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JANUARY 2021



## TB TESTING IN COVID - 19 TIMES

With the new more infectious variant of Covid-19, it is really important that we maintain the 2 m distancing when we are on farm. This is particularly difficult when testing young calves. APHA rules state that calves under 180 days do not need to be tested. If the test is a Short Interval test, then leaving these calves untested means the test will be classed as a part test. If it is a Whole herd Test, and the test is clear, but the farmer wishes to sell calves (that were not tested) they will require a Pre Movement Test. One way to deal with young calves is to halter each one for the vet, but this can be more time consuming. Please let us know if you wish to do this on a large number of calves, so that we can allow more time for the test. If, for health reasons, you are concerned about the test being carried out whilst we have high levels of Covid-19 in the area, then please contact us to discuss the options. If you have a TB test or any other visit booked and you, or anyone you are in contact with has signs of Covid- 19 or has tested positive, then please contact us ASAP.

## MANAGEMENT OF SUCKLER COWS CARRYING TWINS

Twins can be seen as a blessing or a curse! On the down-side there are increased risks for the cow, her body condition in late pregnancy and milk / colostrum supply, plus increased risk of still birth or calving difficulties. However, if we are trying to increase efficiency and maximise the percentage of live calves born in the suckler herd having twins and actively identifying and managing cows carrying twins to reduce the risk of problems could be a successful strategy.

After PD the objective is to reduce cow liveweight loss rather than increase calf birthweights Separate twin cows into a different group, if still running with their calf, wean ASAP, feed the same as the rest of the cows ; if only one or two twin bearing cows, put them with the lean, single calving cows. 6 Weeks Pre-Calving- increase feeding by approximately 20 MJ ME per day, ideally by feeding more/better quality forage rather than more concentrates; also supplement rations with an extra 20 g/cow/day of a well-balanced mineral/vitamin mix. 4 Weeks Before Calving Start-supplement rations with extra magnesium e.g. 30 g/cow/day of cal/mag to improve ease of calving. 2 Weeks Before Calving Start- consider feeding last thing in the evening i.e. around 10 pm. This will minimise the number of cows calving in the night. The majority of calves will be born between 5 - 8am so they can be quickly moved into individual pens to ensure they are fully mothered up, with twins having a 3 - 7 day shorter gestation start checking the twin group at least one week before calving is due to start. Post Calving - Once they are fully mothered up, run all cows with twins at foot in a single group and clearly spray mark them and their dam e.g. cow A, calf A1 and A2; Feed at least the equivalent of 2 kg more concentrates per day than the rest of the cows to support higher milk yields and maintain/improve condition.

## SUBSIDISED BARREN EWE CHECKS

If you have scanned your sheep and the results were disappointing, then there is subsidised testing available for Toxoplasma, the most common infection cause of poor pregnancy rates. Whilst we have the blood samples, it is also worthwhile checking the Trace Element status of the ewes if this hasn't been done recently. Please call for more information.

## LAMBING PREP

We are now in the run up to lambing and it is time to think about stocking up with all the equipment you need. We have lambing ropes, snares, lubricant, harnesses, lamb feeders etc in stock. If your ewes are on the Heptavac-P system we also have this on stock at competitive prices- don't forget the annual booster.

## METABOLIC PROFILING

Is blood sampling a group of ewes in the run up to pregnancy to monitor energy and protein. The profiles act as a useful "early warning system" to indicate whether there are any shortfalls in the diet that need to be addressed.

Ideally this should be done around 4 weeks prior to the expected lambing date, as this is when the ewes' metabolic requirements are increasing, but still allows enough time for the diet to be adjusted. Ewes should be sampled at least 4 hours after concentrate feeding as this can alter the results. Sample a group of ewes that represent the majority of the flock and who are expected to lamb the earliest. If the flock has been scanned, then sample 5-6 per group; if not scanned then aim for at least 10. Avoid sampling ewes which are obviously poorer or sick, although it may be a good idea to check these animals on an individual basis. We will always be happy to speak to you about managing your ewes in the run up to lambing, including metabolic profiling and body condition scoring.

## LAMBING ROOM COMPLETION

The building works are still ongoing, but we are delighted that our first lambing room is ready for action, and the second one will be ready on a couple of months. Both are equipped with hydraulic tables for ease of lifting and restraining ewes for procedures such as caesarians.



## #THE BIG FARM SURVEY

On January 11th 2021, RABI launches the largest ever research project relating to wellbeing of farming people. This wide-ranging survey will consider for the first time the relationship between physical health, mental wellbeing and health of farm businesses. With an ambitious target of gathering 26,000 survey responses, Alicia Chivers, Chief Executive of RABI is asking everyone in the sector to support the project. "By setting aside 15 minutes to complete the survey, you'll be contributing towards creating an accurate picture of farming life today. The data that's collected will enable RABI and our partners to develop effective tools and support strategies for farming people in years to come," concludes Alicia. Conducted by the University of Exeter, the survey is open to all farmers, farm workers, their spouses and adult-aged children until 31 March 2021. Please set aside 15 minutes to take part at <http://ex.ac.uk/BigFarmingSurvey> when the survey launches on January 11th. Alternatively, request a printed copy from [FarmSurvey@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:FarmSurvey@exeter.ac.uk).

## MEDICINES NEWS

For those of you who have been using Censulfatrim instead of Norodine 24, we now have a UK licensed alternative called Diatrim. The dose rate and withhold times are identical to the other products, but the product should be handled with care by women who are pregnant i.e. they must wear gloves, and it is not licensed for use in pregnant livestock.

## STAFF NEWS

We are delighted that Eleri Davies has joined us, having just moved from working in a mixed practice in Neath. Some of you may remember Eleri from her time working at Drybridge Vets or as a neighbour, as her family farm both at Hirwaun and in Penrhos. She has a lot of experience in farm work and now wants to focus on this, particularly on the dairy side, which is why she has decided to join us.

## JOKE

A vacuum cleaner salesman knocked on my door. Before I spoke he tipped a bucket of farm yard manure over my carpet and said "If this vacuum doesn't remove every trace of it I'll personally eat what's left!" I replied, "I hope you're hungry because they cut off my electric this morning!" - courtesy of Ian Harris, The Cilau.