



# Highgate Veterinary Clinic

## Farmers Newsletter - Sept 2004

### Milk Fever Epidemic

In August, we treated more milk fevers than we have done for years. The vast majority of which responded very well to treatment.

Obviously, backend calving patterns on some units mean more milk fevers at this time of year but why more this year?

You probably all know the answer, the weather. There's lots of grass but its low in dry matter and low in magnesium. Magnesium is used by cows to

help mobilise calcium. So low mags can lead to milk fevers. Magnesium is not stored in the body so what a cow gets that day in its diet it either uses it or excretes it.

So what can you do. If housing them is not practical at the moment, dry cows, especially the close up ones need supplementary feed. Straw or big bale silage in a ring feeder will help to increase dry matter intake.

High mag buckets are a favour-

ite with many but you just can't guarantee who's eating them. 2 kg of dry cow rolls daily allows you to see who's eating what and gets the rumen bugs ready for concentrates in early lactation.

If this weather continues, look out for grass staggers. Remember if you get one, it means that the whole group are low in magnesium.



### Liver Fluke -Time to Act

Liver fluke is becoming more and more common. There are few areas in the UK that are uninfected.

We are all aware of the clinical signs of fluke infestation such as sudden deaths and weight loss but what are the economic costs?

#### Sheep

|                  |                                 |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Live weight gain | <i>reduced</i> by more than 10% |
| Multiple births  | <i>reduced</i> by 10%           |
| Birth weight     | <i>reduced</i> by more than 5%  |
| Lamb weight gain | <i>reduced</i> by up to 30%     |



#### Cattle

|             |                             |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Milk yield  | <i>reduced</i> by up to 15% |
| Weight gain | <i>reduced</i> by 10%       |

Novartis, the makers of Fasinex and Combinex have joined with abattoirs to produce a "Liver Fluke Condemnation Notice" which will be sent to you if any of your stock going to slaughter have fluke. It will serve as useful feed back to you - but lets work towards you not getting this notice.

The warm wet weather this year will have been ideal for both aquatic snail and fluke growth.

There is a need to treat promptly this year with drugs which kill all stages of the fluke in cattle and sheep. This means either Combinex or Fasinex.

### In Brief

#### County Show

This year we are having a stand at the county show on 9th September. We on stand B47 between Nat West Bank and Westmorland Gazette. There will be displays discussing Farm Contracts, Herd and Flock Health Planning. Re-

freshments will be provided and there will be a charity prize draw.

Please come along for a chat and a drink.

#### Toxovax

Just as this newsletter was being written, we received notice that Toxovax will not be available until October.

The company has just run out and the next batch won't be ready until then. I'm afraid this is becoming a regular habit

with this vaccine and there is no alternative.

If this leaves you in the lurch, contact us to discuss ways of reducing the risk of barren ewes and abortions.