

Beef Benchmarking 2023

Thank you to all of you who have signed up to the Beef Benchmarking group.

Just a reminder to bring in your filled in questionnaires and to let us know if you are able to attend the farm walk on 14th September.

Pre-tupping checks

Pre-tupping checks can rule out common problems and can give you an indication of whether you should have a tup semen tested. Up to 30% of rams are thought to be subfertile. Checking over eyes, mouths, feet and body condition scoring is important as well as palpating scrotums and examining the prepuce.

Checks should be done at least 8-10 weeks before they are needed as sperm production takes 6 weeks allowing time for problems to be addressed. A fit, fertile ram will get more ewes in lamb in a tighter time period and will also last longer in your flock.

If you have any doubts about a tup it is best to give us a call and arrange a fertility exam where we examine a semen sample under the microscope.

Flies - New Forest Eye

With the hot weather and arrival of the flies we have been seeing and being asked about eye problems in cattle almost daily at the moment. Prevention is key so if you haven't done so already it's advisable to apply a fly prevention product. Please check the box though as there is varying persistence (4-8 weeks!!) between some commonly used products e.g. Spot on and Butox Swish. Also please read the instructions carefully as not all products are applied in the same way. Cattle affected with New Forest Eye show tear staining, closing the affected eye and progress to ulceration of the cornea leading to eventual scarring and blindness. Affected cattle should be treated with Alamylin LA 300/Engemylin and an anti-inflammatory: Emdocam/Meloxidyl. You can also use eye tubes such as Orbenin or Opticlox.

Flies can also spread summer mastitis between cows at grass – which is another reason to get on top of them.

Farming Community Network Survey

The Farming Community Network (FCN) is conducting some new research to better understand the impact of bovine tuberculosis (bTB) on UK farmers' health and wellbeing. As part of this research, they will be running a survey from June until mid-August, to be shared with livestock/cattle farmers in the UK. Please use the following link to access this survey. <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/3HG5YFG>

This has been designed with input from colleagues and academics and is to be shared with livestock/cattle farmers in the UK. FCN want as many farmers as possible to fill it in so that they can gain a wealth of data from across the whole of the UK. It should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

The results of the survey will help FCN to better understand how farmers and farm families perceive the threat of bTB, helping us to support those at risk or affected by a bTB breakdown.

New Badger Vaccination Phone Line

Farmers and vets that are interested in knowing more about badger vaccination as a tool to help combat bovine TB can now have their questions answered through a new telephone service. With the badger vaccination season now underway, anyone looking to vaccinate badgers this year can speak directly to someone with experience of delivering farmer-led badger vaccination. The service is being delivered by the team responsible for the VESBA project – a five-year, Defra-funded project which is successfully delivering badger vaccination across 250km² in East Sussex.

The VESBA project is now entering its third year, and they keen to share information and knowledge with anyone that is considering badger vaccination. Whilst the information about badger vaccination on the TB Hub (www.tbhub.co.uk) is really useful, they know that farmers and vets really value the opportunity to have questions answered on a one-to-one basis. The advice line is free to call on 0800 1070717, and if the call can't be taken immediately, they aim to call back the following working day.

An invitation to submit calf samples for free of charge faecal egg counting

Infection with gastrointestinal nematodes is a common and significant cause of disease and production loss in young grazing cattle. During the 2023 grazing season, APHA and Moredun Research Institute are collaborating to investigate both the species composition of gastrointestinal nematode infections in cattle, and the frequency of genes that confer BZ resistance in these populations. This information will be useful to improve understanding of nematode species composition in cattle, to raise awareness of the risk of anthelmintic resistance amongst cattle farmers and their advisers, and to inform national best practice guidelines.

Practising vets in England and Wales are invited to submit faeces samples from 10 first grazing season cattle per herd that wishes to participate for:

- Free of charge composite faecal egg count at APHA Carmarthen VIC with the results reported as normal
- Anonymised deep-amplicon sequencing at Moredun for speciation, and to detect genetic markers of BZ resistance; anonymised, aggregated results will be shared at the end of the project.

Sampling requirements:

- *first grazing season calves* • *at grass for at least 6 weeks* • *untreated, or not treated for at least 5 weeks*
- *10 freshly-voided (floor) faeces samples* • *one full universal pot (at least 10g) per calf*

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