



# Newsletter

## June 2020

### Bull Fertility

Using a bull can suit some farm systems, but they can have their pitfalls and will not necessarily improve fertility. Although true infertility is rare, subfertility is found in around 20% of bulls examined.

Using pregnancies generated as an indicator of bull fertility means that problems in a bull may also not be picked up on for some considerable time. Bulls are expensive to keep, can be dangerous, and require adequate handling facilities and farm infrastructure.

If bulls are to be used, you should get all new bulls examined for obvious defects before purchase. Bulls already on the farm should also ideally be checked over by one of us at least once a year. We can perform semen evaluation and can provide you with a Bull Soundness Certificate if required.

Introducing a new bull to a herd also has serious biosecurity implications which we're happy to discuss to suit your individual farm needs.

### Service update BVD and TB services

As Covid-19 restrictions are gradually eased, we are now allowed to resume visits for the BVD Stamp It Out campaign, and risk assessment visits for the TB Advisory Service (TBAS).

Just to remind you, the BVD scheme allows you access to 2 visits from us, 2 farmer meetings, and some lab fees to check your BVD status. There is also a budget to help eliminate BVD should you find it, all free of charge. Places are now very limited and are allocated on a first come, first served basis.

The TB risk assessment visits are a fairly comprehensive questionnaire and farm walk with me, and we'll produce you a bespoke action plan of recommendations. It's aims are to help farmers get rid of TB on their farm if they have it, prevent it coming in if they don't, and to build business resilience to make things easier if the worst happens. Again this is completely free of charge

To access these schemes you will need a Single Business Identifier (SBI) number - found on Single Farm Payment paperwork.

Please give us a call to book your visit, or for more information.

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## Sporting fixtures

If you're missing out on sport at the moment, here's something to think about.

Did you know that the average man needs about 2000 calories, or 8 megajoules (MJ) just to stay alive. This is known as maintenance energy requirement. A top performing Olympic athlete, however, needs about 24MJ. That's a 3-fold increase in metabolic rate.

Your "average" cow's maintenance requirements on the other hand are around 70MJ, about 10 times higher than people, which is not surprising given they are about 10 times our size. BUT she'll need 320MJ to give 50 litres of milk. That's more than a 4.5-fold increase.... and we expect her to do this day after day..... and get pregnant at the same time!

It is therefore no surprise that the most common nutritional problem on farms is energy deficit, often combined with lower dry matter intake than the ration requires.



## Maize!

As much as it's been lovely to have such nice weather during Covid19 lockdown, it hasn't been ideal for some maize crops. Fields planted early down on the levels are coming up well, but on higher ground some fields are looking pretty bare and many farms may be facing reduced maize harvests, both in terms of quantity and quality. Hopefully the recent rain will help things along, but planning ahead and having a viable "Plan B" is a sensible precaution.

Alternative feed sources for the cattle over the winter months may become more important; there's a wide variety of cattle feeds out there, and what you choose will be largely influenced by what is available and at what price. Over the past couple of decades, more 'traditional' home-grown feeds such as cereals, brewers grains and sugar beet pulps have been joined by more exotic imported feeds or those less commonly grown in the UK such as soya beans. Palm kernel meal, a by-product of palm oil production is a popular cattle feed, and while ethical concerns over palm oil production and destruction of rainforests looms large in public opinion, the massive scale of palm oil production and the availability of kernel meal is unlikely to change soon. Copra is a similar by-product meal from the production of coconut oil, but generally less widely available.

Otherwise, is planting a winter forage crop – such as kale – a viable alternative on your farm, even if it's something you've never had to do before? Early planning for winter feed availability, and increased pasture growth in the spring to allow early turnout may both be important.

Maximising feed conversion efficiency and minimising wastage is even more vital than usual if feed is in short supply. If you've got any concerns about feeding and animal performance, feel free to call us for some friendly advice.