



WELCOME TO farm 2012 news

JANUARY 2012

Caring Friendly Professional



Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme (FFIS)



By **Sandy Jamieson**
BVM&S MRCVS

The FFIS is part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and is a scheme of support, developed to help farming, forestry and horticultural businesses in England to become more efficient at using resources.

This scheme aims to help make your business more profitable and resilient whilst reducing the impact of farming on the environment.

There is £20m available under FFIS until December 2013. The grants are for capital items and the grant rate available is up to 40% in non upland areas, and up to 50% in upland areas and the maximum grant allowable per project is £25,000. The minimum grant is £2,500.

See <http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/funding-sources/farm-and-forestry-improvement-scheme> for more information.



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Scarsdale Herdsman Certificate 2012 dates

Wednesday 4th January 2012

Module 1

**Heifer Rearing (Part 1)
From Birth to Weaning**

Wednesday 25th January 2012

Module 2

Heifer Rearing (Part 2) From Weaning to First Calving

Wednesday 15th February 2012

Module 3

Practical Fertility and Obstetrics

Wednesday 29th February 2012

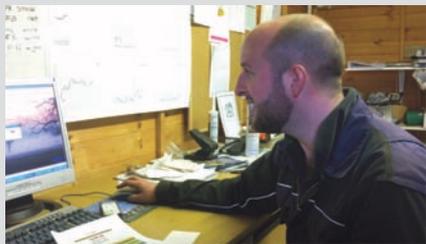
Module 4

Mastitis Prevention: Making the Most of Your Records

Farmer testimonials from previous Scarsdale FarmSkills courses:

'I found the genetics course particularly useful because I had previously seen genetics as a 'different language' and felt that, because I'm not a pedigree herd, the subject was a bit of a closed door. Coming on the course has meant that I now make the primary decision about buying semen rather than being sold it. I do my own AI so this extra involvement will make it even more rewarding when I see the first heifers down on the ground.'

Andrew Gilman, Tamworth (pictured below).



'Following the calf rearing course, we made the decision to stop feeding waste milk and instead calves are now fed a specialist whey based calf milk replacer which is high in protein (26%) and low in oil, and specifically developed for modern dairy calves. We had always fed colostrum for the first four days, but now, in addition, we use a colostrometer to check its quality. We now use a thermometer to check the water is at 39°C pre-mixing for every feed, and always ensure we mix the milk thoroughly. We've noticed that nutritional scours have been significantly reduced as a consequence.'

Richard and Val Wedd, Burton

Making the most of the dry period



Article by **Paula Scales BVS_c MRCVS**



Historically dry cows have been one of the 'forgotten' groups on the farm but new research is demonstrating how important the dry cow period is for the future success of the cow in lactation.

The aim of nutrition in the dry period is to:

- Prevent negative energy balance and ketosis
- Prevent milk fever
- Optimise immune function
- Achieve smooth transition onto lactation diet

All cows will drop intakes by 30-40% a few days off calving which makes the cow utilise some of her body stores. Most dairy farms now have a 'transition' group for the three weeks prior to calving where the cows are given a palatable, straw based diet to maximise intakes and rumen fill at this time. Some fat mobilisation is normal and it only causes issues when it is excessive. Making sure the cows start the dry period in the right condition score is vital for dry period success and so diet changes should be made in the last third of lactation to get her at BCS 3 at drying off.

Research from University of Illinois has shown that deliberately slightly underfeeding the far off dry cows resulted in:

- Less body condition change at calving
- Less fat mobilisation
- Less risk of ketosis and LDA

The researchers think that when intakes drop at calving, fat put on in the first part of the dry period is more responsive and will be mobilised quicker at and around calving leading to more weight loss, decreased appetite and increased risk of ketosis and LDA. This research is promising but more work is needed to see how it applies to the UK situation.

Milk fever is a very common disease affecting cows in the first few hours/days of lactation when calcium demands of lactation and milk increase rapidly. Calcium levels are tightly controlled in cows and when demands suddenly change it takes 12-18 hours for the body to adapt and be able to absorb more calcium from the gut and bone. This means the first 12-24 hours after calving are critical for a dairy cow. Studies estimate that even in the absence of clinical signs of milk fever, up to 40% of all dairy cows are sub-clinically affected which can lead to held cleansings, dirty cows after calving and poor fertility in the next lactation.

There are various methods of controlling milk fever:

- **Calcium restriction:** feeding low levels of calcium before calving tricks the cow into mobilising her own stores of calcium

before calving but is very difficult to do as grass/grass silage contain high levels of calcium.

- **Mag chloride:** magnesium is needed for the body to mobilise calcium and so adding this to the ration/water can help keep levels of milk fever under control. Mag chloride tastes awful so care must be taken to make sure intakes are good (12kg DMI per cow per day). If it is put in the water then no other water source can be available and care must be taken to make sure the trough doesn't run dry as Mag can be highly toxic!
- **Full DCAB:** this involves adding salts to the transition ration in order to slightly acidify the body which makes the adaptation to absorb calcium at calving much faster. The salts taste awful so again, intakes must be monitored and to check the cows have acidified enough, urine pH must be checked regularly.
- **Partial DCAB:** this is a slightly simpler version of full DCAB where 'low DCAB' forages are used instead of salts - it's not quite as effective as full DCAB but is simpler, needs less monitoring and results in a more palatable diet. To do this accurately you need to have good forage analysis available to calculate the DCAB values needed.

The rules for dry period success are:

- Start at BCS 3 and maintain a BCS 3 until calving - don't blame the dry period for a fat cow from lactation!
- Don't overfeed the early dry cows
- Maximise intakes around calving:
- Palatable feed
- 3 foot trough space/cow
- Clean out trough/concrete (especially in summer to avoid old food over-heating)
- Prevent milk fever

Herd fertility planning that's

- ✓ easy to arrange
- ✓ easy to understand
- ✓ easy to manage
- ✓ easy to budget

With over 64% of dairy farmers looking to improve herd fertility, xLVets have made it easier than ever for farmers to find out how they can benefit from a realistic fertility plan.

Contact us today for your free Grassroots Fertility pack.

www.grassroots.xlvets.co.uk

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