

# nantwich farm vets



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24hr phone line: 01270 610349

September 2018



## Dates for your diary

**26<sup>th</sup>  
September**

**Cheshire Ploughing  
Match**  
Please join us on the  
stand for refreshments

**28<sup>th</sup>  
September**

**Macmillan Coffee  
Morning**  
Nantwich Hospital

### NEW Office staff

This month we welcome two new members of staff to the office – Mel and Hannnah. Please make sure to say hello if you see them in dispensary!

## Goodbye from Liz

Sadly after six years I am leaving Nantwich Vets at the end of the month to work for Genus as a bull stud vet at Ruthin. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as part of the Nantwich team and thank you to all of the clients who I've had the pleasure of working with since the early days when I was a very green new graduate! I won't be far away and I will be sure to keep in touch with you all. I have loved in particular my work with calves and to watch clients who have invested in management changes or calf housing make significant improvements to calf health has always been the most rewarding part of my job. Sarah Williamson shares my passion for calf health and will be available to answer all your calf queries from now on! I wish you all the best for the future I will certainly miss you all.

*Liz*



### NEW anti-inflammatory for calves that can be added to milk

**Solacyl** © (sodium salicylate) is a derivative of aspirin which is a Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) licenced for use in calves. NSAIDs are medicines that reduce inflammation, decrease fevers and relieve pain. It is a soluble powder that can be mixed with drinking water or milk (replacer) so can be easily administered to groups of calves. It can be especially useful for calf rearers where it has enabled a reduction in antibiotic use. It is licenced in calves over two weeks old and works out as a relatively cheap way to help manage disease.



# Coccidiosis at pasture

Recently we have seen some deadly outbreaks of coccidiosis in calves post-turnout. This month **Liz Wynne** discusses this serious problem.

Calves scouring soon after turnout is sometimes blamed on the diet change or worms when actually coccidiosis could be causing severe gut damage. Recently we have seen outbreaks of coccidiosis at pasture even in the dry weather and in some cases there have been deaths. If you do have coccidiosis on your pasture you need to act quickly before the infection can take hold.

**Coccidiosis** is caused by a protozoal infection. The lifecycle involves damage to the gut wall, as the various stages develop and reproduce, eventually resulting in shedding of "oocysts", the highly resistant eggs, in massive quantities in faeces. These oocysts are the source of new infection, and can survive many months in the correct conditions, and even over-winter on pasture.

There are three main pathogenic species of **coccidiosis** (*Eimeria*) in cattle: *E. zuernii*, *E. bovis* and *E. alabamensis*, each with slightly different life cycles.

Generally, the lifecycle is around 3 weeks which means that calves are most likely to show disease from 3-4 weeks onwards. However, *Eimeria alabamensis* which is commonly found on pasture is different...it's life cycle is only 8 days and scour can be seen as soon as 5 days after exposure to oocysts. So disease can manifest in less than a week after turnout. Typically disease is seen in calves less than 6 months old but we have diagnosed it in in-calf heifers up to 2 years old.

Classic **coccidiosis** symptoms include weight loss with watery diarrhoea. *Eimeria alabamensis* attacks the small intestine which is different to the other species which attack the colon. Therefore the signs with *Eimeria alabamensis* can be more severe and death from severe dehydration is more common.

In some calves the infection is self-limiting, with low doses of infection stimulating immunity and calves becoming immune before disease develops: the calf wins. In other calves, the parasite wins. In most cases, this means the

calf fails to grow as well, loses its appetite, and some might scour. Although they should eventually recover, large economic losses will occur.

In the minority of cases, the scour is severe, the calves become dehydrated and in these cases, the calves can die without treatment as the parasite definitely has the upper hand, and the calves no longer have the ability to fight off the infection and gain immunity.

So, **coccidiosis** immunity, infection and disease is always a balance, with the "classic" signs being the tip of the ice-berg representing the scenario when the parasite has clearly won.

At pasture usually, *Eimeria alabamensis* is involved as this can over-winter. Relatively small numbers of over-wintered oocysts can be multiplied up in infected calves to cause heavy pasture contamination, and disease which can be confused with worms.

