

# nantwich farm vets



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October 2018

## Dates for your diary

**16<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>  
October and  
13<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>  
November**

**BVD Stamp It Out  
Meetings**  
See back page for details

**10-13<sup>th</sup>  
December**

**Dairyland Foot-  
trimming Course**  
Contact Steve Crowe to  
book a place

It's been great to enjoy some sunny days at the backend of September to help in the maize and a decent cut of silage. Some clamps need some serious refilling after the summer. The end of the year seems to be approaching fast!

Last month we had to say 'goodbye' to Liz Wynne as she moves on to work for Genus, based in Ruthin. We wish her all the very best for this next chapter in her veterinary career. Fortunately she has been able leave us with some last pearls of wisdom on calf housing...so read on!



## Foreign Farm Staff Training



Many clients are building a farm team with milkers, herdsmen and other staff from countries outside the UK – Poland being one. For some of these workers there can be a language barrier that limits the training they receive for the job. With our client network, we have the opportunity to facilitate training workshops that could bridge the language gap and better equip your team for managing the herd and individual cows. Topics could include identifying and managing sick cows, medicine use, drying off protocols – and other areas could be included at your request to suit your needs too. If you would be interested in such training for Polish workers, please contact our office with your details and what level of training would be most useful, and we will be in touch. If training for other nationalities would be useful, do let us know and we will see what we can provide.



# The perfect calf housing

This month vet **Liz Wynne** gives an insight into what she's learnt about calf housing during her time at Nantwich Farm Vets

Before I leave I would like to pass on what I've learnt in terms of calf health on the many farms we visit and what housing makes for the healthiest calves.

Firstly, HUTCHES HUTCHES HUTCHES! They are absolutely fantastic for calf health. Why? Because the hutch can be pressure-washed, cleaned and disinfected away from the other calves so that **every** calf goes into a completely clean environment on its first day of life. The calves have the choice of inside or out- they get plenty of fresh air and provided they are on concrete with a generous slope or stone you will have good drainage underneath. They can also snuggle into deep straw to keep warm in the hutch.

Single hutches are great for preventing disease because the calf cannot spread its bugs to any other calves, but they don't provide the calf with social development and in terms of PR for the dairy industry they are a bit of a nightmare. Also calves

housed together tend to eat more concentrates and respond to new or stressful situations more calmly. So twin hutches (see picture) are probably the best compromise for the first few weeks of a calf's life. Depending on your herd size you can then group them in similar age groups of 4-6 calves in a super hutch/igloo when they are around 4-6 weeks old.

In terms of block calving the situation is much more simple especially if you have a tight block as it can be all-in all-out. The calves are in a very narrow age range and you have 6 months or more to clean and disinfect the housing before next year's calves. In this scenario it can be very easy to rear calves in large groups in a shed. However if you have an outbreak of scour or virus pneumonia it will very quickly spread to every calf and can be disastrous, so it is well worth investing in a scour vaccine and a pneumonia vaccine.

Provided you have given the calf an adequate supply of good quality colostrum and you put it into a clean, disinfected hutch with good drainage and plenty of straw you

can eliminate the need for preventative treatments for scour which can mount up to thousands of pounds a year especially if you are treating for rotavirus and cryptosporidium.

Hutches are labour intensive yes, but realistically....calves are labour intensive! And for those who say they are not practical on a large scale you should visit some US farms where there are hutches as far as the eye can see! If a Holstein calf has pneumonia her first lactation milk yield will be reduced by 1000 litres. At 30p/litre that's £300 per case. If you have 100 calves born in a year and 50% of them get pneumonia and you could reduce that to 10% that's a saving of £12,000!!! There is lots of research to support that calves reared in hutches are somewhere between 2 and 25 times **less** likely to be treated for pneumonia than calves reared in a shed.

What about a nice big shed with curtains and automatic feeders I hear you ask?

