

# MARCH 2024

## MYCOPLASMA BOVIS UPDATE

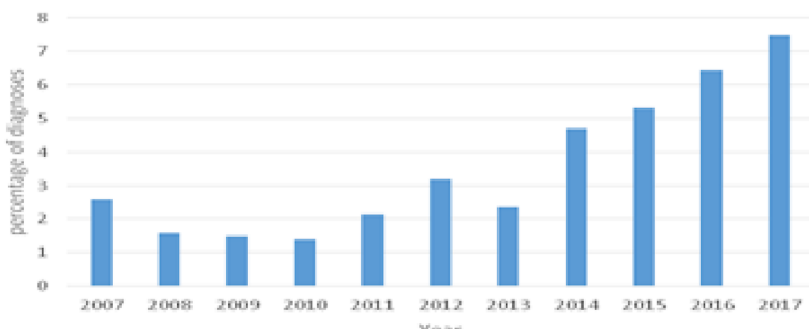
*Mycoplasma bovis* is one of 13 *Mycoplasma* species known to infect cattle and is recognised as a significant pathogen for UK cattle. *Mycoplasma* species lack a cell wall, so certain widely used antibiotics such as penicillins are not effective. They also have an ability to change the surface proteins to evade the cow's immune response and can produce a biofilm so they can temporarily hide from both the immune system and antibiotic treatment.

*M. bovis* causes several clinical disease presentations in UK cattle. The most common of these is **pneumonia**, where it can cause disease as the sole pathogen or more commonly in combination with other pathogenic respiratory bacteria, viruses or parasites. Disease can occur in all ages of cattle in both beef and dairy systems but especially in younger animals. Response to treatment is poor in some cases, with relapses commonly reported.

**M. bovis mastitis** is not so common in the UK dairy herd and the organism can be detected as an incidental finding in milk. However, outbreaks of mastitis in individual herds can be severe and sometimes occur in association with arthritis. *M. bovis* is considered a contagious mastitis pathogen spreading during the milking process and response to treatment is very poor.

**Arthritis** can occur in all ages of cattle, presenting as single sporadic cases, or as outbreaks. Lower limb joints are usually affected and in severe and in established cases recovery is unlikely. It is suspected that lower grade cases of *M. bovis*-associated arthritis occur in herds but may be unrecognised and under-diagnosed.

**Middle ear infections** are seen most commonly in youngstock, particularly young dairy calves which present with an ear droop or head tilt.



Vets report this presentation to have been increasing over the past 10 years.

The graph shows the increase in diagnoses of *M. bovis* by APHA up to 2017, and this increase has continued, with various recent screening studies showing approximately 40% of herds positive.

The disease is shed from eyes, nose, and tonsil for up to 2 years by chronic carriers. It is easy to kill with disinfectants but likes cold moist conditions and will survive in water troughs for weeks. Risk factors for spread of *M. bovis* infection include an open-herd policy, large and expanding herd size, waste milk feeding to calves, automatic calf feeding systems, aerosol transmission, poor housing/ventilation, and spread via the milking parlour. It can also be spread by bulls in semen.

**Diagnostic tests** available include PCR tests on lung tissue or swabs and blood tests for antibodies in recovered animals. Bulk milk samples can also be monitored for presence of the disease in dairy herds.

**Treatment** options for *M. bovis* are limited because of the nature of the organism means that only a few antibiotics are effective, some of which are classified as Critically Important Antibiotics.

There are currently no vaccines licensed for use in the UK, but it is possible to use imported vaccines in affected herds. However, getting protection from vaccines into young calves soon enough to prevent disease is a challenge, particularly in calf rearing units. For herds that are free of disease, efforts should be made to keep it out, by testing pre purchase testing or screening purchased animals whilst in isolation

## WATERY MOUTH

Many of our clients have made significant progress in preventing Watery Mouth in their flocks, without using preventative antibiotics. The key points are to maximise the health of ewes, so that they produce high quality colostrum, maintain hygiene in the lambing area and then to get sufficient colostrum (10% of bodyweight or 400 ml for a 4 kg lamb) into lambs within 6 hours of birth. However, there are many challenges to this and if cases are occurring in your flock, please contact us for advice on how to deal with them. We have a non-antibiotic product that can be given to lambs at birth, which can also be used to treat cases. We can also test samples to confirm which drugs are best to prevent and treat cases, and, on eligible farms, Farming Connect funding could be used for this and for advice on management at lambing time to help prevent cases in the future.