Perhaps the most common scenario occurs with spring block calving herds, where large groups of calves are grazing, particularly if calves are turned onto the same pasture as the previous year.



Sometimes a trigger factor seems to be involved, such as a change in weather, or reduction of concentrate feed. The first symptom is calf growth rates slowing, followed by progressively more calves developing diarrhoea.

There can suddenly be a big weight range between the biggest and smallest calves in the group, with more severely affected calves falling behind. This can be very significant for block-calving herds in particular, where growth rates must be maintained so heifers are big enough to be served on time.

Diagnosis of coccidiosis is done by sending a muck sample to the lab. However, in some cases cattle will begin scouring before oocysts can be detected in the

faeces. Also in cases of severe diarrhoea and dehydration treatment needs to be instigated without waiting for a diagnosis. Please talk to your vet for advice on the best way to proceed if you see any symptoms in your cattle. There other potential causes of ill-thrift and scour which we can help to rule out.

Once a diagnosis has been established, treat the affected calves, but just importantly, plan ahead for future batches or years, as prevention is always better than cure. It is important to have in mind that once the calves have started scouring, anticoccidial therapy has a limited effect on avoiding the consequences of the disease.



#### Control:

A good preventive strategy will keep the balance of infection in the calves' favour, allowing immunity to develop. Reducing environmental build up of oocytes and keeping calves otherwise fit and healthy are the two cornerstones of prevention.

Preventive strategies include:

**1: Reducing stress** – e.g. avoid sudden diet changes and keep well fed to avoid nutritional stress.

**2: Reduce infection risk** – e.g. keep feed and water troughs clean, and raised to avoid dung contamination. Rotate pastures – avoid set-stocking. Turn out onto clean pasture from previous year. Keep stocking density low. Maintain youngstock in even age-groups.

**3: Strategic use of Deccox in feed.** This requires a veterinary prescription, and is added in either a preventive dose or a higher treatment dose. Accurate daily feed intakes must be known, so the inclusion rate used can be correctly calculated by your vet: under-dosing is common, especially when feed is withdrawn to encourage grazing. There is no residual activity, so once feeding stops, protection stops, until immunity has developed.

**4: Strategic oral dosing with a coccidiostat.** Vecoxan and Baycox Bovis are the two licensed products. Once sufficient exposure has occurred, immunity develops. Neither are licensed for *Eimeria alabamensis* so use of this as a treatment in the face of this species of cocci is under the direction of your vet.



### Vets Mobile Numbers

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"@NantwichFarmVet"

# Milk Sampling Tips

More and more of you are sending milk samples in to us to be tested. Vet **Amy Cox** discusses how to make sure you get the most out of your efforts.

As part of an overall industry shift in reducing on farm antimicrobial usage more of you are taking samples of milk to culture on farm or send off to an external laboratory through us.

The benefits of testing milk are:

- Find out which bugs are present on the farm and causing cases of mastitis
- Being able to choose suitable effective antimicrobials for treatment of mastitis
- See how effective an antimicrobial tube has been on any one cow
- Identify any resistant bugs causing mastitis and which may be present on farm generally
- Distinguish between cases of mastitis which require antimicrobial treatment and those which do not

To make the milk testing worthwhile and value for money it is absolutely essential that this sample is collected in a scrupulously hygienic (aseptic) manner. If not, then bugs from the environment eg. the teat, particularly those in cattle muck will dominate the culture and your result will be meaningless.

You must use sterile sample pots which do not contain preservative.

How to collect a sterile milk sample:

- Wear clean gloves at all times
- Clean any visible muck off the teat with water and dry wipe. If visibly clean then move onto next step
- Foremilk the quarter and discard
- Apply pre-milking teat dip and dry wipe clean
- Change your gloves if necessary
- Clean the end of the teat with surgical spirit-soaked cotton wool repeatedly until you are confident the end is as clean as it possibly can be
- Hold the sample bottle with the lid off at an angle and squirt one long stream of milk into it without letting the teat end touch the bottle
- Put the lid back on the bottle and label it with the cow number, date and your farm details
- Put in freezer for collection at a later date or drop it off at the surgery any day except Friday straight away to be put in the post same day. If it is a very hot day and you have a long way to travel with the sample ensure it is kept cold.