



Newsletter

June 2021

TB news - 6-monthly testing

The introduction of 6-monthly TB testing in the “high-risk” area (i.e, the South West), which has been talked about for some time, is finally happening here in Somerset as from July. The changes are in response to the Godfray review and public consultation, and aims to remove infected animals from herds at an earlier stage and reduce the time TB can spread within the herd or be shed in the farm environment.

The default position is that those herds which have their annual whole herd test (WHT) from July to December 2021, will then have their next WHT from January to June 2022. Farms may qualify to remain on annual testing, however, if they qualify for “earned recognition”. Farms which test every 6 months will not be expected to do “contiguous tests”, however.

Farms can qualify for earned recognition if the herd has been in existence for at least 6 years, and have not had a TB breakdown in the past 6 years, or if the herd is registered for a CHECS TB health scheme and has achieved level 1...

TB news cont....

or above (see www.checs.co.uk for more details). CHECS entry level TB accreditation will not be sufficient.

We appreciate that the extra testing will cause extra work-load and disruption to our farmers, and it will also have an impact on our own work-load. As much as we do our best to accommodate your choice of vet, please understand that there are times where this is just not possible.

In other TB news, reactor removal is now getting back on track with over 90% of reactor cattle removed within 10 working days

Staff news

After 14 years at Orchard, Ray is finally hanging up his trade-mark tie and retiring. It would be impolite to let you know his age, suffice to say he appears to have aged much better than I have! We wish him well with his DIY and travel plans (as and when we're allowed to go abroad).

Amy is now in charge of organising TB tests, and the TB diary is due to get a lot busier in the coming months, so please give us as much notice as you can regarding dates.

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Heat stress

The weather appears to have changed quite suddenly, and I for one am struggling to acclimatise to the heat (especially in waterproofs!)

Clinical signs of heat stress include panting, drooling and failing to cud. Feed intakes are usually low and there may be more competition for access to water. In dairy herds milk yields can be significantly reduced and butterfat will drop. As cows pant and drool, the bicarbonate in her saliva which is designed to buffer the acid production in the rumen is lost on the floor, leading to rumen acidosis. This explains the falling butterfats, so also look out for excess fibre coming through in the dung.



So what can be done? Even older collecting yards and housing are often easily modified to improve air flow for cooling by installing space-boarding for the sides, chimneys or fans for forced ventilation. Cows at grass will have a tendency to huddle together under any available shade. Very sensible from a temperature point of view, but beware heavy pasture contamination in small areas leading to increased risk of mastitis and high cell counts. Oddly enough, in previous years there has been so little grass on some of our farms that cattle are being moved to new pastures frequently enough that summer cell count problems have actually improved!



In hot weather, cows will have a higher demand for water. As herds expand it's all too easy to overlook the water availability. Cows require adequate trough space to ensure there is no undue pressure on water intakes. Inadequate space can lead to crowding and competition, both of which may increase the risk of faecal soiling and will increase stress, not to mention a reduction in yields. There should be water trough space of at least 10cm per cow for all cows at all stages of the production cycle, including availability in the yards before and after milking. Its a really quick and easy thing to check - all you need is 10 min-

utes and a tape measure. Water troughs should have sufficient refill speed and capacity never to empty. As a quick rule of thumb, if you take out a bucket full of water from the trough, it should re-fill completely within a minute. Cows should not be denied access for more than 1 hour in a 24 hour period, therefore those herds where milking takes several hours, it's worth considering bringing the cows in to be milked in more than 1 group. This will also increase time available for eating and lying down thereby increasing yield and reducing lameness.