

Farm Animal Practice Newsletter: March 2009

New lead clinician

After five years with the Farm Animal Practice, Chris has decided to undertake a PhD in order to further his research interest in dairy cow fertility and costings. This means that his involvement in the Practice will be declining over the forthcoming months. We are currently in the process of recruiting two new permanent full-time clinicians to work in the Practice, one in a leadership role (as a direct replacement for Chris), plus an additional clinician to support the new clinical lead.

This will bring a number of benefits for the clients of the Practice. Two permanent clinicians will provide a new level of continuity of care, an issue we have been looking to address for some time now. In addition, the lead clinician will now be employed by LVS solely to run the Practice, allowing them to focus more on this task than has been possible in the past, when the senior clinician had significant teaching responsibilities. Chris will still be involved in the management of the Practice and in supporting the clinical scholars in providing services on farm until his replacement is in post. We'll keep you posted on any further developments in future editions of the newsletter, but we're sure you'd join us in wishing Chris all the best for the future.

Launch of Langford Veterinary Services

As we mentioned back in the September issue of the newsletter, the University has formed a new company to run all of the veterinary clinics at Langford. Langford Veterinary Services (LVS) has now officially launched, and is now in control of the running of the Farm Animal Practice. The main aim of this process is to make the business more client-focussed and to expand the practice as well as our services to you. The new organisation will be able to be much more dynamic and responsive to customer needs than has been possible in the past, when the Practice was part of the University as a whole. The main practical implications of this are:

- **All cheques should now be made payable to "Langford Veterinary Services Ltd."**
- Monthly statements of account will now be in a new format. For the time being, these will still be accompanied by the pink tripartite billing slips as a way of ensuring batch number traceability

Other than this, it's business as usual!



In this month's newsletter...

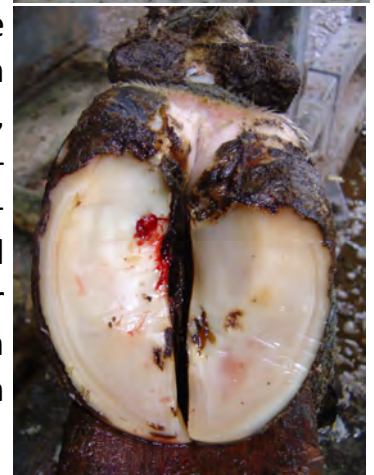
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This month's special offer—10% off Ketofen 10%

The importance of pain control in cattle is becoming better recognised amongst cattle farmers and vets in the UK and further afield. Following on from the well-attended cattle lameness meeting just before Christmas, we have negotiated a discount of 10% on Ketofen 10% injection (a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (painkiller) for use in cattle) to apply to sales during April and May. Lameness is one of the most important areas in which to consider use of pain relief—studies have shown better maintenance of milk yield in cows treated with pain-killing drugs as an adjunct to other lameness treatments, and the benefit to the animals' welfare is obvious. Other common situations in which Ketofen or similar drugs could be considered would be calf disbudding and castration, and clinical mastitis. If you are interested in more use of analgesia in your herd, feel free to speak to one of the team. Recent work by Jon Huxley suggests that farmers are more willing to pay for pain relief that vets often give them credit for. Stock up this month!



Intern sustains injury!

Unfortunately our intern Jenny has broken a bone in her foot, meaning that she will be out of action on farm for at least the next three weeks. In the meantime, we've bought in a locum, Helen Mottram, to help cover Jenny's work. Helen qualified from the Royal Veterinary College in 1997, and has worked in mixed practice in west Wales and Lancashire. She's looking forward to getting out and meeting you all.

Fees for laboratory testing

As you may know, laboratory testing for clients of the Practice has traditionally been heavily subsidised by the University. This has allowed us to offer this service at negligible or no cost. In the current economic climate, the University has withdrawn a large part of this subsidy, and as a result we will now have to make charges for laboratory tests on diagnostic samples. We have negotiated a major discount with our in-house diagnostic laboratory, to allow us to provide these tests at a very competitive price. Where samples are to be taken for chargeable testing, clinicians will discuss the cost with you before proceeding.

Practice News



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VETERINARY SERVICES

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Preparing for turnout: Sheep

It is getting to the time of year when sheep are due to be turned out to grass. Whilst animals at grass tend to require less intensive husbandry than while housed, there are many conditions that can present a problem. However, with a little forward planning, these conditions can often be avoided.



Vaccination

- Clostridial diseases are relatively common, and can result in major financial losses if not prevented. Vaccines provide good protection against the diseases, and should be administered yearly, especially if there is a history of clostridial disease on farm.
- Pasteurella – vaccinating ewes against this disease will protect their lambs until they are 5 weeks old. For protection beyond this, lambs can be vaccinated with 2 doses from 10 days old.
- Bluetongue – vaccination is the only protection for your stock against this notifiable disease. All stock over 3 months should be vaccinated before turnout.

Nutrition

- Hypomagnesaemia – this condition is a consequence of lush grass and/or inadequately mineralised rations. The condition can result in convulsions and sudden death, and as it is very difficult to overdose animals with magnesium, licks or supplemented rations should always be provided to sheep at grass.
- Hypocalcaemia (*right*) – often occurs alongside hypomagnesaemia, and can be prevented by using licks/supplements in the same way.
- Trace Elements – Cobalt, Copper, Selenium and Vitamin E are the most common trace element deficiencies. These will tend to affect all the lambs grazing on the same pasture. If there is history of soil/grass deficiencies on farm it can be worth supplementing/bolusing to prevent problems developing. However supplements can be expensive, so groups of lambs with poor growth, poor wool or lethargy should be investigated before treating.



Parasites

- Fluke – any cases of ill thrift in animals grazed last season should be investigated and/or treated for chronic fluke.
- Gut-worms—a number of different stomach and gut worms affect lambs, notably *Nematodirus* and *Haemonchus* species. Strategies to combat these parasites are evolving all the time, and use of faecal egg counts is increasingly recognised as a vital tool. If you'd like to discuss your worming strategy for this season, please contact one of the team and we'll be happy to help.
- Flies – Dagging of tails and a pour-on product can be used to reduce the incidence of fly strike (*right*). Whilst this is classically a summer disease, with warmer, wetter springs it cannot be ruled out, and it can be worthwhile preventing rather than trying to treat.



Lameness

Scald and footrot are the two biggest causes of lameness when sheep are turned out. See the articles in the last two newsletters for recognition, treatment and prevention.

