



Newsletter

July 2021

TB news - vaccination trial

The first field trials of a cattle vaccine for TB have started in Herefordshire, using BCG vaccination. Providing it is found to be safe and effective, it is hoped that it may be rolled out nationally by 2025.

Although the BCG vaccine itself is not new - it was developed as a vaccine for humans in the early 1900s) This is a significant breakthrough in TB vaccine development for cattle, especially since we have had regular reports of a vaccine being “five to ten years away” since the 1950s.

As the BCG vaccine consists of a weakened strain of *M. bovis*, the causative agent of cattle TB, one of the main challenges to vaccinating cattle is having a test which is able to tell the difference between an animal which has been vaccinated, and one carrying the disease itself. To this end, a new skin DIVA (Detecting Infected amongst Vaccinated Animals) test will be used on the trial farms. It is likely to be an identical procedure as the current skin test, just using a different solution in place of the current tuberculin.

Agricultural Transition Plan.

At the end of last month, some information was released regarding the government's Agricultural Transition Plan.

Most of the update relates to the Sustainable Farming Initiative, and a key announcement for our sector relates to annual health visits to eligible farms through the Annual Health and Welfare review. Livestock farmers with commercial cattle, sheep and pigs who are eligible to claim BPS will be eligible for a Defra funded vet-led annual health and welfare review. During the visit, we will be able to decide together on priority actions specifically to improve your farm's health, welfare and productivity, alongside medicine reviews, key data collection and testing for certain endemic diseases including a priority for BVD monitoring.

The Sustainable Farming Incentive will be the first of three environmental land management schemes to be rolled out. The aim is to accelerate the widespread adoption of more sustainable approaches on all types of farms, including maintaining and enhancing the natural environment, reducing carbon emissions, and improving the welfare of livestock.

We'll keep you informed as more information is released.

Orchard Vets Glastonbury

Tel: 01458 832972

www.ovg.co.uk

Summer Mastitis

Summer mastitis is usually a disease of non-lactating cows and heifers during the summer months. It also occurs occasionally in the rudimentary udders of young heifers, bulls and steers. In beef cows, summer mastitis is often seen when barren spring calving cows are kept for later breeding (e.g. transferred from the spring herd to the autumn-calving herd on the farm). It is important to note that some beef cows may stop lactating before the calf has been removed from its dam.

Bacterial causes include *A. Pyogenes* and *Strep. dysgalactiae* which act synergistically. Transmission of infection is thought to be by the head fly (*Hydrotea irritans*). These flies live in bushes and trees, and can only fly during mild, damp humid conditions and low wind speeds thus cases tend to be associated with "problem fields" next to woods and high hedges.

Supervision of maiden and in-calf heifers and dry cows at pasture during the summer months is often sporadic due to other commitments on the farm and therefore mastitis may be well advanced before clinical signs are noted. During the early stages of the disease, there is a gradual enlargement, both in length and diameter of the teat of the affected gland, for up to one week before the cow becomes sick. The udder secretion is thick and clotted (like grains of rice) with foul-smelling green/yellow pus. Often large numbers of flies cluster around the affected teat orifice causing considerable irritation with frequent kicking. Signs of illness including isolation from the group, stiffness and reluctance to walk, lack of grazing giving a gaunt appearance, joint distension of the fetlock and hock joints and rapid loss of body condition. Veterinary treatment is essential for these sick cattle as affected animals may abort and may die if prompt treatment is not administered. Even after prompt treatment, the affected quarter is permanently damaged. Illness leads to the birth of weakly calves which have a high mortality rate. Colostrum from another cow is strongly recommended for these calves.



As well as antibiotics and anti-inflammatories, stripping of the udder should be undertaken as often as is practical but is resented by the animal due to the painful teat/gland and kicking is common. Occasionally amputation of the affected teat is required for drainage.

Teat sealants are very effective at preventing disease. At-risk animals should also have reduced exposure to susceptible fields - higher, more exposed pastures are preferred away from clumps of trees or high hedges. Fly control measures are also essential, such as fly tags, pour-on preparations and sprays.