



# Highgate Veterinary Clinic

## Farmers Newsletter - December 2006

*Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from all of us at Highgate Veterinary Clinic*

### Seen any Sheep Scab Lately? – We have!

In 1992 when compulsory dipping was halted, there were one hundred outbreaks of sheep scab reported each year. Since then the number of cases has rocketed so that now scab is commonplace.

Scab is caused by a mange mite, which lives in the ears, armpits and groin of sheep during the summer. During this time, the sheep show no signs of disease and it can be brought onto the farm on bought in “healthy” replacements. As the temperature falls, the mites move out onto the skin and causing severe itching.



Plunge dipping is the ultimate treatment as it gets into all the nooks and crannies where the mites hide. Dectomax and Cydectin are good treatments as well giving prolonged protection.

So with these treatments available, why is scab such a problem?

Imagine you have scab in your flock. You treat your sheep and they’re become clear. Your neighbour is also conscientious but he treats four weeks after you. As the mites live for up to 17 days off the ewe, any contact with either directly with neighbouring flocks or indirectly in handling pens or shared fences has the potential to re infest your sheep. Add to this that you will have several neighbours and few farms are ring fenced, the problem doesn’t go away.

The answer is for farmers to cooperate and coordinate treatments in a set area. If you’re fed up of seeing scab and want to do something to prevent the disease in the long run, please contact the surgery and we can try to work together and with farming groups to make a difference.

### So Why Don’t You Vaccinate Your Calves Against Pneumonia?

*“They’re just too expensive and I can’t afford them”*

They’re certainly not cheap. A course can cost around £10 to £12 per head but can you afford not to prevent them. It’s estimated that calf pneumonia costs the UK farming industry £80 million per year. The average cost of pneumonia in a calf is between £60 for a dairy calf and £80 for a suckler calf. The cost of treatment is just the tip of the iceberg poor growth rates in the treated animals and all the other calves in the group are the major costs.

*“I don’t have much of a problem. One shot of Alamycin LA and they’re fine.”*

Nationally, the number of calves with pneumonia increased from the winter of 04/05 to that of 05/06. This winter it could be you that has a big problem. Even the seemingly minor outbreaks which are settled quickly can have long term effects on growth rates and fertility.

*“Which vaccine should I use – there are just too many to choose from.”*

That’s where we come in with giving you the best advice on when to use them and what to use.

*“My calves get pneumonia when they’re very young before I can get a full course of vaccine in them”*

A new vaccine, “Risposal Intranasal” is a one shot vaccine up the nose which can be used in very young calves. It protects against two major pathogens RSV and PI3 viruses.

### Metabolic profiles underline dietary inadequacies in Dairy Herds



A team at Edinburgh University have recently published their findings from blood samples taken from 35,500 dairy cows over five years.

The energy status was found inadequate in 70% early lactation, 57% of mid lactation and 58% of cows in transition.

16% of cows in early lactation and 20% in mid lactation showed evidence of deficiency of effective rumen degradable protein. In contrast, inadequate levels of magnesium, phosphate, copper, selenium and iodine were uncommon. The transition period was identified as the biggest constraint on production. Nutritional problems were most commonly associated with poor

feed management rather than the formulation of the rations.

This underlines that energy deficiency is the most important cause of problems in dairy cattle and this is most important in cows around calving. It also shows that diets can be perfect on paper but if there isn’t enough trough space and feed is not truly ad lib, problems can still occur.

Metabolic profiles are useful tools for monitoring the nutritional status of cattle. If your herd’s yields or fertility is disappointing, we can help along with your nutritionist to pin point the source of the problem

### This Month: December



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



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



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



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