## NAVEL TREATMENTS

The umbilical cord, or navel, in newborn lambs and calves can act as a potential access point for bacteria to enter the body, resulting in localised infections such as navel ill, but also more widespread issues like joint ill, liver abscess and meningitis. Prompt dressing of navels following birth is therefore crucial to reducing disease in lambs and calves.

**Aims of Treatment: Disinfect the navel of bacteria, dry out the navel to prevent access of bacteria to blood stream.**

**We stock the following products:**

**ANTIBIOTIC SPRAYS SUCH AS ENGEMYCIN OR CYCLOSPRAY DO NOT DRY NAVELS EFFECTIVELY AND SO THEY ARE NOT GOOD ALTERNATIVES, AS WELL AS NOT BEING RESPONSIBLE USE OF ANTIBIOTICS.**



*10% iodine- this is long been the gold standard as it provides drying of the navel and good disinfection. Supply has been an issue in recent years.*



*Vetericyc Super 7 Plus spray- slightly less drying than iodine, but studies have shown as good a results as 7% iodine.*



*Repiderma spray- an aerosol spray, similar results to Vetericyc Super 7, slightly less drying than iodine and small studies have also shown no increase in infections.*



*4% Hibiscrub, or a 50/50 mix 4% hibiscrub and alcohol- there are limited studies reporting equivalence with 7% iodine.*

## AMENDMENT OF THE TB ORDER (WALES)

This came into force on 1 February 2024. All bovine animals that move into herds in the intermediate TB areas (ITBAs) from the high TB area of Wales, the HRA of England and from Northern Ireland on or after 1 February 2024 will need a post-movement test (PoMT). These tests are private and must be paid for by the farmer. It is the farmer's responsibility to contact the vet and arrange testing. The PoMT must be no sooner than 60 days and no later than 120 days after their arrival on the holding.

## DR COLLIN WILSON OBE

Many of you will remember Collin as one of the partners in Abbey Vets. We are very pleased that he was awarded an OBE for his services to public health and the meat industry in the 2024 New Years Honours List. He is current role is Food Standards Agency Animal Welfare Veterinary Lead and last year he won the RCVS Impact Award, for his vital work on welfare at slaughter, especially his work with the Halal meat industry. The ongoing impact of his work will positively affect millions of animals and knowing Collin, he will just shrug and continue making a difference in his own humble way.

## FARMING CONNECT FUNDING



FARMING  
connect  
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This is available to most Welsh farms and the 70% funding can be applied to investigation of disease or management issues on farm; developing or updating health plans; and many other ways we can work with farmers to improve profitability and efficiency. So far, many of our clients have used it to look at their trace element status, pre-calving/lambing metabolic profiles, parasite testing, pneumonia investigations, mastitis bacteriology, fertility improvements and health plan reviews. If you are interested in using this funding, please call us and one of us can sort the application form for you.

## CLIENT MEETINGS

**Thursday 14th March- MAXIMISING SUCKLER COW PRODUCTIVITY**

Learn about maximising suckler cow productivity through herd management focusing on nutrition, fertility and infectious disease.

**Thursday 21st March- BVD WORKSHOP**

Learn about the clinical signs, transmission, diagnosis and monitoring of BVD.

**Thursday 28th March- OPTIMISING FERTILITY: MANAGING THE DAIRY COW FROM DRYING OFF TO SUBMISSION**

Learn about preparation of the cow prior to her calving and in the immediate few weeks post calving will have massive effects on her subsequent fertility.

**Clients must be registered with Farming Connect.** Location: **Monmouthshire Livestock Market NP15 2BH at 7pm.**

Food Provided. **PLEASE CONTACT THE SURGERY TO BOOK YOUR FREE PLACE TEL: 01873 840167**