



# Highgate Veterinary Clinic

## Farmers Newsletter - December 2008

Highgate Veterinary Clinic wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

### Bluetongue



The most recent importation of blue tongue infected cattle from Europe is doubly worrying. First, the cattle were brought to Blackpool, which is too close for comfort. Second, the cattle were carrying BTV serotype 1. There isn't a licensed BTV-1 vaccine in the UK therefore everyone's stock is at risk. We are so lucky that the weather this year has not been suitable for the midge population. If imports continue, it is only a matter of time before blue tongue becomes established in the UK.

The irresponsible actions of some members of the farming community threaten the livelihood of all UK farmers. As a change of law to stop imports is very unlikely, a change of attitude needs to come from the industry itself. Naming and shaming these culprits and making it an antisocial act to import from risky areas would be a good deterrent to others who may be thinking of doing the same thing.

Please, if you're planning to import stock from Europe, think very very hard before putting everyone's stock at risk.

If you haven't vaccinated yet, now is the time to plan the best time to do it. Vaccinating in the second half of the winter should give stock full protection for the whole of next years risk period.

### Copper Deficiency

It is widely agreed that true copper deficiency of soils in the UK is rare and that molybdenum (Mo) acts as an antagonist, blocking the effect of copper in the body. The mechanism for this is a subject of heated debate. Most scientists agree that Mo attaches to copper in the gut and prevents its absorption. Some say Mo not only does this but is also absorbed into the body and acts directly as a poison.

These points may seem academic but they influence the arguments over the best ways to measure body copper levels and treat deficiencies. Put simply, blood samples give you a very rough guide to copper levels and different tests may be better than others. Liver biopsies are better than blood samples as copper is stored there.

So what is the best way to diagnose copper deficiency?

Well even the boffins like a suck it and see approach. They recommend the following:

- 1) Identify the problem and decide whether it can be attributed to copper deficiency.
- 2) Rule out other causes of the problem.

For example, energy deficiency is the major cause of infertility in dairy cattle.

- 3) Make sure that you know the total level of copper in the animal's diet.

Toxicity often occurs when there are multiple copper supplements e.g. in the cake, a mineral bucket and copper injections.

- 4) Blood sampling may highlight that copper levels are already high and that extra copper may lead to toxicity.

5) After all that, treat a proportion of the herd or flock, stand back and see whether extra copper improves things in those animals compared to the rest. As fertility and growth rates are influenced by many factors, blanket copper treatment followed by improvements, may not mean the animals were copper deficient

If you think your stock could benefit from additional copper, please speak to us for advice.

### Stamp on Strep. uberis Mastitis Problems

Strep. uberis is recognised by many as the problem bug on the dairy farm. Intervet's Cobactan® diagnostic scheme – a subsidised milk testing programme examining samples from farms all over Britain - shows it was responsible for 26% of clinical cases and 18% of high SCC. Coliforms were the next highest cause of clinical mastitis at 14% with Staph. aureus at 10%.

Strep. uberis mastitis is a complicated disease as it often causes repeat clinical cases, returning despite some of the mastitis treatments currently available. This results in persistent high cell counts and long-term infections which have a serious impact on the farm. An additional complication is that it can interfere with Bactoscans, leading to apparent milk failures. Unlike some bacteria, it is spread cow-to-cow and via the cow's environment, making Strep. uberis very difficult to control. For all these reasons the first treatment needs to be the best treatment.

It is important to get a bacteriological cure, rather than simply a clinical cure, from the outset. This means making sure that the bacteria are killed and not relying on a less inflamed udder and cleaner looking milk as the guide for success. To get a bacteriological cure you need an antibiotic with a broad spectrum that will penetrate deeply into the udder tissue, rapidly acting on the bacteria.

Farm experience shows that treatment with Cobactan® LC (this is the new name for Cephaguard LC) is able to deliver these high bacteriological cures. In addition, combination therapy with both lactating cow tube and injectable antibiotic – Cobactan® LC and Cobactan® 2.5% injection - provides the kind of hard-hitting, fast-acting treatment that can even produce bacteriological cures in cases of E. coli mastitis. This approach is becoming increasingly popular with farmers and vets throughout the country.

### This Month: December



If fluke is a problem on your farm, fluke cattle this month.



Look for early signs of calves starting with pneumonia and treat promptly



Ensure that silage faces are not overheating as this can lead to fungal growth and mycotoxins in the fodder.



If sway back occurs on your farm, give copper supplementation to sheep in mid pregnancy.