



# Highgate Veterinary Clinic

## Farmers Newsletter - April 2009

### Cattle Lameness

At the end of March, Mark attended the inaugural Cattle Lameness Conference at Nottingham Veterinary School. It was well attended by vets, scientists, nutritionalists and advisors. The day started with a presentation by Laura Green, a scientist from Warwick University, who headed up a three year lameness survey in 50 farms across the country (one of which was one of our clients). She presented various risk factors for increasing lameness in dairy herds, which often raised more questions than answers. One of which was farms who hired foot trimmers had more lameness than those that didn't. There could be a few explanations for this; those with little lameness didn't see the need to employ a foot trimmer, some foot trimmers have poor technique i.e. they over trim, or immediate attention was not given to the lame cow because 'the foot trimmer is coming next week and he'll sort it out'.

Milk records showed that the milk yield was depressed several weeks or even months before lameness was treated. This suggests that the disease had been going on for a long time before treatment was given. It was suggested that treatment should be given earlier than is occurring at the moment. i.e. don't just treat the lame cows, treat those that are ever so slightly lame before their condition develops any further.

Microbiologists from Liverpool University appeared to have established the cause of digital dermatitis (DD). It is a bacterium called Treponema which is repeatedly found in foot lesions. They were unable to find it anywhere else and so conclude that the reservoir of disease within a herd is the feet of infected cows rather than the environment. Interestingly, Treponema has not been found in ulcers that occur at the front of cow's udders. The identical bacterium has been found in lesions of contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD), so it appears that CODD and DD are the same disease in different species.

Treatment advice has not changed, but it is still interesting that Treponema are more sensitive to Penicillin than to Lincospectin. Although a vaccine is a long way off, identification of the bacteria that cause DD is a step in the right direction.

### Bluetongue – The Dutch Nightmare

Last month a joint venture between local vet practices and Intervet Animal Health held a meeting at which Karin van Heuven-van Kats, a vet from south east Netherlands spoke about her experiences of the bluetongue outbreak in 2007. Her practice deals mostly with dairy cattle so they weren't expecting to see many clinical signs in their patients. How wrong they were! A sudden increase in general illness i.e. mastitis, LDA, milk drop and pneumonia on several of their farms led them to test for BTV-8. Once confirmed they realised that their increase in work load was due to the knock on effects of BTV infection. No vaccine was available and so that year they had to weather the storm.

The severity of disease varied from farm to farm, some units saw abortions, cows calving with no milk, deformed calves, others saw nothing as dramatic initially but then all units showed poor fertility.

In May 2008 BTV-8 vaccine became available. It was free to the farmers but vets had to administer it, so again the practice was very busy. However, looking back, the amount of disease seen by the practice halved in 2008 compared to 2007 and Dutch farmers are very happy they vaccinated. Karin's main worry for 2009 is BTV -1. There is no vaccine against BTV-1 available in Holland and it is destined to get closer to the French border this year.

Bovilis BTV-8 vaccine is readily available and we recommend that you all vaccinate your stock this spring.

### Lambing and the Follow Up

We've had a busy lambing time and in a lot of ways more pleasant and less smelly than usual. We've lambed more ewes but we've produced more live lambs and healthy sheep this year than previous years. This not only makes the job more fulfilling for us, but it also makes our intervention more profitable to you. Please keep it up!

So it now remains to keep these lambs alive and growing well so they can be sold for the most profit. A major part of this is parasite control, and using wormers wisely can affect your bottom line dramatically. Please contact us if you would like any help with deciding when to worm and what with.

### This Month: April



Ensure that young stock are fully vaccinated with Huskvac before turnout.



If turning cows out this month, ensure they have a daily source of magnesium to avoid staggers.



Aborted ewes can be tested for EAE and toxoplasmosis by blood sampling. These tests are free of charge until July.



Vaccinate lambs against orf before problems occur.



BVD and leptospirosis boosters are due before turnout.