you have a look at the website and see what you think. You can buy access direct from *My-HealthyHerd.com* or you can join through us with full support for the same price. Please have a look and call us if you have any questions. If you want to call in for us to demonstrate the system please just let us know.

Full membership to the system and support from us is only **£10 a month**; having a look costs nothing, so give it a go! Those of you working through the Johne's and or BVD strands of the Healthy Livestock Initiative will receive free membership for a year, we can discuss this with you on the first visit under the initiative.



Upcoming meetings...

Dairy farmer's discussion group

Benchmarking meeting - 16th March

Cow Signals - 13th April

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Twin lamb disease

Now we are into the lambing season, although we know several of our clients have already started or even finished, we are getting into the time of year when we see our sheep clients most. This is often about a difficult lambing OR sick ewes close to lambing.

Most people have heard something about twin lamb disease, also known as pregnancy toxæmia or ketosis, but here is a short update on how it works, how to spot it, how to treat it and how to prevent it.



What is it?

- It is a disease that is set in motion by the **energy demands** of the **growing foetuses**.
- Whilst being heavily pregnant, a ewe needs to have a lot of energy for both her and the lambs.
- But she actually has less space in her abdomen to fill with food, than she had as a non pregnant animal.
- When the ewe cannot keep up with eating the amount of energy she needs, she starts mobilising her fat reserves.
- The fat is used to form 'ketones', an emergency energy supply. These ketones, and the lack of energy, make her dull and even less hungry, so she enters a vicious cycle which she cannot break herself.

What signs do you see?

At first she will **lose interest in concentrates**, will be **dull** and **standing apart**. If the diseases progress you may find they lost appetite completely, are **weak** on the hind legs, **appear to be blind** or even fully **collapsed**. If untreated the animal might go from being ok to fully collapsed within 24 hours.

What can you do?

The first treatment consists of 'refuelling' the ewe. This can be done by an **oral drench** (ie **Ketosaid**) if

the animal is still standing and able to swallow. The drench will give them instantly accessible energy and you should see an **improvement within 30 minutes**.

Many of the ewes will **need drenching until they lamb!** You can give them a high dose to start with, followed by a lower dose twice a day, provided that she starts eating again.

If after the drenching she still does not eat and doesn't look better it might be best to call a vet out so they can either give her **glucose in to the vein** or, if the situation is bad and the ewe is more important, **lambing can be induced**.

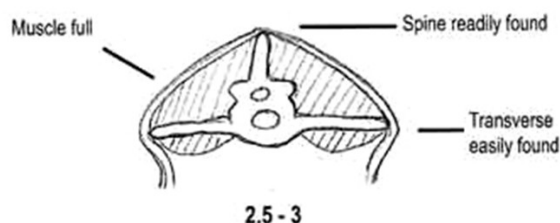
If you find the ewe already collapsed, the best treatment for her would be to have an i.v. treatment so we recommend calling us out!

After lambing, without the energy demands of the lambs, the ewe should pickup. If the animal has been down for a while it might well be that the lambs don't survive, whether she is induced or not.

Careful!! Read the instructions on the bottle before you drench them, in higher amounts the ketosaid can be poisonous as well. So more is not always better!

How do you prevent it?

The **fatter** the ewe, the more fat reserves available to form ketones and the **less space left for food**. So it is really important that the ewes do not get to fat pre lambing! Do not only judge your ewes condition on sight (wool can be extremely misleading) but **feel at least 10% of your flock every two weeks** the check their condition and **do not let them get over a BCS of 3.5**.



Scanning the ewes for numbers of lambs will also help you to feed the ewes appropriately and make sure the twins and triplets will be supplemented from 6 weeks before lambing until lambing.

Parasitic skin disease in cattle

Hair loss in cattle is a common sight at this time of year, **close contact** of groups and presence of parasites that **remain in the housing** are often thought to be the cause.

What is the significance of this to the stock and what might be the cause?

- Research has shown the **economic impact** on fattening animals affected by ectoparasites. Appropriate management of skin diseases has been shown to give unexpected increases in production.
- Ectoparasitic disease is also a **welfare** issue, where discomfort is caused in affected animals.
- It may also affect the health of those handling stock, some of the ectoparasites can be **transmitted to people**, in particular ringworm, but lice and mites may also cause bites.
- An ectoparasite infestation may also be an indication of other **underlying disease**. Debilitated animals are often to be affected by secondary diseases, for example lice. Animals that are immunosuppressed may also show more severe presentations; animals affected by **BVD**, particularly calves born 'persistently infected' may show severe ringworm or lice infestations. Look out for individuals that are more severely affected.
- Severely affected animals may also suffer **complications** of parasitic disease. Although the symptoms often appear to be external, heavy burdens of biting lice can cause significant blood loss through their feeding. This is often not apparent until the animal is collapsed and by this point may be unable to recover.

Diagnosis is often based on the area affected and the level of 'pruritus' (itchiness) caused. For example the



presentation of lice is often over the neck and back and causes mild itching. While Chorioptes mites often affect the legs, tail head and neck, and cause more severe itching. Ringworm has characteristic lesions often sufficient for diagnosis but many of the other parasites may present similarly.

It is a simple procedure to collect samples for diagnosis of the cause, a vet may take a scraping from the skin or an imprint onto tape, in order to view and identify the causal parasite under the microscope.

Common skin parasites

- Lice - biting and sucking species
- Mites - Chorioptes and Psoroptes
- Ringworm

In a similar manor to intestinal parasites the **risks for diseases** changes all the time, on your own farm this may be down to stocking density and housing hygiene, on a larger scale **weather conditions** can af-



fect the risk, particularly cool weather of late winter. Diseases can also show some geographical distribution, **Psoroptes mites have been reported in cattle this year** where previously this was uncommon.

There are many options on the market available for treatment, this is may be costly due to the numbers involved, adding to this some lengthy meat withdrawal times can also complicate matters.

Many of the pour-ons are effective for several ectoparasite species but check the label first, we can also advise you on a suitable product, or options for shorter withdrawal periods if need be.

Prevention may be a more profitable means of control, this needs advanced planning, as it would be required prior to housing.

Practice update...

Have you looked at our website?

http://www.langfordvets.co.uk/farm_animal_practice.htm

Bluetongue vaccine advice

Many of you have been enquiring about the recommendations for Bluetongue vaccination this year. The BVA and RCVS continue to encourage vaccination as the best means of protection. The risk of disease continues to be low, the last recorded case being October 2008 and reduced risk on the continent. If you choose not to vaccinate, it is imperative that you keep an eye on risk status.



TB testing

A message from the diary organisers...

Call in early to get your first choice of dates for TB testing, giving a months warning will give you the best chance of dates of your choice!

Farming Essentials Training Courses

2011 Training Diary

An introduction to keeping Pigs Weds 11th May	Getting to grips with the key health and husbandry requirements of pigs in a small holding setting.
An introduction to keeping Poultry Weds 8th June	Understanding essential health and husbandry needs of domestic poultry and how these can be practically met.
An introduction to keeping Sheep & Goats Weds 6th July	A comprehensive introduction to keeping sheep and goats; providing you with core health and husbandry knowledge and essential practical skills.
Lameness control & prevention in Sheep & Goats Weds 17th August	An update on new developments in the control and prevention of lameness in sheep and goats.
Lambing Essentials Mon 5th December	An extremely popular practical workshop, covering all aspects of lambing to get you ready for the 2012 season.

Call us today to book your place or to find out more