

nantwich farm vets



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CW5 5SF

24hr phone line: 01270 610349

September 2016



Dates for your diary

**19th-23rd
September**

Imrestor meetings this week.

Speak to your vet to book in

**End of
September**

3 day AI Course

Call Michael for more info

A shed or a home?

A tweet from a Canadian dairy farmer recently caught my imagination. It showed workers steam-cleaning a layer of muck from the otherwise sparkling white insulation on the underside of a dairy barn roof. The caption was the hook...

"It's not just a barn... it's a home"

Over the last few years, many of you have invested heavily to improve housing, and many of you have ideas that have been on the back-burner until milk price stops being insulting. We all know that cows perform better when kept in a suitable environment, but unfortunately we are only recently learning more about what that environment might be!

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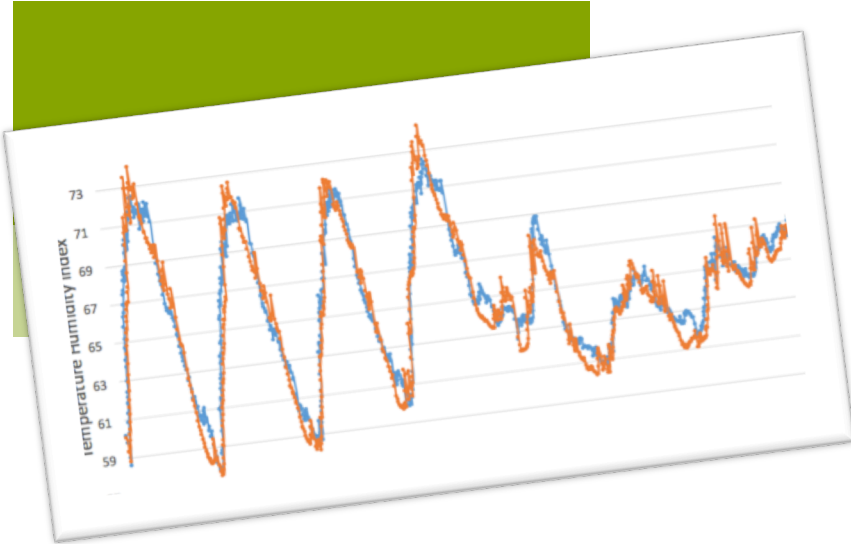


Are you backing BVD Free England?

We would encourage you to sign up to the BVD Free database by visiting www.bvdfree.org.uk. Here all of your BVD test results will be uploaded so that a potential purchaser can find out the disease status of the animal or herd they are buying. It is likely that this will become compulsory in the future and there is no charge for historic test results until November '16 so get started now!

Cow housing design

Stuart Russell discusses his recent experiences with shed modification and how we can help you get the best out of your buildings



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As an example, Amy discussed heat stress last month, a hot topic [forgive me!] during the summer months. None of us like seeing cows suffering in the heat. I measured a temperature of 52°C in direct sunlight on a 26°C day last summer (picture 1), so let's not forget cows at pasture!! (Recommended 4-6m²/cow shade **at noon**).

Some of you noticed obvious milk drop in late July, while others are now seeing some suspected fertility effects. But how do we know that cooling the cows would solve the problem next time? Even if it does, will it be cost-effective?

We have to look at research, and how applicable it might be on your farm. Unfortunately, the research is *far* from clear on exactly *when* cows are affected by heat (and so investments in cooling start paying you back). All seem to agree that a 'temperature humidity index' (THI) of 68 is the threshold for heat stress, but is this the daily *maximum*, *average*, or *minimum*?

Worse, in this same research, was this THI measured in the shed, just outside the shed, or (often) five miles away at a local weather station – it makes a BIG difference to the environment the cows were experiencing in the research study, and completely changes how we should interpret it for **your** farm!

Another example – it is reasonably well accepted that providing around 16hr/day of high intensity lighting increases milk yield. It is said to be the fastest return on investment that you can make in dairy farming. However, it costs a surprising amount to install sufficient lighting to reach the minimum 200 lux threshold at which point the milk yield effect is supposed to switch on.

How often is biology that simple? According to the research we have, milk yield effects probably start much lower than 200 lux, so is this the optimum financial cut-off? There is no point installing fancy lights if your feed or water is unpalatable or unavailable! Unfortunately, due to the nature of light intensity, it is far more expensive to increase minimum

intensity from 180 to 200 than from 160 to 180, and is it even being measured correctly?



Professional light meters have a diffuser which captures light arriving from all angles. iPhones don't – point it towards a light source and you'll get a huge reading with a light meter app, but point it at the roof just beside the light and it will look very low...

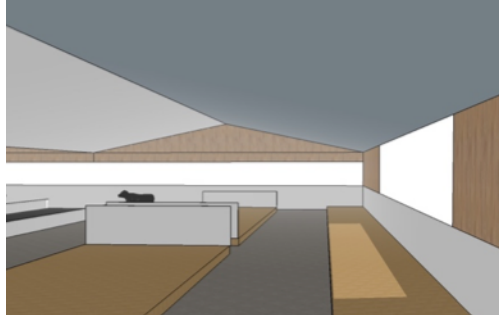
I was recently asked to help a non-client with plans to solve heat stress problems in a tricky cowshed for next year. Fans seemed a reasonable option. Three companies had advised on fan installation, and he didn't know which one was the best investment. One company seemed to think that two fans would be sufficient, while another recommended sixteen!

