



Highgate Veterinary Clinic

Farmers Newsletter - August 2008

Bluetongue

It seems likely that Cumbria will soon be included in the Protection Zone (PZ) for bluetongue (BT) and therefore we will be able to use the vaccine. Several of you have told us that you may not vaccinate your stock. It's tempting to think that vaccinating stock in Cumbria could be a waste of time and money but there are some facts that need to be borne in mind.

- France is now seeing a major outbreak of BT with one case as close as Calais.
- Although many but not all farmers have vaccinated their stock further south, all the susceptible wildlife have not been vaccinated and may be already carrying the virus.
- It may seem too late to vaccinate this year but last year's UK outbreak didn't start until September and the risk period did not end until December.
- Once we're in the PZ, stock can be moved throughout England whether they're vaccinated or not. So in theory, a carrier animal could be brought into Cumbria. If that seems unlikely, it's how tuberculosis returned to Cumbria!
- Generally BT does not cause disease in cattle but this strain has been different, cattle can become very ill. Remember that although cattle don't show signs of disease, the virus can multiply in their bloodstream and increase the number of midges infected.
- If you want to sell stock into Scotland, the simplest way to do this will be to vaccinate and wait 60 days. If stock is to go south, then the buyers will probably want them vaccinated. Also there's no standstill period after vaccinating if the animals are moving within the PZ.
- Remember vaccination isn't just a matter of protecting your stock, its part of a national strategy to eradicate BT. Farmers in the rest of the country have vaccinated and thanks to them, BT hasn't appeared in England this year – yet!

A Fertility Breakthrough

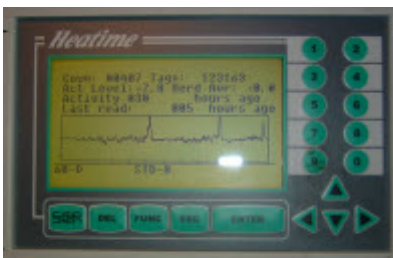


Three of our dairy farmers have recently installed new equipment which is already improving their herd's fertility.

"Heat Time", an automated heat detection system which is being marketed by Semex, is revolutionising dairy cow fertility. Collars fitted to the neck of the cows record movement and, when there is a significant increase in cow movement due to oestrus, a detector in the parlour alerts the farmer to serve the cow. If the collar is fitted shortly after calving this means that cows not cycling can be identified before the breeding period. After service cows not pregnant and returning to heat are seen.

Good fertility is getting cows in calf when you want them to be. It can be split into two components, heat detection rates and conception rates. Conception rates can be very difficult to influence as they involve a multitude of factors within the cow and within its environment. An easier way to improve fertility is to increase heat detection rates but, due to increasing cow numbers and reducing staffing, heat detection has sadly become poor. "Heat Time" will increase heat detection rates to around 80%.

So you may think this eliminates the need for routine fertility visits. It definitely reduces the amount of prostaglandin we use but, instead of trying to help by "treating" cows not seen a bulling, we can concentrate on checking cows after calving so treating problem cows earlier.



This Month: August



Remember to protect dry cows and heifers from summer mastitis with fly control and teat sealants.



Look out for lungworm.



With such wet weather look out for wool rot in sheep.