



Highgate Veterinary Clinic

Farmers Newsletter - May 2005

Don't Bury Your Head In The Sand

Winter is Over

Another winter is over, cattle are being turned out and lambing is nearly at an end. Memories of coughing calves last back end will already be long gone and those of scouring calves and aborting ewes will fade fast. It is all too easy to breathe a sigh of relief and get on with those other jobs, but now is the time to act to prevent future problems. Don't bury your head in the sand and pretend things will go away because they usually don't!

Controlling Pneumonia

Modification of buildings to aid in the control of pneumonia takes time and planning, and vaccination programmes may need to start before housing.

Free Blood Testing

It's not too late to blood sample ewes to confirm toxoplasmosis and enzootic abortion as the free testing by Intervet will run until the end of July. Using these results you can vaccinate pre-tupping this year.

Controlling Scour

Control of scour in sucklers may include changing calving patterns and using vaccination in late pregnancy.

Do ask for our advice

Prevention of disease saves time and more importantly money, making farming a more enjoyable occupation but it does require a bit of prior thought and effort.

Do ask for our advice – we also find it more rewarding to be involved in husbandry decisions and disease control rather than just seeing “the lost causes”.



How fertile is your bull?

It is estimated that taking fixed and variable costs and depreciation into account, keeping a bull costs at least £30 per calf produced. When this is compared with using AI semen, keeping a bull is not the cheap option it seems.

An infertile bull can be a disaster but is easy to spot – no calves! But a subfertile bull can cause big problems but in a more subtle way. He gets cows in calf but conception rates are low so calving periods are extended in suckler herds and sweeper bulls in dairy herds are no better or even worse than AI! So how do you identify these bulls? Semen samples give you a good idea of the fertility of bulls. Testing them before they're needed helps avoid disappointing conceptions.

Why don't we provide a semen testing service? Well, up to now we've relied on using an artificial vagina to collect a sample. This is a dangerous and unreliable technique, requiring a cow in season and a bull willing to work with a vet standing next to him.

Mark recently attended a course at Edinburgh University where he learned a new safe, quick and reliable way to obtain a semen sample. Electro-ejaculation obtains a sample in less than 30 minutes in the majority of bulls as they are restrained in a crush.



Do you have a breeding bull or intend to keep one?

Providing semen testing using an electro-ejaculation instrument would require some considerable investment for us.

Before splashing out, we thought we would ask you if there would be any demand for this service. If you have a breeding bull or intend to keep one, please could you fill in the following short questionnaire and return it to the surgery.

This form can be filled in online on our website at www.highgate-vets.co.uk/farm/current.htm	
How many breeding bulls do you have / plan to have?	
Have you had disappointing conception rates with bulls in the past?	YES NO
Would you consider testing your bull's fertility before using him each year?	YES NO
If you sell bulls would you consider testing them prior to the sales and selling them with a certificate of fertility?	YES NO
Would you be prepared to pay about £60 per bull?	YES NO