FARM FIRST VETS NEWSLETTER

JULY 2025

Haemonchus - The Barber's Pole Worm

The microscope image shows a Haemonchus worm that was recently found at post-mortem with many hundreds of others in the stomach of an anaemic ewe. The twisting "Barber's Pole" inside it is the worm's intestine filled with the ewe's blood. Adult worms can each suck 0.05ml of blood per day, so a heavily infested sheep could lose up to 250ml blood daily. This explains why Haemonchus can cause a rapid death in even apparently well-conditioned sheep.

Female worms will lay several thousand eggs per day so once Haemonchus enters a flock it can spread rapidly and immunity to infection is poor. Hot dry conditions favour the worm over other gut parasites which explains why **we have seen more cases over recent years**.

The best way to control Haemonchus in your flock is not to allow it in! **Quarantine dosing with an effective wormer such as Zolvix should be carried out whenever new sheep enter your flock**. We sell individual bottles and smaller doses of Zolvix to offer affordable and effective quarantine treatments.

Expansion of Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (England) Scheme

Livestock farmers in England can now access funded vet visits for multiple herds or flocks belonging to the same farming business from the 26th June, helping to support better health and profitability within the sector. The expansion to the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway provides farmers a more comprehensive understanding of livestock health on farms with many groups of animals, whether mixed holdings or larger farms with many groups of a single species.

Each visit includes:

- Testing for endemic diseases: BVD in cattle, PRRS in pigs, and worming resistance in sheep
- A tailored health and welfare discussion
- Practical advice to support productivity, animal welfare, and business outcomes
- Optional follow-up for deeper sampling, biosecurity planning, and action on priority diseases

	Initial Visit	Optional Follow-up Visit
Pigs	£557	£923
Sheep	£436	£639
Cattle	£522 for beef cattle £372 for dairy cattle	£215 for cattle (no BVD) £837 for beef cattle (with BVD) £1,714 for dairy cattle (with BVD)

⚠ Bluetongue Rules Update ⚠

There have been recent changes on the Bluetongue rules for both England and Wales. Please look out for a separate email from us explaining the most important changes, or call the practice if you need an answer to a specific question.

Managing Heat Stress in Your Dairy Herd

As summers in the UK grow warmer and more unpredictable, managing heat stress in dairy cattle is becoming increasingly important. Even though our climate isn't tropical, periods of high temperature and humidity can significantly impact milk yield, fertility, and cow welfare. Here's a practical guide to help you keep your herd cool, comfortable, and productive during hot weather.

What is Heat Stress and Why Should You Care?

Cows are most comfortable between 5°C and 20°C. When temperatures rise above this — especially when combined with high humidity — cows can't regulate their body heat effectively. This leads to heat stress, which causes: reduced feed intake, lower milk yields, poor fertility, increased risk of lameness and mastitis and in severe cases, heat stress can be fatal. The Temperature Humidity Index (THI) is a useful tool for assessing heat stress risk. A THI above 68 can start to affect cow performance — and yes, this can happen in the UK during warm spells.

Early signs of Heat Stress in Dairy Cattle

(if you notice any of these behaviours it's time to act fast)**:**

- Panting and increased respiration rate
- Grouping around water troughs
- Reduced movement or lying time
- Decreased feed intake
- Drop in milk production

Practical Tips to Reduce Heat Stress

1. Provide Shade – Outdoors - trees, hedges, or purpose-built shelters can help. Indoors, make sure roofs are insulated or painted white to reflect heat.
2. Improve Ventilation - Install fans in sheds, especially in holding areas and parlours. Ridge vents and open sides can help release hot air. Fix broken drain pipes or leaking water tanks to reduce extra moisture in the building
3. Increase Water Access - Cows need up to 100L of water per day. During hot weather this can increase. Ensure there are enough clean troughs and that flow rates are sufficient. Place troughs in shaded areas where possible.
4. Feed Management - Offer fresh feed during the cooler parts of the day. Reduce heating of TMR by feeding smaller batches more often or using feed additives to slow spoilage.
5. Reduce Handling and Movement - Schedule milking, vet work, and foot trimming for early mornings or evenings.
6. Monitor High-Risk Animals - freshly calved cows, high-yielders, and older animals, as they're more vulnerable to heat stress.

Longer-Term Investments

- Sprinkler or misting systems: Useful in collecting yards and parlours,
- Cow cooling systems: More common in the US
- Pasture planning: Use paddocks with natural shade and rotate to avoid overgrazing during dry periods.

Remember: a cooler cow is a happier, more productive cow.

Royal Welsh Show

Good luck to all our clients who are competing at the show

Joke of the Month

What do farmers talk about when milking cows?

Udder nonsense!

If you know a good joke, please send it to us - you might see it in our next newsletter!

Upcoming Meetings

Thursday 31st July 7pm: Smallholder Skin Disease Meeting. Venue TBC
Thursday 7th August 7pm: NADIS: Maximising Suckler Cow Productivity Raglan Market
Thursday 7th August- Lunch Time : Dairy Discussion Group- Venue TBC
Please phone the office on 01873 840167 to book.

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