WELCOME TO

farm news 2012

SEPTEMBER 2012

This month, be on the look-out for Liver Fluke in cattle...

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Liver fluke are a type of parasite (Fasciola hepatica) that can infect both sheep and cattle. Fluke eggs are shed in the dung like regular worms, but once they land on the grass they migrate into water snails to mature. They then escape from the snails ready to infect sheep and cattle.

Both liver fluke and their water snail hosts need warm and wet conditions to grow; so with the weather we've had this summer, conditions are perfect to achieve high level of fluke contamination. Fluke is traditionally associated with poorly drained land where reeds (the water snail's habitat) are growing and is becoming more common in this part of the country.

As with other parasites, pasture contamination builds up through the summer as eggs are shed from grazing animals. When cattle are initially affected towards the end of summer, they can become acutely ill as the fluke migrate from their guts to their liver. More commonly in cattle, the adult fluke set up home in the liver and cause chronic disease in the autumn and into winter. In warmer winters fluke can survive over winter on the pasture, leading to disease earlier the following summer.

Symptoms of fluke in cattle include weight-loss and diarrhoea, more advanced cases can develop 'bottle-jaw' a swelling under the jaw caused by fluid accumulation. Disease can occur in any age of grazing animal, particularly if they haven't been exposed to fluke before. Once cases are seen this is the 'tip-of-the-iceberg' and the whole group should be treated.

Not all wormers are active against fluke, many have a long milk withdrawal and resistance to flukicides is an emerging problem. If you suspect a case please contact the practice for advice; for dairy herds, we can test for fluke on a bulk milk sample. We are able to supply a wide range of wormers and flukicides at competitive prices. As with many diseases prevention is better than cure, so if you are remotely concerned or have had livers condemned in the abattoir then please get in touch to discuss a prevention and/or surveillance programme.

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Practical on-farm nutrition with John Remnant of Nottingham Vet School.

Wednesday 26th September 2012
10am - 3pm

Module 2
Cow fertility and practical calving tips

Making the most of your routine visits: essential reproductive anatomy and physiology plus practical calving workshop. With Rose Jackson and Chris Parker of Scarsdale Vets.

Wednesday 10th October 2012
10am - 3pm

Module 3
Mastitis prevention: Making the most of your records

Practical advice from Carolyn Baguley of Scarsdale Vets using DairyCo principles.

Wednesday 24th October 2012
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Module 4
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Individual modules are priced at £45.00 + VAT. If you attend all four, there is a discounted price of £160.00 + VAT

Please call 01332 294929 to book your place. Alternatively, download the leaflet and booking form from our website www.scarsdalevets.com/farm-animals/education-and-events

Neospora Update

Sarah Hughes BSc (Hons) BVetMed MRCVS

Neospora is a protozoan parasite and is the most frequently diagnosed cause of cattle abortion in the UK. Most abortions occur at 5-8 months although early embryonic death has also been reported. Cows are initially infected by eating the reproductive form of the parasite, oocysts, which are excreted in dog faeces. Dogs, which are infected by eating cleansings, only excrete the oocysts for short periods of time so the main route of transmission (>95%) within the herd is vertical i.e. from dam to calf. Horizontal transmission (cow to cow) does not occur. Cows tend to only abort once following infection but can abort more than once.

Diagnosis is ideally by post-mortem of an aborted foetus and placenta. Blood samples from the dam can be used but are difficult to interpret; just because a cow has antibodies to Neospora doesn't mean that Neospora was the cause of an abortion. Positive cows will also not shed antibody all the time so negative results have to be interpreted with caution.

There is no treatment or vaccine for neospora. Control in dairy herds involves reducing infection in the milking herd by breeding positive animals to beef. Previously this has been done by blood testing young calves to ascertain the status of the dam. Due to the use of a new ELISA (diagnostic test) the VLA no longer recommends this method. The new ELISA appears to be affected by pooling colostrum or cross suckling more than the old one and there have been some reports of unexplainable false positive results. The concern is that the test will pick up antibodies in the calf that have come from cows other than the calf's mother via pooled colostrum. Other labs offering Neospora testing are happy with their tests being used in calves as long as colostrum is not being pooled. Results however should still be interpreted with caution.

An alternative method of control is to blood sample the dams directly. Positive cows will not shed antibody continuously so timing of this is crucial. Dry cows (10-4w prior to calving) and aborting cows are the most reliable to test. Therefore an alternative control strategy is to blood sample dry cows at routine visits.

If you are worried about your Neospora testing regime, or think you may be suffering from Neospora related abortions on your farm, please do not hesitate to contact one of the farm team.

37% drop in clinical mastitis following teat sealant adoption

In the first six weeks of lactation, reductions in clinical mastitis cases and mastitis-related culling of 37% and 15% respectively have been found after introducing an internal teat sealant to dry cow therapy programmes, according to a survey of dairy farms with good management records.

Financially, the reduction in clinical incidence alone is estimated to offer a net gain, after the cost of teat sealant, of £4,655 per 100 cows annually. The survey also found 36% and 31% reductions respectively in labour and veterinary costs associated with a clinical mastitis cases during the first six weeks of lactation.

The research was commissioned by Pfizer Animal Health to gauge the effectiveness of its internal teat sealant OrbeSeal® on the 10th anniversary of its launch. Management records on farms in six European countries including the UK were analysed in detail over two consecutive 12 month periods immediately before and after the teat sealant's introduction.

Without teat sealant, it has been established that up to 60% of clinical mastitis cases during the first 30 days of lactation are due to infections acquired during the preceding dry period, despite the use of antibiotic dry cow treatments, according to Pfizer vet Matt Williams.

'A 3.3 per cent reduction in clinical mastitis incidence is sufficient to cover the cost of internal teat sealant in addition to a conventional antibiotic dry cow tube at drying off,' he says. 'So any response above this - a further 34% in this study - may offer a net financial gain to farmers. At the Reading University costing of £245 per case of clinical mastitis, the net financial gain from a typical starting point of 56 cases per 100 cows per year works out to £4,655 per 100 cows annually.'

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