

Farm Animal Practice Newsletter: October 2009

In this month's newsletter, we meet the new lead clinician (who most of you will already know!), hear about potential changes to the TB testing rules, and with the wet weather well on the way, discuss the things to think about when bringing cattle in for the winter housing season.

New lead clinician

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, Chris has now started a PhD (although he still does some work for the Practice): this has allowed us to offer David the lead clinician position in the Practice. David has been with us since 2007, and has proved to be an extremely able clinician. He has particular interests in cattle lameness and fertility. We are about to advertise for another permanent experienced clinician to strengthen the team and allow us to deliver even more continuity of care to our clients.



New TB testing rules likely in New Year

Recommendations by the TB Eradication Group for England presented to the Secretary of State recently may well lead to some changes in the TB testing regime over the next few months. The main changes that may come in are:

- Single retest for inconclusive reactors ("IRs") - animals that consistently test as IRs are currently retested twice before being slaughtered; the Group recommended that there should only be one retest
- Changes to testing areas (currently parishes): in practice, this is likely to mean that the whole area served by the FAP is tested annually

The report also suggests measures to make it easier for "Approved Finishing Units" to be set up—these should provide a route for farms under movement restrictions to move stock on. See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/diseases/atoz/tb/partnership/eradication-group/index.htm> for more information.

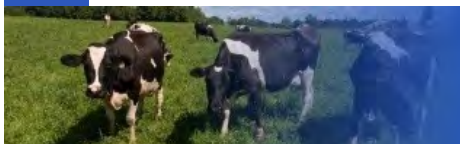
Change to out-of-hours charging

From November 2009, we will be introducing a supplementary charge for out-of-hours visits (calls coming in between 7pm and 7am or on Sundays). Daytime visits on Saturdays will still be charged as weekdays. **This will not affect clients on fixed-fee/contract packages (out-of-hours calls will continue to be included in their contract prices).**

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Getting ready to house cattle

As the housing season approaches, now is a great time to think about managing stock to prevent problems over the winter. Some of the important things to think about are discussed below:

Parasite control

- **Gut worms** picked up over the late summer can produce larvae which become dormant in the lining of the gut
 - In spring, these can re-emerge in large numbers and cause major problems
 - It can be difficult to avoid cattle picking up some worms at this time of year, so a "housing dose" of wormer is commonly used to get rid of these larvae and prevent disease later on
 - This can also help make sure that cattle are clear of lungworm as they come in
 - Not all wormers work against larvae, so choice of wormer is important
 - Gut and lungworms are less of an issue in adult cattle, which normally have sufficient immunity to prevent these larvae surviving in significant numbers
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- **Liver fluke** is another important problem to bear in mind: infection often occurs in late summer/autumn
 - Signs can either result from immature fluke migrating through the liver causing acute signs in autumn/early winter (although this is much more common in sheep) or from the presence of mature fluke in the liver in late winter/spring
 - The latter is commoner in cattle and typically causes ill thrift, weight loss, poor milk yield and growth rates
 - We can check for exposure to fluke with using blood (or bulk milk) testing at this time of year (fluke will usually be too young to be producing eggs, which is the other way to diagnose a problem)
 - Treating cattle around housing can be a useful way to prevent problems, although an alternative approach will need to be considered for dairy herds (because of withdrawal periods). Again, not all drugs treat immature fluke

Other things to consider

- Digital dermatitis control (mainly important in dairy herds): treatment with an appropriate footbathing regime at housing may reduce incidence over the winter. Discuss with your vet if you would like to consider this option
- How well do you know your silage? Analysing forage is a really important part of rationing over the winter months. Don't forget quality may vary through the clamp
- Housing: cow comfort and ventilation can be key to preventing winter problems (see previous issues of the newsletter for details)

Any of the team will be pleased to help with worming/fluke treatment advice.

