

Red Tractor Medicine Administration Course



The next medicine administration course will be held on **Wednesday 12th October, 6pm @ the office**
The course costs £35+VAT and lasts approx. 1hr, drinks and snacks are provided
To book a place please call 01844 260616 or email tname@norcalvets.co.uk

Congratulations!



Well done to Jenni for doing so well at Bucks Show and winning champion in the Simmental class!

Here she is pictured with Mischief, who placed 2nd 😊

Also congratulations to Alex who has recently joined Becca and Kathriona in becoming a fully qualified TBAS advisor (please contact the office if you are interested in booking a TBAS visit to your farm or for any further information).

Preparing for Autumn Calving - Vaccinating for Calf Scours

With many of you preparing for the start of autumn calving it may be beneficial to have a think about whether you had many cases of scours in calves in spring or last year. Scour is one of the most common causes of death in calves less than one month old and pregnant cattle can be vaccinated against rotavirus, coronavirus and E.coli (K99) from 12 until 3 weeks prior to calving.

This is especially a good idea for those of you which have a history of scour problems. Calves who have gut damage from scours will not achieve the same daily growth rates and will take longer to reach your weight targets.

Antibodies produced by the cow from the vaccine will be stored in her colostrum and will be passed to the calf in the colostrum at their first feed - it is important to note that antibodies produced by the cow or heifer will not transfer to the calf before birth. Therefore, it is again vital to follow the 1,2,3 rule and ensure that in the **1st 2** hours a calf receives at least **3** litres of good quality colostrum as the ability of the calves' gut to absorb antibodies begins to decrease from 2 hours after birth.

Vaccination does not protect against cryptosporidium however calves with who have a co-infection with crypto and rota or coronavirus are severely more affected. If scours are an issue, it is always worth the cost to collect samples for us to test to identify the cause and best treatment and prevent infections once the other calves hit the ground.

Acorn Poisoning

Acorns are one of the most common causes of plant poisoning in the UK especially in the late summer and autumn. We are expecting to see cases this year due to foraging with the lack of grass.

Signs of acorn poisoning:

- *Off colour and poor appetite*
- *Straining to pass faeces and urinate*
- *Constipation at first, then black watery diarrhoea*
 - *Weakness, collapse and death*
- *Sudden death can occur, but poisoning usually occurs over a period of a few days.*

Generally, acorn poisoning only affects one or a few cattle in a group, as cattle need to eat large amounts of acorns to be poisoned. The poisonous compound in acorns concentrates in the milk of suckler cows so fast-growing calves on milky dams may be the first in the group to show signs. Acorn poisoning is usually diagnosed based on suspicion of these signs, and we sometimes can also find evidence of acorn consumption in the animal's stomach on post mortem exam. Blood or urine samples on live animals may be useful to rule out other diseases and increase suspicion of acorn poisoning.

There is no specific treatment for acorn poisoning, but most cattle will recover if promptly removed from fields with acorns as soon as they show signs of poisoning. Supportive therapy, such as pumping with fluids can help to reduce the severity of the disease. In more severe cases euthanasia may be necessary.

The best way to protect stock from acorn poisoning is to be aware of the risks and try and avoid exposure of cattle to acorns. This can be by fencing off the area around oak trees or by not grazing fields with a large numbers of acorns present.

Handling Facilities For Upcoming TB Tests

Now that we are coming up to a busy period of TB testing we would like to remind you all of the importance of adequate handling facilities for cattle. For all tests there should be proper handling facilities that are well maintained and in good working order – ideally a suitable race and crush.

Makeshift gates and hurdles are not sufficient and will cause increased testing time or result in the test being stopped and postponed for safety. Please have a check in the next few weeks and see that everything is as it should be!

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).

Key points for controlling *Neospora*:

- 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 where dogs are about
- Reduce contact between cattle and dog/wildlife faeces wherever possible - educate dog walkers about the importance of picking up after their dogs. Worming dogs does not protect against *Neospora*. However, it is important to remember dogs need to eat infected material in the first place - your own farm dogs are usually therefore most likely the source.
- 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 this is most accurate during pregnancy/at the time of abortion. We may also advise doing further investigations for other diseases depending on your individual situation - samples from the aborted calf if possible are usually the most accurate - some other causes of abortion will not show up in the cow's blood.
- 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 be to cull them to try and get rid of disease and prevent further spread. 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.

Flushing Ewes with Lack of Grass

Flushing ewes in the final three weeks before tugging can help to boost ovulation, increase heat expression, and improve scanning rates. Flushing involves feeding ewes on an increasing plane of nutrition, particularly focusing on increasing the energy and protein levels in the diet to increase ovulation rate. Flushing is needed for at least one cycle (2-3 weeks) to influence the ovaries to release more eggs.

At tugging ewes should be at a condition score of 2.5 – 3. Maintaining this score will mean the ewes' reproductive system is prime for maximizing lamb production. Ewes' ovulation rates can be severely affected if BCS is less than 2 at tugging. Flushing ewes that are in the correct body condition (3-3.5) at tugging time will not have any impact - they will already be producing quality follicles. Flushing older ewes and prolific breeds will increase the number of triplets - not always desirable in these groups. Younger ewes tend to have lower ovulation rates.

Targets to aim for:

- ideally 75% of ewes holding to the first cycle.
- 98% holding to the first 2 cycles.
- Less than 2% barren rate.

Possible Methods of Flushing Ewes:

- Good quality pasture (if you've got it!)
- If not available then high quality hay and a small amount of grain.
- Additional High energy lick buckets e.g. Crystalux
- Molasses
- Boluses/Drenches for minerals
- Root crops

Do not flush on pastures containing red clover as it contains oestrogens that will affect ovulation rates. Keep ewes off red clover pastures for 45 days either side of tugging.

Although needed in very small quantities, deficiencies in certain trace elements can impact on **fertility**.

- Cobalt plays a key role in egg development and in the development of the early foetus. Supplementation of cobalt at tugging time can also result in ewes giving birth to more active lambs.
- Selenium deficiency can have an impact on reproductive performance, with increased risk of early embryonic death
- Copper deficiency can limit fertility however excess copper can be toxic and so supplementary copper should only be given if deficiency is confirmed
- Zinc can improve hoof quality. This will help ensure that both ewes and rams stay sound during tugging, increasing the likelihood of a successful mating season.
- Phosphorus - too much can increase the risk of embryo loss

Finally during the first two weeks or so of pregnancy when implantation of the embryo into the uterus is taking place it is important to make sure that stressors are kept to an absolute minimum with no sudden changes in diet or forage quality or any rounding up of sheep.

NorCal Vets

Unit 2 Rycote Lane Farm, Rycote Lane
Milton Common, Thame
Oxfordshire OX9 2NZ

Tel: 01844 260 616
thame@norcalvets.co.uk

Follow us on Instagram @norcalvets



Orion Farming Group

NorCal has recently joined the Orion Farming Group as a supplier – if you are a member and would like to be invoiced through Orion instead please let us know – we will need your Orion membership number.