

Farmers Newsletter



Autumn 2006

RED MEAT INDUSTRY FORUM (RMIF)

AUTUMNAL PROBLEMS!

With the dry summer we have just endured it is a strong possibility that with a sudden surge in grass growth we may see losses due to **Fog Fever**, especially in suckler cows. Avoid sudden changes from poor swards onto lush ones without phasing the transition. Also it is wise to provide some long fibre in the form of hay or straw to buffer the effects of the sudden increase in the amino acid tryptophan, which is what causes the trouble.

Another high risk this year, again depending on grass availability, is acorn poisoning. There is an enormous crop this year and if grazing is tight they will be eaten by cattle and sheep. Back in the early eighties the practice saw a lot of deaths caused by acorns – it is wise to try to restrict access by fencing off under oak trees – or grazing with pigs first!

VECOXAN CALF

Intensive research into the incidence and financial implications associated with coccidiosis in calves has highlighted how common it is. The product Vecoxan which we have been using in lambs for some years is now licensed for calves. If you feel that coccidiosis is a problem, please let us come and investigate and take some meaningful samples for analysis.

Our Red Meat Industry Forum (RMIF) group is meeting on a regular basis approximately every three months with speakers sponsored by EBLEX. Subjects covered so far include Estimated Breeding Values (EBV) in bulls and rams and Grassland Management. A meeting scheduled for the end of September involves John Hughes, a specialist in the design of housing for stock, talking on farm about ventilation problems. The RMIF are still keen to recruit more members to our group. Members are visited on farm to collect data on production and finance matters to enable benchmarking to take place between large sets of similar farm types. Anyone interested involved with beef and/or sheep can contact Teresa at the surgery who can put you in touch with the relevant people.

PRE-MOVEMENT TESTING (PRMT)

We envisage an up-surge in requests for PRMT for tuberculosis this Autumn with an increasing requirement when the requirement for testing of 6 week plus old calves to kick-in in the Spring. Please give us plenty of warning so that we keep everyone happy as we also endeavour to schedule routine and short-interval tests in as well. In some cases by careful planning routine tests can include cattle also requiring PRMT. Speak to Teresa or Hannah at the surgery if you wish to discuss this.

DAIRY CLIENT MEETINGS

With the onset of Autumn we will be re-introducing a programme of meetings for our dairy clients. Feedback on possible subjects and preferred times of day (or night!) for meetings would be greatly appreciated. Would meetings on-farm be more interesting?

There are a couple of items in the pipeline but we would be encouraged if we could be more certain of good turnouts enabling us to source high quality speakers and sponsors. Let's hear from you!

SHEEP VACCINATION

Enclosed with this newsletter, for sheep farmers, is a useful Vaccination Planner. We are still coming across instances when vaccination schedules are not being followed correctly with unfortunate outcomes!

This newsletter is on our website www.marchesvets.co.uk

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MEDICINE COSTS

This is an ever-recurring subject of conversation. We have endeavoured to keep our drug prices at a level that is fair to you and still provides a reasonable margin for us. Keeping medicines in stock for immediate supply is a costly procedure. However, in an increasing number of cases we are forward buying for clients, especially for quantities of vaccines, dry cow tubes etc. Under these circumstances, given two working days or more we can often adjust our prices in the light of the reduction in stock holdings required.

We are always available for discussion and advice as you are well aware and are keen that the correct medicine is given at the correct dose by the correct route and that they should provide a cost benefit to you. We are always willing to discuss pricing issues if and when they arise. The practice is more than pleased to be able to supply "the complete package" including carefully chosen wormers and other animal health products. These suggestions are very often highlighted in our discussions in relation to Health Planning. Please remember that those farming clients who have Health Plans produced by us are in a different discount group! It's worth asking!

You can now order medicines using email at farmorders@marchesvets.co.uk; please allow 24 hours before pick up. We are also considering introducing the facility to pay by Direct Debit – your comments on this would be welcome.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT MICOTIL

Please note that as from 30th July 2006 we have been ordered by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate following an EC directive to cease supply of Micotil injection onto farm. The product can still be prescribed but has to be administered by a veterinary surgeon. This does not affect any supplies that may still be on farm as it would be impractical to control. The reasons are based on safety and, as you are aware, we have always been vigilant in reinforcing information about the human risks involved with self-injection. There are alternatives but Micotil does still have important applications and where practicable we will advise its use with administration fees being as cost effective as possible.

BOTULISM

Botulism is an increasing problem on a national level and we have seen outbreaks in both cattle and sheep. A combination of increasing use of poultry litter for dispersal on land and increasingly hot summers are probably the main reason for this increase.

Suffice it to say, it is extremely unwise to spread poultry litter (that inevitably includes body parts of birds!) onto pasture and to allow even brief access of stock to collections of this waste material.

Symptoms include weakness, recumbency and death in numbers of a group at the same time and financial consequences can be dire.

STAFF CHANGES

Since the last newsletter we have had an addition to our Large Animal Veterinary Team. Alice Worrall, whom some of you may have already met, spent some time practising in Montgomery before going to New Zealand where she gained a lot of experience in dairy practice. Alice is very interested in Mastitis Control Schemes and together with Ed Jones she is participating in a MDC sponsored programme looking at new ideas in controlling udder health problems.

September also sees the temporary departure of Adrian Allan, also to New Zealand, where he is spending approximately nine months working in an equine practice concentrating mainly on stud medicine. We wish Adrian and his family good luck and see you next summer!

Taking his place as long-term locum is Barney Sampson who used to work in Kington and Shropshire before spending a year doing charitable work together with his wife Hannah (also a vet) in India. Welcome Barney.