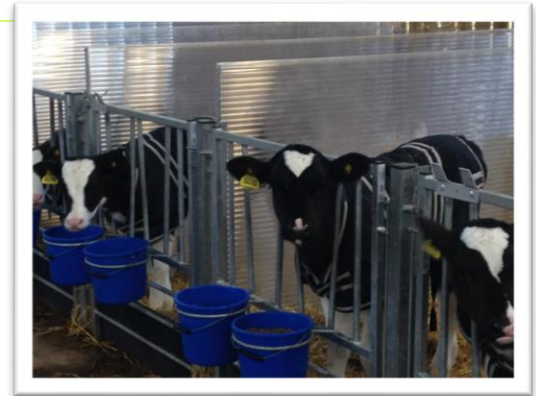
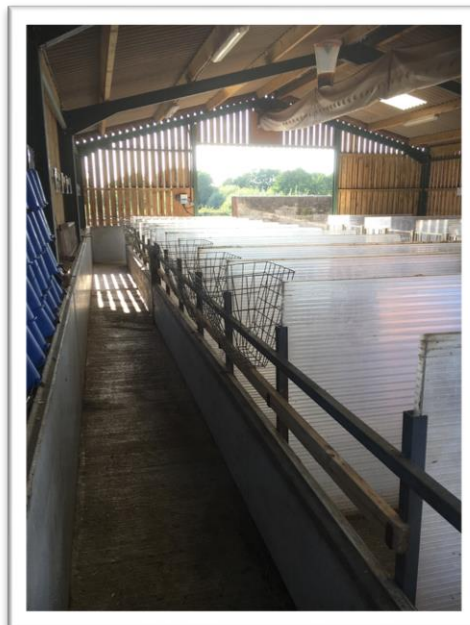
Unfortunately at the moment automatic feeders provide the perfect method to spread pneumonia bugs between calves. Notwithstanding this, they also mean that you house calves in groups of 10 or even 20 per machine. Even with the best ventilation and drainage and a wonderfully dry fresh environment you will still get a small amount of pneumonia. In a group of 20 all sucking on the same teat – that small amount of pneumonia can very quickly turn into a very large amount of pneumonia. Many farms in the UK and US have spent large amounts of money on new sheds with machine feeders and had to go back to individual hutches because they couldn't control pneumonia.

In fact, at Liverpool University's Wood Park dairy farm they did a study looking at pneumonia in different feeding systems. Group A calves were in groups of 6 on a machine calf feeder from birth and group B calves were fed twice a day in individual pens for 3 weeks and then group housed but still bucket fed until weaning. All calves were in the same shed. Calves on the machine feeder were 6 times more likely to get pneumonia than calves fed twice a day. I know the machine manufacturers are looking at ways to disinfect the teat but unfortunately even if the teat disinfection is satisfactory, the

problem of housing calves in large groups remains.

If you are using a machine then you must divert the time that was used to feed the calves to cleaning and maintaining the machine. The machines cleaning cycle is NOT enough to ensure the calves are receiving top quality consistent milk replacer.

So if you are determined to ignore my advice regarding hutches (!) then there is a calf shed that I do like which generally works really well for calf health. Jeanette, Rob and Dave Hares, Millenheath Farm, put up this shed a few years ago. The design is based on individual pens divided by conservatory roof panels that will slide out to pair calves together.



Each pen has an open front and back so that fresh air can flow around the calf with a passage behind the pens so that the pens are not against the wall. They also have a ventilation tube on 365 days a year. The floor is sloped to the drain in the centre. This shed works very well but doesn't get a rest to allow thorough cleaning and disinfection and although they can remove and clean the dividing panels they obviously can't pressure wash in the shed whilst calves are in it unless they want them all to go down with pneumonia. So ideally in an all year round calving herd you would have two sheds OR one shed divided by a solid wall to enable thorough cleaning. The success of this farm is not just down to the shed but also the attention to detail on every front! Well done guys!

And that's it from me! Best of luck and happy healthy calves!



### Vets Mobile Numbers

Dave Shaw	07836335185
Rob George	07773384450
John Manson	07813690860
John Yarwood	07814879109
Stuart Russell	07770448179
Peter Duncalfe	07717780604
Laura Donovan	07800647608
Steven Crowe	07891843694
Mike Wilkinson	07866257014
Jake Lawson	07891843573
Amy Cox	07966833870
Sarah Williamson	07812173942
Joe Mitchell	07773342345



“@NantwichFarmVet”

# BVD Stamp It Out Scheme



RDPE money has been made available so that all our clients with breeding cattle can have access to free BVD control. This is a scheme that will be running over the next 2.5 years and we will invite every client that qualifies for the funding to a BVD meeting over that time. If you would like to be involved in the first wave of meetings this autumn please get in contact with Laura Donovan. The process is as follows:

1. Initial BVD Meeting of 15-20 farmers – hot lunch provided, an additional topic of interest to be discussed at each (see below)
2. First on farm visit to discuss BVD and perform a check test (farmer receives £61.80 towards testing/uploading results on to the BVD free website)
3. Second on farm visit to discuss results, potentially £440 towards a PI hunt if necessary
4. Final meeting of the same 15-20 farmers to discuss impact of scheme

The dates we have booked in for the initial meetings are below:

### **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October**

External speaker Tom Greenham, Advanced Milking

### **Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> October**

Fertility in block calving herds

### **Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> November**

Calf health

### **Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> November**

External speaker Tom Greenham, Advanced Milking

**ALL MEETINGS 11am - 2pm**

**@ Nantwich Equine Centre, Hurlleston CW5 6BU**

## **J** **HNE'S COUNTDOWN**

For some producers the deadline for completing Phase II of the National John's Management Plan was the end of September, for many others it is October 31st. We have been endeavouring to engage with each of you proactively to develop an appropriate management plan, but if you have not had any discussion with one of us about this please speak to one of us as soon as possible.