



NEWSLETTER

**AUG
2020**

This Month:

**A New-Look Newsletter!
Bulk Milk Disease Monitoring
TBAS Extension**



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WELCOME TO OUR NEW-LOOK NEWSLETTER

It has been a funny old summer so far. As we try to get back to a (relatively) normal way of life again following the Covid-19 pandemic the weather continues to range from one extreme to the other. It has definitely been a bit of a hybrid of 2018 and 2019 so far this year. As I write this it looks like its trying to rain again with temperatures sat in the mid-teens. However, by the time you read it we may well be in the middle of another heatwave!

Since early June there has certainly been no shortage of grass around. As harvest approaches straw crops look like they will be quite poor in addition to the reduced acreage to cut in the first place. All this points to high straw prices this winter. For those of you who rely on feeding large quantities of straw to dry cows and youngstock it might be worth considering making some of your surplus grass into more mature silage or haylage and feeding that as a straw substitute this winter. Just a thought as I know it won't be practical for all.



In terms of getting back to a 'new normal' post-Coronavirus we are aiming to return to normal office opening hours (8am-6pm) from 1st September. This may be subject to change depending on the course of the virus. We will keep posting updates via social media and of course in next month's newsletter.

Gwen Davies, our first new grad of the summer, has started work this week and Jack Randle, our second new recruit, will be starting on the 1st September (there will be a proper introduction next month!). I always enjoy welcoming new graduates into the practice as they are the future and always come with that new vet enthusiasm and bright, fresh ideas. It's amazing what us "older" vets do pick up and learn from them. We'll introduce Jack more fully next month! But do give them both a warm welcome on farm when you get to meet them.

Looking forward to the future and better times ahead.

John

COURSES

ONLINE MEDICINES COURSE

We had a successful first online Medicines Course using Zoom in July. Our next one on **August 12th** is fully booked. These courses include covering correct administration of medicines and avoiding residues. Anyone who still needs to attend a Medicines course to meet their Red Tractor requirements should contact Nicky Bowden on 01270 610349 or nickybowden@nantwichfarmvets.co.uk. Future sessions can be arranged subject to demand.



TBAS EXTENSION

Over 50 of our clients, whether with or without a current TB breakdown, have made use of the TB advisory service visits. The funding was due to be available only up until June this year, but thanks to Covid-19 impacting the ability to make on-farm advisory visits, this has been extended right to the end of this year. Every cloud, eh?

On these visits, one of the Nantwich Farm Vets TBAS team (John Manson and Amy Cox) will visit your farm, ensuring the advice is specific to your set up and addresses any of your specific concerns with managing or preventing TB in your herd.

Following the visit you will receive a bespoke report including all the recommendations outlined from the farm visit, and a follow up call and/or e-mail from TBAS for feedback and to see how you are getting on with



implementing the recommendations in the report.

Don't worry, the advisor is there to help and will not judge you or your farm. The recommendations are suggestions – there is no penalty if you don't implement them. If you have any questions or concerns about having an advice visit, just call us – we are here to help!

There is also stacks of brilliant information and some great resources about TB at www.tbhub.co.uk, so it's worth a click on that link to have a read for starters.

BULK MILK DISEASE MONITORING

The ins and outs of bulk milk testing are outlined by Nicky Bowden, our business development manager.



ACCESS TO RESULTS AND DATA

Ensuring you are testing appropriately and interpreting the results can be a bit of a minefield, but our team are always happy to help steer you in the right direction. In order to do this we need to be able to see what testing you are doing and the results. The best way of doing this is to grant us advisor access to your milk recording data. Due to GDPR changes we are unable to request milk testing for you without this permission.

We are set up as advisors on both CIS and NMR Herd Companion. Quite a lot of bulk milk testing is carried out through NML/NMR as they can test the payment samples they receive from all milk producers. So farms that record with CIS or do not regularly record can still have testing done through NML/NMR. All dairy farms have access to NMR Herd Companion to view their payment testing, but you may need to register if this has not already been set up.



We are exploring options for improving our medicines recording using the NMR FarmAssist platform, so please ensure this box is also selected for Nantwich Farm Vets in Herd Companion.

To make sure we are advising all of our farms appropriately it would be extremely helpful if all of our dairy farms could check their online advisor access to ensure Nantwich Farm Vets is listed, and for non-NML recording farms to log in to Herd Companion and grant us access there. If you need assistance with this, please call Nicky in the office on 01270 610349.

WHAT SHOULD I BE TESTING FOR?

Whether you should be testing and what you should be testing for will vary between farms. This may depend on your disease or vaccination status and some milk contracts require farms to carry out regular testing. Some tests are not appropriate in vaccinated herds, for example, so it's important to ensure you aren't paying for unnecessary tests.



Let's look at the common tests and discuss when and how they could be used:

BVD ANTIGEN PCR

This test looks for BVD virus in the bulk milk sample. A positive result is often due to a persistently infected (PI) animal in the milking herd but you can also see positive results if the virus is circulating in the herd. You may also see positives immediately after vaccination with the live vaccine Bovela, so we advise waiting three weeks post-vaccination before taking an antigen sample.

