

## NorCal News...

### Merry Christmas

All of the team at NorCal would like to wish you a very happy and prosperous New Year!



## Farmers Meeting...

### Christmas Meeting

'Problems Associated with Housing Cattle at Winter'  
&  
'How our TBAS accredited Vet can advise you'  
On  
Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December  
At 7pm, Wynnstay, Thame

## OFFER....

### Footvax

We have some footvax on offer, please contact the Thame office for details.

## CASE OF THE MONTH

### Eye Removal

This month during a routine TB test, Hannah was asked to look at an infected eye. Unfortunately, the eye was too far gone for treatment. Eyes can be very painful for animals so the decision was made to remove it in the hope the animal could continue a happy life!

On the second part of the TB test, Hannah and Rebecca (under the watchful eye of Evan!) set out to do the procedure. The animal was restrained in the crush with a halter and local anaesthetic was placed around and behind the eye to make sure the area was completely numb. A cut was made around the eyelids and then scissors were used to bluntly dissect around the eye. The optic nerve is cut, the eye removed and then the skin is stitched back together – easy!

Eye removal is pretty gory stuff but a very good way of keeping cattle pain free when eye infections stop responding to treatment or have simply gone too far. When treating eye disease, it is important to recognise problems early and they must be treated very regularly – normally 2 or 3 times a day. TB testing is a great opportunity to have a quick health check of all your animals and identify any issues. Plus, there's a vet on hand to help you out and answer any questions.



This cow has recovered brilliantly and is getting used to one – eyed life!

## Why do we diagnose pregnancies and why is it so important?

The key to profitability for all beef breeding enterprises is high reproductive efficiency. This means aiming to achieve:

- 95% calves weaned to cows that were served.
- An average calving interval of 12 months.
- A calving spread of 9 weeks or less.
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Pregnancy testing is one method of monitoring reproductive efficiency and detecting any problems early in the breeding cycle, so that these objectives can be achieved.

### Benefits from pregnancy testing:

1. Early detection of non-pregnant animals.
2. Age of the calf and calving date can be estimated and therefore separated into early/late management groups.
3. Various abnormalities responsible for infertility can be identified- cystic ovaries, infected uterus, sub-fertile bulls, free-martinism etc. and appropriate action implemented.
4. Improvements in long-term reproductive efficiency as barren cows are culled and fertile heifer calves are kept back as replacements.

Non-pregnant cows are unproductive and should be removed from the herd. Pregnancy testing 8-10 weeks after the end of mating is a cheap and convenient method of identifying non-pregnant cows at an early stage.

The cost of pregnancy testing is minimal compared to the cost of keeping unproductive, empty cows in the herd throughout the Winter.

Pregnancy testing should also help to tighten your calving pattern - the most sensitive measure of suckler cow performance.

**So if you haven't already, book in your pd visit, now ties in pretty well with tb testing too!**

## Managing the 'downer cow'

There are many reasons that cows can become downer cows. It is important to identify as soon as possible what is causing the cow to be unable to stand, as this will affect how you treat her and whether she has a reasonable chance of returning to full health. Some of the common reasons that we see include:

- Metabolic, e.g. milk fever. If caught early, appropriate treatment of these cows (e.g. calcium into the vein) can help these cows to make a full and rapid recovery
- Trauma, e.g. doing the splits. These cases will benefit from pain relief and anti-inflammatories, and a prompt assessment of whether catastrophic injuries have occurred. Catastrophic injuries in adult cows include fractures or dislocations of the limbs, and there is no way we can effectively treat these so we would recommend prompt euthanasia.
- Infections e.g. toxic mastitis. Severe infections can cause cows to become downer cows - in these cases the cow requires rapid treatment with anti-inflammatories and antibiotics, as well as fluids given either orally or into the vein.

In addition to identifying and treating the underlying cause of the downer cow, it is essential that all downer cows receive excellent supportive care to keep them as healthy as possible and prevent further complications. The most important aspects are ensuring the cow has access to a palatable diet and plenty of clean water within easy reach. She must also be kept on a well bedded area and be turned regularly to minimise the muscle damage that inevitably occurs from the pressure of the cows weight onto her muscles. If hip lifters are used they should be only applied for short lengths of time and the cow should be able to place all 4 feet on the floor, so they support her to stand.

Whilst downer cows can occur at any time, the period around calving is particularly high risk for all of the causes listed above. It is therefore worth thinking about actions you could take during this period to reduce the risks. Keeping yards clean and well bedded and ensuring diets for heavily pregnant and freshly calved cows are appropriate (including mineral supplementation) are often the most important factors.

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