

nantwich farm vets



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Nantwich
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24hr phone line: 01270 610349

September 2017

Dates for your diary

**29th
September**

Macmillan Coffee Morning
Nantwich Vet Hospital

**25th
October**

**BVD Action Plan
meeting**
Nantwich Equine Centre

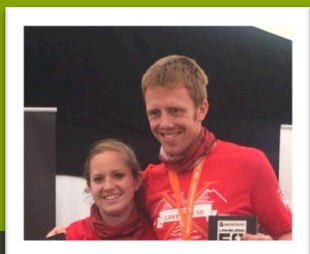


NEW rules on TB tests

Please be aware that APHA are now putting herds under restrictions if there are any animals on the BCMS list that are not tested on a whole herd TB test even if that test was clear.

The restrictions have generally been applied immediately after the test window closes i.e. after the deadline for you to complete the whole herd test.

The best advice we can give is if you have a whole herd test coming up please try and get your CTS online up to date and, if following the TB test you do happen to find any animals on the list have been sold or died; inform BCMS as soon as possible so they can update your holding list.



Thank you!

A big thank you to everyone who has sponsored Steve Crowe in his 50 mile run for the charity 'Send a Cow'. He has smashed his target and has raised over £1100

Keep the flow

This month, **Peter Duncalfe** attended a course on Cow Flow and Human Interactions with Neil Chesterton who has conducted world-renowned clinical research on the importance of herd management for lameness reduction



If you've ever chatted to me or any of the other vets about lameness on your farm you will likely have heard the term 'cow flow,' the freedom of cows' movement around their environment. In particular we might have looked out for 'pinch points,' or bottlenecks where cow flow is negatively impacted, ie. dead-ends in cubicle sheds, narrow passageways, tight turns and entrances in/out of the parlour, and handling systems. White-line disease is especially linked with poor cow flow and excessive turning forces on the feet. Up until recently, nearly all my focus was on the interactions between the existing physical environment and the cow.

As important as the cow environment is in contributing to lameness risk factors, by itself it misses out a key influence on cow flow – human behaviour made me more aware of how we as vets and farm workers negatively impact cow flow by putting more pressure on cows to move in ways that oppose or restrict their natural behaviour. Often this is as a result of our impatience and failure to understand cows properly.

There are many ways that

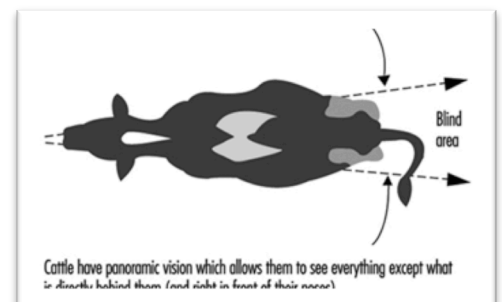
improving the physical facilities and environment of your cows could lead to better cow flow. You could no doubt think of a dozen on your own, without the input of us as vets! But often a lot of these are costly, and by themselves won't necessarily solve or change the other risk factors that we create as human beings interacting with cows.

So below are 9 keys to understanding cows (based on Neil Chesterton's lectures, find more great stuff at www.lamecow.co.nz) and how we impact them. Maybe none of them will be revelatory for you, but it's often surprising how easily we forget these things in our behaviour around cattle.

Cows are prey animals. They are always on the look out for threats (including humans) and keeping herself safe is the priority. If we increase their stress level by being threatening with loud noise, fast movement, hitting, dogs etc then it pushes them to the fright/flight/fight responses. As we work with cattle we want to be aiming to keep them in a low state of stress, which will also reduce our stress level too. As prey animals, they are naturally more comfortable with herd mates, so we shouldn't segregate them out by

themselves.

Cows' vision is different from ours. As prey animals, cows' eyes are on the sides of their head so they get panoramic vision all around, with the exception of a blind spot directly behind them. Cattle will therefore respond better to being moved by someone standing slightly to one side from behind rather than where they can't see. Their eye position also means they don't see with 'binocular' vision like we do with both eyes, so they can't judge distance and speed as easily or quickly. They need time to assess whether we are going to be a threat or not, rather than rushing at them. Using a friendly tone of voice that they can recognise and know when you are coming is also helpful.