This is one of the more expensive bulk milk tests at around £25, but it is a cost effective way of testing a large number of animals for BVD virus, particularly during a PI hunt. It can be done as a one off or part of quarterly monitoring. It is important to remember that this only tests animals currently contributing to the bulk tank, so there could be PI animals in the dry cows, young stock or other cattle on farm that would not

be detected by this method alone. If you are relying on this as your only method of BVD monitoring there is a big lag time between a PI being born and being detected as a milking heifer.

It can be a particularly useful test in flying herds, as if a sample tests positive, only animals that have joined the herd since the last negative test need further testing in a PI hunt.

BVD ANTIBODY

Antibodies are produced by the body in response to infection or vaccination, so detecting antibodies in a bulk milk sample shows the herd has either been exposed to disease and/or vaccinated. There is no way of distinguishing between wild infection and vaccination with BVD Ab testing.

This test may be useful in an unvaccinated herd which has not had any recent BVD infection but if there is an outbreak in these herds other signs of BVD are often detected before the bulk milk antibody rise has been identified. For this reason it should not be the only method of BVD monitoring in these herds.

Because the test cannot differentiate between active BVD infection and vaccination, this is not a necessary test for farms currently vaccinating for BVD. However there are many farms still testing (and paying) for this on a



A calf will only become PI if its mother is infected during pregnancy (40-120d); it cannot become PI after birth. (bvdfree.org.uk)

quarterly basis. While the test may not cost much on its own, this money could be better spent elsewhere.

LEPTOSPIROSIS ANTIBODY

This test shows evidence of Leptospirosis infection or vaccination with no way to distinguish between the two. Leptospirosis is a zoonotic (transmissible to humans) disease that can have serious consequences if people become infected. For this reason, many milk buyers insist that farms either vaccinate for Leptospirosis or carry out quarterly bulk milk samples with negative results to prove absence of herd infection.

For farms that are not currently vaccinating watching for an increase in bulk milk Lepto antibodies can be a good option for monitoring herd infection. As with BVD, if a farm is vaccinating for Leptospirosis testing for bulk milk antibody is probably unnecessary.

IBR AND IBR GE ANTIBODY

One difference between IBR and the other diseases monitored through milk is that if a marker vaccine has been used, it is possible to distinguish vaccinated animals from those with wild infection. The marker vaccine has had a particular gE protein deleted, and it is the antibodies to this protein that the IBR gE test looks for.

For this reason, herds vaccinating for IBR should ensure they are using marker vaccine and that any bulk milk

monitoring is for gE not standard IBR. The tests cost the same, but we have already spotted a few farms that are doing the wrong test. This could be an issue as some milk buyers have this as one of their requirements.

LIVER FLUKE

NML give four different levels of liver fluke infection from bulk milk antibodies, from weak/no infection to heavy infestation, which can help to give you an idea of how many of the herd are infected. It is worth noting that antibody levels are still detectable for 4-6 months post-infection, so if you have treated animals recently, they may still test as heavily infected.

NEOSPORA

It is also possible to test for Neospora on bulk milks. A positive result shows there is Neospora in the herd, but a single negative result does not mean the herd is totally free of Neospora due to the way Neospora antibodies fluctuate.

IN CONCLUSION

Bulk milk disease monitoring can be a useful tool but if you are not testing appropriately or if the results are not being monitored it could be a waste of money. For this reason ensuring Nantwich Farm Vets has the appropriate permissions via Herd Companion and CIS will help us ensure you get the best from the testing carried out on your herd.

Contact us today if you need any help with getting to grips with what testing you might (or might not!).

CLIENT NEWS

HERD SALE

This month sees the end of an era for the Hoolgrave Herd, belonging to David Astbury at Church Minshull. David is the third generation in the family to have milked at Old Hoolgrave Farm, and has been much appreciated as a Nantwich Farm Vet client over many years.



We wish David and the rest of the family and staff all the best with the sale and whatever the future of the farm holds for them!

The herd sale will be held at Shrewsbury Auction on Tuesday August 11th.

BVD STAMP IT OUT UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who has taken part in the BVD Stamp It Out scheme since 2018. Some of you may have received a survey by email asking for feedback. If you get chance, please could you fill this in as it will help to guide policy for BVD control in England going forwards. If asked for your reference number this can be found on your black Stamp It Out BVD file e.g. NAN0001.

It is with sadness that I have cancelled the last remaining follow up cluster meeting. The project comes to an end in December 2020 and I have decided to run the final meetings on farm. I will endeavour to deliver as many of these final meetings as I can myself. If anyone would like a print-out of the slides of the final presentation, please just let me know.



Hopefully all farms now have a clear plan to use BVD eartags or annual heifer 'check' testing to monitor their BVD status. If you are using 'check' testing a member of the team will be in touch when it is due. Many farms have now achieved BVD Free Test Negative status and will receive a certificate to display on farm. In addition to this, if you would like to learn more about attaining a CHCS (Cattle Health Certification Standards) Accredited Free or Vaccinated Monitored Free status for BVD this is also something that I can help you with.

Laura

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