



nantwich farm vets



February 2020

Dates for your diary

Tues 11th Feb 2 - 4:30pm	Lambing Course Theory and practical, including problems with ewe around lambing and new-born lamb care
Wed 12th Feb 10:30am - 12:30pm	Rearing for Returns - Module 2 Colostrum is Gold
Feb 24-27th	Dairyland Foot Trimming Places still available.
Wed 11th Mar 10:30am - 12:30pm	Rearing for Returns - Module 3 Pre-weaning nutrition

Welcome to our February newsletter! With the onset of lambing for many of our sheep farmers, and calving for our spring herds, it perhaps feels like the calm before the storm is coming (or has come!) to an end.

We welcomed back Lewis last month, and he has some points to share from the New Zealand system for our seasonal calving herds in our main article. There's also some info and reminders regarding TBAS and Farm Assurance visits, and a point about on-farm security. Enjoy!

Planning ahead for Assurance



All of our Nantwich Farm Vets team are happy to help you prepare for any upcoming inspection visits, be that Red Tractor or as part of the requirements for your milk buyer. From medicines records, staff training to herd health plans and annual health reviews, we pride ourselves in being able to tailor our advice to the needs of your farm.

Herd Health Plans cannot just be signed as a tick box exercise – they require a health and performance review (looking at records for the last 12 months), medicine and antibiotic review, discussion regarding Johnes and BVD management plans, and any specific management areas that need addressing. So this does take time, especially if you don't have a routine vet that is involved in this generally throughout the year, so please plan ahead to ensure that our team have the time to give you the support you may need.

TBAS visits – limited time left!



Between 40 to 50 of our clients, whether with or without a current TB breakdown, have already made use of the TB advisory service visits. However, the funding for this FREE valuable service is only available until June 2020.

On these visits, one of the Nantwich Farm Vets TBAS team will visit your farm ensuring the advice is specific to your farm set up. There will be discussion of any current concerns you have regarding TB, and issues you may face in the future. They will then have a walk around your farm buildings and fields to better understand your current situation and risk areas. At the end of the visits, the adviser will discuss with you what they have seen and specific areas you can address to reduce your current TB risk.

After the visit, you will receive a bespoke report including the recommendations of practical things that you can do outlined from the farm visit. You are encouraged to share this report with your regular vet. You will also receive a follow up call and/or email from TBAS to get some feedback on the service, and to see how you are getting on with implementing the recommendations given in the report.

Don't worry, the adviser 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!

An NZ perspective

Lewis Hodgson recently returned from New Zealand, and shares aspects of their dairy industry and what can be applied to similar systems here in the UK.



Last year I spent four months (July - November) back in Canterbury on New Zealand's South Island. This was where I worked as a new graduate (back in 2014) in Culverden, a small town of 400 people surrounded by about 90,000 dairy cows. I went back to work as a locum helping out with the busy season of pre-calving, calving and serving that occupies those months.

The past

The Amuri basin in which Culverden sits was a dry-land area mostly used for sheep farming until the early 1990s when irrigation systems were put in and the land was suddenly attractive for pasture-based milking business. What followed was two decades of unchecked growth in the NZ dairy industry. This led the basin to become what it is today. Huge financial and social change has taken place, bringing immigrants from all over the world to work on, and provide services for, the dairy farms there.



Figure 1: irrigation systems installed in the 1990s led to development of land for pasture-based milking

New Zealand milk was, and still is, largely powdered and exported as a global commodity. High market prices attracted the first farms to convert, but has been volatile since, yo-yoing between 16p and 40p per litre. Expansion of the industry has also led to higher land and animal prices with most operators carrying high debt and owners struggling to sell farms.

The future

Outlook for the future is a mixed bag. Large debts on low interest could rapidly change and become unaffordable for many.

Environmental compliance standards are increasing, particularly with regard to nitrate contamination of waterways. However, global demand for dairy is still increasing and the kiwis are convinced they can produce milk cheaply and with low environmental impact to meet this demand.

The present

So what do NZ dairy farmers do between July - November? Firstly, transition cows from winter diets (often comprised of 80-90% crop fed in-situ) onto a winter grass / silage based pre-calving diet. At this point we take bloods and condition score representative groups of cows to assess the herd's readiness for calving and the subsequent milking season. PSC (planned start of calving)

is the first week of August. Farms aim to calve 80% of their cows within six weeks, and with most farms in Culverden being over 800 milking cows, they come thick and fast! Everybody calves outdoors with new-born calves taken to temporary grouped housing until about six weeks of age – at which point they are turned out themselves.

Cows are milked for the first four days in a "colostrum" group until they clear a CMT and join the milking herd. Before calving has finished we start "metri-checking" for cows with uterine disease post-calving. Aiming to check the herd three times before the mating block means that cows identified as infected can be treated early to ensure maximum gains on conception can be achieved. PSM (planned start of mating) is the third week of October. Synch programs are used to treat cows not identified as cycling before PSM and throughout the mating period. Finally, there follows a break in the busyness for us vets before pregnancy scanning begins in December / January.