Cows like to walk and stand with their head down. They need to be able to see where to place their front feet, and then given enough space, the back feet will land in the same spot. If they are herded too tightly, or not given enough space in the collecting yard (including with bad use of backing gates!), their heads go up and they won't be able to see where to place their feet and they can't respond to stones or loose concrete in the same way, and there will be more twisting forces on the feet. Have a quick count of how many cows have their heads up in the collecting yard next milking.

Cows recognise people. Ever wonder why 'that cow' always kicks you when you milk, but is fine with the relief milker? It's thought that cows may develop a permanent memory of individual people by sight, smell or sound. This is especially true if the first interaction with a person is a bad one, leading to a fear response. A great recommendation for new staff on farm is to make sure their first interaction with the cows is positive!

Cows have a 'flight zone'. This can vary in distance between cows and between herds (2-3m in low stress vs 9-12m in high stress) and depending on how well they know the person handling them. Getting into this flight zone will cause a flight or fight response from the cow as they try to escape, also putting excessive forces on their feet. For stress-free handling of cows we should work at the edge of a cows' flight zone, including when moving them down the road or track.

Cows have balance points. The main point is an imaginary line across their *shoulders*. Moving (slowly) in front or behind this point will cause them to move backwards or forwards. The other is their backbone, so moving from left to right behind them (not in their blind spot) will help them change direction.



Cows are followers. Within a herd there is a pecking order—some cows are dominant, others submissive. Dominant cows within the herd (they don't all just go to the front) set the walking speed of the herd, and have a push-pull effect on the submissive cows in front and behind them.

If these dominant cows stop moving the submissive cows behind won't overtake, and those in front will stop too. Allow cows to walk at their own pace. Putting pressure on the rear cows in the herd (almost certainly submissive cows) won't speed up the main herd in front, it will only cause these following cows to bunch up, and increase damage to their feet. Cows need to have plenty of space, both in cubicle sheds and collecting yards, to avoid forcing interaction between dominant and submissive individuals.

Cows' walking order is different from milking order.

Most of you have probably noticed that the cows that walk in front from the field don't necessarily come in to the parlour first. This is another reason why there needs to be plenty of space in collecting yards, to allow this herd order to change. Otherwise you will have cows waiting at the entrance to the parlour unable to get out the way to allow their herd mates to go in first, slowing up your milking.

Cows are creatures of habit.

Unlike us, cows want consistency not variety. It is up to us to provide the routine in how we handle and interact with the cows, from tone of voice to herding movements and milking technique (especially when we can often react with impatience and frustration). Everything should be done the same way, every day, by everyone on the farm team. This is why on-farm protocols, whether for milking technique, use of the backing gate or calf-feeding, are helpful not just for the staff but for the cows.

Keeping these natural behaviours of cows in mind as we handle stock will lead to lower stress for stock and staff alike, reducing abnormal forces and damage to the feet and some of the main risk factors for lameness – which the majority of cows are facing at least twice a day.

There is more to come in future newsletters on cow behaviour and what your cows might be telling you, so watch this space!



Vets Mobile Numbers

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

Jess Tonks	07921855043
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"@NantwichFarmVet"



Are you confident you have BVD under control?

Eradicating BVD from your farm centres around one key objective: identifying and removing PI animals from the herd, while instigating a vaccination program to protect naïve animals and prevent future infection from outside sources.

Identifying PIs within your herd can be done in one of two ways:

- **Blood sample the herd.** Blood testing all animals will allow you to rapidly identify which animals are PIs, and subsequently remove them from the herd.
- **Tag and Test.** You can now opt to ear tag your calves with a BVD 'check tag', which acts as a normal primary tag, but also punches out a small tissue sample when applied. This sample is then tested to see whether or not the calf is a PI.

Any calf that is revealed to be a PI should be removed, and its mother blood tested to see if she is also a PI (as a PI cow will always produce a PI calf). All PIs in the herd can be identified and removed in the time it takes for all cows to calve – typically less than 2 years. This method requires no extra labour, as all calves need to be tagged anyway. With either method, it is important to quarantine and test any new bought-in stock for the disease if you are to subsequently keep it off your farm.

Vaccination of your stock will protect them from infection with BVD, although it will not 'cure' a PI, or stop her from having a PI calf. Vaccination will protect naïve stock during your eradication program, and ensure that once you have removed all PIs from your herd, the disease is not accidentally reintroduced from elsewhere.

Do you know and understand the risks on your individual farm? Are you confident that your vaccination program is providing you with 100% protection? **Come along to our meeting on Wednesday 25th October to generate a tailored BVD action plan for your farm.**