



Highgate Veterinary Clinic

Farm Case History

Unusual Lump in the Throat



Cow restrained for examination

I was asked to examine an eighteen month old dairy replacement heifer on a client's farm. Over the summer she had slowly developed a lump under her jaw, which had now ulcerated.

On examination, she was bright and had a normal temperature. The lump was mostly just under the skin but I could feel part of it going deeper into the neck.

I decided to operate and remove as much of the mass as possible. I deeply sedated her and put local anaesthetic around the lump. As I tried to remove the mass, I found that it extended in and around major structures in the neck. I took out as much as I could without damaging vital tissues and then stitched her up.

I gave the farmer a poor prognosis.

I sent a biopsy of the mass to a laboratory for histopathology examination. I fully expected the report to say the heifer had cancer but to my surprise, I was informed that this was likely to be an infection by *Actinobacillus lignieresii*.

This bacterium usually enters the cow through abrasions in the mouth. It's most often the cause of a disease called wooden tongue, where the tongue becomes swollen and sore. Wooden tongue is not often seen now – "A James Herriot disease" as one client described it i.e. a disease of the past. As a result, I treated the heifer with a 10 day course of antibiotics and she made an uneventful recovery.

I was examining some cows for pregnancy diagnosis on the same farm ten months later. As I found a pregnancy in one young cow, the farmer asked if I recognised her. I had to admit I didn't. It was the same heifer without a trace of a lump under the jaw.

Article by Mark Stott

