



SPRING UPDATE

# FARM FIRST NEWSLETTER



MAY 2021

**OPENING HOURS**  
**MON - FRI**  
**8.15 AM - 5.30 PM**



## BLOAT IN CATTLE

Is a build-up of gas within the rumen and reticulum due to a failure to eructate (belch). **Primary bloat** occurs due to the formation of a stable foam within the rumen, which traps the gases of fermentation, resulting in a build-up of gas within the foam which the animal is unable to expel. Certain soluble leaf proteins such as red clover, white clover and lucerne have the greatest propensity to cause bloat, but grazing cereal crops, rape and young grass pastures can also result in bloating. **Secondary bloat** is where the animal cannot eructate due to a physical obstruction of its oesophagus, for example, a stuck potato or root crop. This article will focus on primary rumen bloat.

The severity of clinical signs varies enormously; indeed bloat is a common cause of apparent sudden death in cattle. When bloat is observed, the abdomen becomes distended, particularly on the left-hand side of the animal. Cattle show signs of discomfort such as sitting, then standing frequently and kicking of the abdomen. This progresses to respiratory distress and death may ensue, typically within 3-4 hours, although it can occur within 1 hour of grazing. Acute bloat is a veterinary emergency – in serious cases, the vet may incise into the rumen to reduce ruminal pressure. In less severe cases, a stomach tube may be passed to release larger pockets of rumen gases. However, in the case of primary bloat this is often unrewarding, but it does facilitate the administration of an antifoaming agent, such as vegetable oils. Commercial anti-bloat remedies e.g. Bloat Guard often include an additional surfactant. More than one animal is likely to be affected, so the herd should be removed from the offending pasture.

Bloat incidence is highest during the spring and autumn; and the risk is greater following the interruption of grazing e.g. following a storm or housing overnight. The safest method of control is to avoid high-risk pastures during high-risk periods. If alternative grazing is available, then consider making silage on these pastures in early season.

If high-risk pastures are going to be grazed, cattle should be fed high fibre forages, such as hay, before turnout. This ensures that cattle do not gorge on the new pasture and intakes of the high-risk forage are reduced. Feeding hay also has the benefit of stimulating saliva production, which appears to reduce the risk of bloat occurring.

Strip grazing limits the amount of high-risk forage which can be consumed and ensures that a greater proportion of the entire plant is consumed, “diluting” the intake of soluble proteins found in plant leaves. Forages should still be offered before turn-out to reduce the likelihood of cattle breaking through the electric fence.

Feeding vegetable oils at high-risk times prevents bloat due to their anti-foaming properties. Whilst individual drenching may be appropriate for cases of mild bloat it is not a practical prophylactic strategy. If strip -grazing is initiated the pasture may be sprayed with oil emulsified with water. Adding oils to concentrates at a rate of 120g per day fed before turn-out is a reliable method of administration.

Establishing productive pastures which have low bloat potential is a longer-term strategy. In practice, a maximum inclusion of 50% clover with grasses is a sensible compromise for grazing. Also consider the addition of other legumes with low bloat potential into the pasture seed mix, for example, 10% Sainfoin or Birdsfoot trefoil.

**For more advice on this and  
other issues call us on  
01873 840167**

## HIGH NEMATODIRUS RISK

\*\*\*\*\*Please be aware that we are now in a High Risk period for Nematodirus in young lambs. The worm egg counts that we have carried out so far this year are already showing that there are already mixed infections with trichostrongyle worms present too, so ideally we should be carrying out worm egg counts before you treat. If there are no trichostrongyles present a white drench such as Endospec 2.5% should be used to treat the Nematodirus, but there is a mixed infection then Noromectin drench would be a better option. There are other causes of scour in young lambs, such as coccidiosis, so examination of faeces samples is very useful; although in some cases lambs will die of Nematodirus, before the eggs appear in the faeces.



**PLEASE REMEMBER TO  
PRE ORDER YOUR DRUGS  
VIA TELEPHONE BEFORE  
COLLECTION**

## SLOW CALVING SYNDROME

SRUC in Scotland have recognised a 'slow calving syndrome' in suckler cows, particularly in Dumfries and Galloway as an emerging problem. We also see herds in this area with similar issues. A case definition would be still born calves or calves that die within a few hours of birth. The calf is not oversized and the cow fails to have adequate uterine contractions in second stage labour. Assisted birth is usually straightforward and the calf is born dead. No infectious or deficiency cause is identified.

Their theory is that this is related to over fat cows and subclinical hypocalcaemia. Many grass silages made in the area are of sufficient quality to ensure that cows will gain weight in the winter and many farmers are reluctant to buy in expensive straw when they have sufficient forage reserves in terms of silage. Also silages can be high in potassium due to slurry application which may alter the DCAD of the ration pre-disposing to sub-clinical hypocalcaemia. Monitoring cow condition and silage analysis to include minerals (especially Na, K, S, Cl, Ca and Mg) is key to making this diagnosis. Also considering how straw and minerals are fed relative to overall feed presentation and feed trough space is an important consideration. If you have are experiencing such problems at the moment, do not hesitate to get in touch to consider the best way to investigate further.

## TB VALUATIONS AND PREGNANCY DIAGNOSIS CERTIFICATES

At the moment a Pregnancy Diagnosis Certificate (PDC) doesn't have to be available at the time a TB valuation takes place to enable valuers to value an animal as being in-calf. This requirement was paused as part of the response to Covid in 2020. APHA have informed us that as of 1 July 2021, a PD certificate will be required at valuation to enable a contracted valuer to value an animal as being in-calf.

## BARREN EWES/ABORTED EWES

If you had issues with either of these problems and don't yet have a diagnosis, there is funding available from both Farming Connect and the drug companies to blood sample these ewes. If you would like to investigate, please call us before you take them to market.

## MEETINGS

We are hoping to start running Farming Connect/Nadis meetings and Mastering Medicines meetings again in the very near future. Please look out for details.

## JOKE

All credit to Max Boyce for this one:

Evan and Bevan were walking through a graveyard when they came across a distraught man kneeling at the grave of Mog Edwards. The mourner was in floods of tears, but they could hear clearly hear him cry "Why did you have to die? Why did you have to die? My life was perfect until you died, wake up in the morning with smiles on my face waiting for another day. I was so happy; and then it all went black. My life every day is hell; sometimes I wish I was dead myself. Why did you die? Why did you die?"

Evan asked the old man "Who was he, butt?" The man replied "My wife's first husband".....

**01873 840167**

**INFO@FARMFIRSTVETS.CO.UK**

