



# HIGHGATE VETERINARY CLINIC— Farmer Newsletter

December 2009

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## Holiday surgery opening

Christmas Eve  
8.30am - 4.00pm

Christmas Day  
Closed

Boxing Day  
Closed

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> Dec  
Closed

Bank Holiday Monday  
Closed

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> Dec  
8.30am - 7.30pm

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> Dec  
8.30am - 7.30pm

New Years Eve  
8.30am - 5.30pm

New Years Day  
Closed

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan  
9am - 12.30

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan  
Closed

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> Jan  
8.30am - 7.30pm

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The Farm Animal Welfare Council produced a report in October stating that the welfare of the dairy cow in the UK has improved over the past 10 years, but greater improvement can be made.

'Welfare' is not a word I often use as a vet . This is not because I don't believe it to be important but that the word is often closely associated with cruelty and neglect and prosecution.

This report is mainly aimed at animal health, disease control and longevity. It recognises the financial constraints but points out that cow health is a contributing factor towards profitability.

The report says that the incidence of lameness has remained the same over the past 10 years and although traditional causes of lameness are in decline, diseases like digital dermatitis are on the increase. Clinical mastitis levels are stable but sub-clinical mastitis (high cell counts) are on the increase. The report calls for more training, dissemination of knowledge and benchmarking to help improve these things.

Although many infectious diseases can be vaccinated against, many others cannot, so a strong biosecurity programme for each farm should be in force. More attention should be given to rearing heifers so there is less wastage of young cattle in early life.

Greater emphasis should be placed on cow welfare in breeding programmes but this improvement will inevitably be slow. The report suggests that we should aim for the average lifespan of our dairy cows to be eight years and that we should aim to improve general welfare in dairy cattle in the next five years.

There are no surprises here, many of our dairy clients are recognising the problems on their farms with our help; and in conjunction with ourselves, nutritionalists and consultants are making headway into improving cow welfare, longevity and *profitability*.

If you would like to read the full report visit <http://www.fawc.co.uk/pdf/ppf-report091012.pdf>

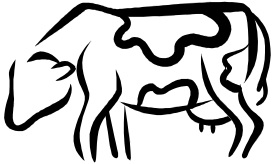
**Best wishes for Christmas and 2010**

*from all at Highgate Veterinary Clinic*

## This Month



Don't forget **fluke!**



Keep a look out for **pneumonia** and treat promptly. We are now stocking 'Selectan' which is exactly like Nuflor but is more easily syringable – why not try it?

**A new long acting dairy antibiotic will be available this month.** Naxcel has the active ingredient of Excenel but lasts for up to 7 days and nil milk withdrawal.

One shot is equivalent price of 3 shots of Excenel. There is a catch; the injection has to be made in the base of the ear, which can be tricky.

## Project delivering welfare benefits on Cumbrian farm...

Nigel Teasdale is the third generation of his family to farm at Halefield Farm, Kirkby Thorne near Penrith. In the heart of the Eden valley, the farm extends to around 270 acres and is home to around 100 cows with 100 acres of the land dedicated to combinable crops and a small beef enterprise. The dairy herd is a mixture of red and white Holstein Friesians, Ayrshires and MRIs and yields average around 6500 litre/ year.

When the animal health and welfare project was first launched Nigel expressed his interest in taking part. "When the leaflet came through the post I rang up straight away," he explains. "We have struggled with cow comfort and somatic cell counts for some time and I thought it would be really beneficial to take part in the project."

So a visit from his vet, Matt Colston, from Frame and Swift in Penrith, and his adviser, Nigel Hardie, from CREA was arranged. They had a look around the farm with Nigel and quickly identified the cow housing as a problem area for both cow comfort and milk hygiene. In addition, fertility was highlighted as an area that could be improved, via the implementation of a recording system.

"Our cow housing is in an old byre that was converted to Newton Rigg cubicles in 1976," explained Nigel. "The vet and adviser recommended that we improve the housing by upgrading the cubicle divisions and installing mattresses, whilst also focusing on improvements to ventilation." In addition, Nigel was recommended to start milk sampling to identify the pathogens causing mastitis cases and to consider parlour routines to prevent cross infection.

Nigel took this advice on board and decided to apply for grant funding for new cubicles and mattresses, as well as cluster flushing in the parlour. This was approved and the cubicles were altered in time for this housing season.

"We are already seeing an improvement in cow comfort and welfare and we haven't finished implementing all of the recommendations yet," Nigel commented. "We used to have several cows that wouldn't lie in the beds and now we don't seem to have that problem, and the cows are definitely more comfortable."

Overall, Nigel has been pleased that he took advantage of the advice available. "The process worked well and has been really useful," he concluded. "We've still got some more work to do but we've definitely seen welfare benefits as a result."

## Treating mastitis with NSAIDs reduces culling rate

A recent and yet to be published New Zealand study showed that if a non steroidal anti inflammatory drug (NSAID) similar to Flunixin was used in addition to antibiotics to treat mastitis, both cell counts and culling rates were reduced.

The snag is the researchers didn't expect culling to be affected so didn't ask farmers to record why animals were culled, and when asked later why cows left the herd the answer was often, 'I can't remember'.

The most obvious answer would be that NSAIDs improved the mastitis cure rate and therefore pre-

vented reoccurrence or high cell counts. But there may be a less obvious answer.

We take NSAIDs like ibuprofen and paracetamol because they reduce pain; swelling and fever i.e. they make us feel better. Many mastitis cases occur early in lactation when a dairy cow is already under nutritional stress. NSAIDs make the cow feel better more quickly so she gets her appetite back promptly and is less likely to have metabolic diseases which may lead to ketosis, solar ulcers, infertility or just general lowered ability to fight off other infections.