

NorCal News...

Medicines Administration Course

We now have a Red Tractor Approved medicine administration training course that can be delivered in person or online via Zoom

Zoom dates: **7pm**

20th October

27th October

3rd November

It is a Red Tractor requirement that all medicines are administered by a competent person, and a recommendation for beef and sheep farmers that competency is demonstrated by completing an approved course.

Our course covers all aspects of medicines use, including storage, administration, disposal and record keeping to ensure you are up to date with all the Red Tractor requirements. Once completed, all participants will be issued with a certificate of attendance.

Limited places so **book early** to avoid disappointment

If you are interested in completing the course please get in touch with Jono at wantage@norcalvets.co.uk or calling 01235 429 767



Managing calcium at calving time

You might think you don't have a problem with low calcium in calving cows - and you might be right! But just because you aren't seeing classic cases of milk fever, it doesn't mean that you don't have a calcium issue. At this time of year we see a lot of signs of 'sub-clinical' milk fever - these include difficult or prolonged calvings, uterine prolapses, retained cleansings, post-calving infections etc. When calcium levels get low, muscles can't contract properly - affecting the cow's ability to expel the calf and her uterus's capacity to contract back to its normal size. Older cows are more at risk of milk fever and its complications, but we do see cases in cows of any age.

There are many different strategies for controlling calcium levels in calving cows. One of the simplest and most common is to add Magnesium Chloride flakes to water - this helps to 'prime' the cow's body to mobilise more calcium in preparation for the increased demands of milk production. However, this alone is not always sufficient to prevent milk fever.

The content of the ration for close-to-calving cows is important too - grazed grass or grass silage (especially if produced with lots of potassium fertiliser) can put cows more at risk of milk fever. Straw and maize silage are generally lower risk. We would definitely recommend getting some forage analysis done to help flag up if you are likely to have issues.

High risk or suspect cows can be supplemented with a calcium bolus at the time of calving, although this can create extra work at an already busy time. Different control methods suit different farms, but if you want more advice please just have a chat with one of the vets.

It's also worth stocking up on Calciject 5 well before calving - as well as using it to treat typical 'milk fever' cases, a bottle under the skin can provide a good boost to cows that have had long or difficult calvings, or are suffering from complications post-caving.

If you would like training on how to safely administer calcium give us a call.



Parasite management at housing

Gut worms

- Treat youngstock at housing with a clear/Group 3/macrocyclic lactone wormer (e.g. Cydectin, Eprinex etc) to ensure that all larvae are killed off and cannot overwinter in the animals
- Older stock and adult cattle should not need treating at housing as they should have natural resistance - however, they may benefit from a treatment if they are in poor body condition - worm egg counts are a useful tool if you are unsure.

Fluke

- If you are on a farm with a known fluke problem, treat now. You will need to repeat the treatment in 6-12 weeks if stock go back onto fluke affected pasture after the first treatment.
- If you are unsure of your fluke status keep an eye on abattoir feedback and do some egg counts. Fluke is also something we can easily check for with a post mortem exam if you have any unexplained deaths.
- Read the label of your treatment product carefully - some products will require repeated treatments during the winter

Neospora

Neospora caninum is a parasite that infects cows, causing abortion and stillbirths. It is the most commonly diagnosed infectious cause of abortion in cattle. Neospora can cause abortion from three months of pregnancy onwards but typically we see cows aborting around 6-7 months gestation.

Cows become infected with Neospora by coming into contact with the faeces of dogs or wildlife species (e.g. foxes) that carry the parasite. Once a cow is infected, she may either abort or give birth to a live, infected calf. Sometimes these calves will be abnormal, but others may appear normal and will carry the parasite for their whole life - often undiagnosed until they too abort. Cows cannot catch the parasite from each other (only from dam to calf).

The key points for controlling Neospora are:

- Dogs and wildlife become infected with Neospora from ingesting the placenta or aborted fetuses from infected cows - so make sure all cleansings and aborted material are disposed of promptly, especially when calving outside
- Reduce contact between cattle and dog/wildlife faeces wherever possible - educate dog walkers about the importance of picking up poo! Worming dogs does not protect against Neospora.
- If you have cows either aborting unexpectedly, or unexplained empty cows at the end of calving, get in touch with us - a simple blood test can reveal if the cow is likely to be infected, and we may also advise doing further investigations for other diseases depending on your individual situation.
- Cows that are confirmed positive for Neospora have a 5x increased risk of aborting again - if you just have a few positive cows in the herd, our advice would often be to cull them to try and get rid of disease. If this isn't possible then we would advise not to keep replacement heifers from infected cows, as these are also likely to be infected.

For more information or if you have any concerns about subfertility or abortion, have a chat with one of the vets.

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