

Heat Stress in Cattle and Sheep

With the heatwave particularly last week and with more hot temperatures to come this summer it's important to remember the impact that this has on cattle and sheep.

Extreme high temperatures can lead to increased risk of health issues directly or indirectly associated with heat stress such as reduced herd fertility, reduced milk yields and composition in dairy cattle and increased risk of mastitis.

There can also be increased risks of pneumonia and digestive disturbances leading to conditions such as CCN due to variable and lower feed intake during the day which we have seen this week particularly in cattle.

Cattle do not sweat very well and rely on respiration (breathing) to cool themselves down. They take on a heat load in the day and dissipate it at night when temperatures drop and the air is cooler, however this may take up to 6 hours to achieve. This can have implications for moving cattle in the evenings as they might not have shed their heat load from the day. Heavy fatter cattle and those with dark coat colours are more susceptible to heat stress and breed can also be a contributory factor.

Please make sure there is constant access to fresh water that gets constantly refilled - a cow can drink up to 100L in this sort of weather daily.

For those of you feeding cattle daily it is wise to feed them later in the day or move to new grazing later in the day as rumen fermentation produces vast amounts of heat peaking 4-6 hours after feeding. Feeding later allows this to happen during the night when it is cooler.

Haemonchus Risk Increase (Barber Pole Worm)

We have had reports from APHA of sheep and goat submissions with *Haemonchus contortus* as the cause of death recently which is early this year. Carcasses have been anaemic with large quantities of the Barber's pole worm found in the abomasum.

Some reminders about haemonchus:

- Ewes are affected just as severely as lambs
- Affected animals do not scour generally unless there is infection with other parasites - anaemia (shown by pale mucous membranes)/collapse and oftentimes just sudden death are the main signs.
- Less acute cases will appear like fluke - weight loss, bottle jaw and lethargy
- 5000 haemonchus are capable of drinking 250ml of blood daily while each female worm is capable of producing up to 10,000 eggs per day therefore animals can succumb to infection very quickly.

We are now able to speciate *Haemonchus* eggs from other strongyle type eggs in the practice so please bring a faecal sample into test.

Please contact us for advice if you suspect a *Haemonchus* burden in your animals.

Photosensitivity in Cattle

Unfortunately, the sun can cause painful issues for cattle out at grazing which can result in a condition called Photosensitization where the skin becomes extremely sensitive to sunlight, leading to a painful, sunburn-like reaction. Clinical signs of photosensitivity are seen as reddening/ulceration of the muzzle, eyes and teats, jaundice, off feed, severe irritation shown by tail swishing and laying down kicking for example, swelling of eyes and face (looking like they've been stung by a bee!) and high temperature. If left to progress without intervention areas of skin necrosis (death) can occur.

There are a few types:

- Primary (due to eating plants e.g. St John's Wort which contain compounds that react with UV rays)
- Secondary (due to already present liver damage - liver fluke, abscesses, toxins etc)
- A genetic condition reported in Limousin cattle, Blonde d'Aquitane and Holsteins where they lack a specific enzyme.

There is unfortunately no specific treatment similarly to sunburn! Animals should be placed in a dark shed for at least three weeks, anti-inflammatories (steroids if empty, meloxicam/emdocam if pregnant), antibiotics if there are any secondary skin infections and there are also liver support tonics available on the market, but these are infrequently used in commercial cattle.

For the sheep farmers - we see the same condition in sheep, and it has also been linked to cobalt deficiency, seen especially around the ears!

CCN - Cerebrocortical Necrosis

With the hot weather and feed problems in the last few weeks we have seen a few cases of CCN in cattle. The basis of the disease is a lack of Thiamine/Vitamin B1 which causes death of part of the brain. Ruminants do not ingest their B1 - it is produced by bacteria in the rumen. So, any disturbance in the rumen flora can cause an issue with thiamine production or destruction of Vitamin B1 by specific rumen bacteria.

This can often be caused by too fast changes in feed or excess ration for example. Signs of animals affected are wandering away from the flock herd, blindness, stargazing, recumbency and seizures progressing to death.

Treatment involves Vitamin B1 and steroids intravenously and then continued for several days intramuscularly. Blind animals will need feed and water easily accessible and can also often be found dehydrated for this reason.

Animals can make a full recovery however blindness may persist for several weeks in our experience and occasionally mental deficits can be permanent.

Early detection is key.

Animal Health and Welfare Review Reminder

Another reminder to you all to schedule your follow up visit for the animal health and welfare review or organise another review with Kathriona or Becca if you have had your follow up.

There must be a minimum interval of 10 months between each animal health and welfare review (the BVD bloods in cattle or faecal egg counts in sheep). The endemic disease follow-up visits take place no more than 10 months after you do a review, however the initial review claim needs to be fully processed and approved before you can submit a claim for any subsequent follow-up support.

The payment rates also increased in January!

Species	Animal health and welfare review		Endemic disease follow-up	
	Old rate	New Rate	Old Rate	New Rate
Pigs	£557	£648	£923	£1,087
Sheep	£436	£574	£639	£658
Beef Cattle	£552	£647	£837	£954
Dairy Cattle	£372	£447	£1,714	£1,844

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