



Highgate Veterinary Clinic

Farmers Newsletter - October 2004

Calf Pneumonia Vaccines-Are you wasting your money?



Pneumonia vaccines are expensive - costing 10-12 pounds per calf. So are they worth it? Pneumonia costs, on average, £82 per affected calf so prevention has got to be worthwhile.

The vaccines normally work well but sometimes the results are disappointing. Vaccines are designed to stimulate the animal's immunity but whether they prevent disease depends on several factors. Vaccines are delicate medicines and many (if not all) need keeping refrigerated. Keeping them on the dash board of your Landrover will mean they won't work as well as they should (if they work at all).

It's a good idea to record which animals got vaccinated and when as the timing of the second dose is important and giving only one injection is a waste. If calves are already sickly from other calf diseases, they will not respond well to the vaccine. If the calf's environment encourages large amounts of bugs to be present, the immunity produced by a vaccine may be overcome.

Vaccinated calves in poorly ventilated buildings on damp bedding may still get pneumonia. So the answer to "Are you wasting your money?" could be "Yes" if you're doing other things wrong. Investing in some veterinary time may pay dividends for years to come.

Preventing Toxoplasmosis without Vaccination

Toxovax will not be available until the end of this month, which will be too late for most of you. Young cats are infected with toxoplasma for the first time by eating mice. For the next two weeks, they pass huge amounts of oocysts (eggs) in their faeces. The oocysts survive for over 18 months and can contaminate cake, water fodder and pastures. They can also be spread in slurry. Good rodent control, cat neutering and secure feed stores will

help reduce oocysts on the farm. If a ewe is infected in the first two months of pregnancy, the foetus dies and the ewe appears barren. Infection between two and four months of pregnancy leads to the birth of dead, mummified or weakly lambs. Toxoplasma can be controlled in the sheep with a drug called decoquinat. Providing medicated blocks to susceptible groups of sheep in the last three months of pregnancy

will help to reduce losses. As an example, Denis Brincombe produce "Toxo Tubs" at £39.95 each (min order of 10). You'll need 12 tubs to treat 100 ewes for 12 weeks. (costing £4.80 per ewe!). A medicated feed prescription is required from us before the block can be supplied. This solution is more expensive and less effective than vaccination but beggars can't be choosers and it may be worthwhile for small groups of at risk sheep.

In Brief

TB/Brucellosis Testing
Testing time is upon us. This year we can download lists of ear tag numbers from Workington so (with luck) it will speed up the paperwork. It will be interesting to see how accurate these lists will be!

In Brief

NDFAS Rules Change



As from the beginning of October, the rules are changing for farm assurance. The Herd Health Plan has changed in a few ways. Remember that the plans now need reviewing every 12 months. If the plans are written and signed by a vet

(and the farmer), the inspector will rarely check them. We use the BCVAHHP which is compliant with the new NDFAS rules. Please phone us to arrange for your plan to be written or updated.

Fluke



Please remember to fluke your sheep this month with Fasinex or Combinex. This year is promising to be a bad year.

Warmth and humidity this summer allowed both the snail host and fluke populations to grow well. This will mean that sheep and cattle have been ingesting large amounts of fluke over the past few months. Any sudden deaths or weakness in sheep in the coming months should alert you to a possible fluke problem.