The applications

So with spring around the corner on our side of the world, what should we focus on to ensure a good block calving here?

1. Grass management is paramount.

Average pasture cover across the farm should be ascertained and should be maximised at planned start of calving. In wet conditions, pasture damage must be avoided since severely poached ground can have effects for the next 3-4 months. Milkers can eat a daily allocation of grass within two bouts of four hours, so shouldn't spend longer than needed standing out. If wet conditions really persist, then the only option is no grazing. Aim for residuals of 1500kgDM/ha to ensure maximal regrowth in further grazing rounds, this will pay dividends to have more good quality feed

available when lactation hits peak and conceptions need to be held on to!

Space and hygiene is particularly important as the calving season goes on

2. Set-up resources ahead of time.

Calf pens should be ready to go with enough room for all expected, plus extra for isolation / sick pens. A calving kit should be made up and left near the calving area with obstetric equipment, treatments and some form of record keeping.

3. Cow management in the preceding months to calving is important.

Cows must be at target body condition score (3/5), have been on

a good transition diet for at least 3 weeks pre-calving with minerals appropriate to dry cows (magnesium most important for milk fever prevention), and have a clean and adequately spaced area to calve into. Space and hygiene is particularly important as the calving season goes on as contamination will build and more calf and cow disease will become apparent (particularly environmental mastitis and calf scour).

4. Set a realistic roster for staff.

Sit down and plan with your team pre-calving and at least weekly during. Consider hiring relief staff ahead of time. Make sure all equipment and clothing is ready to go.

If you are preparing for a spring calving block, or have already started, remember our vets are always on hand to talk through systems and help you manage this busy time of year!



Figure 2: Newborn calves group-reared in clean, spacious indoor pens until six weeks of age.

Farm security awareness

One of our vets attended a milk processor meeting where they shared a story of a dairy farm on the south coast that had been targeted by animal rights activists. This remote farm had covert surveillance cameras placed in their collecting and calving yard for 6 months without their knowledge. This footage was then edited into a short video to make it appear that the farmer was mistreating their cows and then shared on YouTube. The family involved were devastated by this intrusion into their lives but asked that the story was shared to make other people aware of the risk.

Other farms have shared stories of finding hose pipes inserted into bulk tanks and residue failures as a result of malicious activity. This is a reminder why it essential that dairies and medicines stores are always kept locked. Also if you suspect that your farm has been targeted the advice is to keep your milk buyer and other agencies such as Red Tractor informed, as by taking an open and proactive approach the farm in this case was able to defend their reputation and keep their premium milk contract. The advice if you are approached directly by activists is to keep calm, act professionally, avoid debate and contact the police if in doubt.



Courses & Meetings

LAMBING COURSE

Tuesday 11th February 2020 2 - 4:30pm

£35 This session will cover: Lambing – theory and practical, recognition and treatment of health problems in ewes around lambing time and the care of the new-born lamb.

DAIRYLAND HOOF-TRIMMING COURSE

Feb 24th -28th 2020



This popular, comprehensive course provides theory and hands-on practical experience with knives and grinders over four days, and is perfect for first-timers or old-timers when it comes to trimming! Get in touch with Steve or the office if you want to get your name down for this up-coming course.

REARING FOR RETURNS – BITE-SIZED LEARNING

The uptake for our bite-size calf health training series, Rearing for Returns, has been very exciting, spaces are filling fast but it's not too late to book on! These two-hour sessions are for anyone on farm who is responsible for the day to day care of calves, and provide a great basis for training staff in calf-rearing best practices.

£35 per session, discounts available for booking on all remaining sessions.

12th February – Module 2 - Colostrum is Gold

This session will cover the essentials of colostrum management to ensure that every calf gets the best start in life. We will look at practical tips on the testing, storage and feeding of colostrum.



March – Module 3 – Pre-weaning nutrition

April – Module 4 – The calf environment

May – Module 5 – The coughing calf

June – Module 6 – The scouring calf

August – Module 7 - Growth rate monitoring

September – Module 8 - Weaning to bulling

October – Module 9 – Heifer fertility

LAMBING HAMPER

To prepare for the onset of lambing, our Nantwich Farm Vets lambing hamper includes the essentials you need. The hamper includes lambing ropes, arm length gloves, vet lube, iodine navel spray, stock marker, lamb feeding tube and syringe, lamb bottle and teat, digital thermometer, head torch, note pad plus other Nantwich Farm Vets goodies. All in a handy storage tray, £60 (ex VAT).



Vets Mobile Numbers

Dave Shaw	07836 335185	Mike Wilkinson	07866 257014
Rob George	07773 384450	Amy Cox	07966 833870
John Manson	07813 690860	Sarah Williamson	07812 173942
John Yarwood	07814 791109	Joe Mitchell	07773 342345
Stuart Russell	07770 448179	Craig Scarisbrick	07958 361378
Peter Duncalfe	07717 780604	Eleri James	07958 361278
Laura Donovan	07800 647608	Zoe Waterson	07891 843573
Steven Crowe	07891 843694	Lewis Hodgson	07972 463365

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