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Unfortunately, the first solution was too good to be true. He had also discovered some cheap fans, and it looked like he could design an excellent setup himself for half the price. In the end, the calculated running costs of the cheaper fans would have made them a much less sensible investment.

However, none of the three fan companies mentioned the severe lack of water trough space (less than 50% of recommended), the lack of outlet in the barn roof, or the severe hotspots caused by previous removal of space-boarding. I identified these hotspots using computer modelling software providing correct sun angles for 22nd July. The sun stayed on these cubicles from 11am to 5pm during the hottest week of the year! Extra water troughs, open roof ridges and an overhang designed using the same computer software will go a long way to making his cows more comfortable next summer.

If he decides to add fans, he now knows which setup will be most efficient and effective, and will no longer worry that he is being taken for a ride.



We are fortunate to have many clients with a wide variety of systems and housing. We do not sell fans, lights, cubicles, or mattresses, and most importantly we know your herd. We know how cubicle dimensions and sometimes shape need to change depending on the bedding used. Sometimes the trendy investment would not give your fastest return, and often facilities can be adapted for very little cost. Others may find that a trendy investment is a superb buy **for their setup**.

If you need independent and bespoke advice on cow housing, please give us a call – get the roof angles wrong on a new shed and it will become a cow-oven in late afternoon in summer.

Next routine, why not ask your vet to give a bucket-list of tweaks to your housing facilities? Either way, before the maize comes in, let's have a collective push to fix those broken cubicles, check and tweak their dimensions, clean up the electric lights, fix water pressure & access, plan a regular water & feed trough deep clean, replace or rejuvenate tired mattresses, sort the roof ridges, dig out the sand beds and re-groove the floors. Your cows will thank you.

"When the milk goes up and disease comes down, that's the cows saying 'thanks for what you're doing'"

Dr Rami Hamad, Nishant Dairy Company, Pakistan.



Imrestor is a **revolutionary** medicine to prevent disease in transition dairy cows. The first-of-its-kind innovation has been 26 years in the making.

We would like to invite you to a series of meetings to discuss how Imrestor can reduce your antibiotic usage and keep your cows healthy.

We are very lucky to have **John Cook** who is an ex technical director of Genus ABS, has worked for Valley Ag software and is an expert in dairy herd health and reproduction as **main speaker** for the meetings.

We will be holding 3 meetings on the week commencing 19th September 2016. These will be held at the Nantwich Equine Centre at Hurlston from 10.30am – 1pm and lunch will be provided.

Please speak to your routine vet to book your place.

We are now stocking "Bovocycline" pessaries which contain the same antibiotic as the old pessaries but at a higher concentration. Each box contains 10 pessaries and costs £45+VAT.





Vets Mobile Numbers

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John Yarwood	07814879109
Colin Baxter	07860605079
Stuart Russell	07770448179
Peter Duncalfe	07717780604
Laura Donovan	07800647608
Steven Crowe	07891843694
Liz Davies	07767447281
Mike Wilkinson	07866257014
Jake Lawson	07866257014
Amy Cox	07966833870
James Patterson	07774795700

Vet Technician

Jess Tonks	07921855043
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"@NantwichFarmVet"

Copper toxicity....more common than you think?

We have recently been doing some more liver biopsies to measure copper status on a couple of herds with suspected problems. This is a quick and simple procedure, and doesn't seem to bother the cows, but was crucial in both cases. One farm had repeatedly been told by nutritionists and salesmen that he needed to feed more copper as his cows were deficient, most recently by someone who had tested the bulk milk (not a recommended test for either deficiency or toxicity!). When we asked the cows (liver biopsy), they were doing fine, apart from one which was in the **toxic** range. Adding extra copper could have been dangerous. On the other farm, the cows had access to two potential sources of copper, and we didn't know whether the copper levels were deficient, good or toxic. Although we have had no deaths from copper toxicity in this herd, the copper in four out of six of the samples was scarily high – more than enough to kill a cow if she got stressed. This is crucial information and has probably saved many cows' lives.

Copper toxicity is a chronic disease in cows, caused by build-up of copper stores over a long period. Sudden deaths then seem to be triggered by stress events, and cows breathe very fast, have a high

heart rate, go down, and their urine turns dark red in the later stages. Unfortunately adding extra copper to the diet seems to improve fertility and yield, so it is easy to assume that you did the right thing.



Eventually people start seeing poor use of feed energy, grumbling and frustrating problems attributable to immune deficiency, and eventually dying cows. It can take a lifetime for excessive copper stores to return back to normal levels, so please don't make the mistake of allowing them to rise too high in the first place. Consider monitoring copper levels in your barren cows if you don't suspect a problem, but liver biopsies on high yielders will be the most sensitive if a problem is suspected. Give us a call if you would like to know where your herd stands.



Are you growing lucerne or interested in finding out about this increasingly popular crop?

We are looking for farmers to form a lucerne discussion group. Contact Liz for more info.