

There is a lot of interest in the Healthy Livestock Initiative. If you have not yet got involved, it's not too late. Let us know what you are interested in and we can let you know what is available and how to get involved.

The situation so far:

### **Johnes disease.**

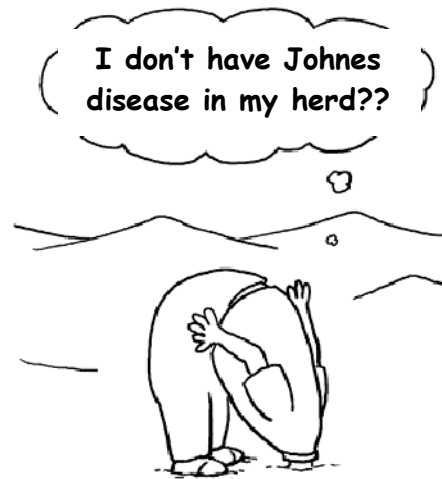
We have had a lot of interest in Johnes disease. This has been increased by the involvement of Milklink primarily, and subsequently Arla. There is also a suggestion that other milk buyers will join in.

About a third of our dairy herds are now investigating their Johnes disease status and finding out how to deal with the disease or how to keep it out of their herds.

If you are not yet involved, the first step is to attend an awareness meeting. The practice have run two so far which were well attended, and most of the farmers who were there have signed up for the next stages.

Remember that this is 70% funded, so you will only pay 30% of the cost involved. This means that you will get Johnes disease risk assessment and assessment of your current herd status and control advice for less than £150 including VAT. And if you are a Milklink customer, the news is even better. Sign up with Milklink by attending one of their awareness meetings, and they will fund the 30%!

With at least one third of herds affected, the modern cattle farmer needs to know his current herd status, and either how to keep it out or control it. Doing nothing is not an option!



### **BVD**

There is also plenty of interest in BVD control. Following our meeting 2 years ago with Professor Joe Brownlie at the Tiverton Hotel, your appetite was whetted. Now we have an opportunity to make real progress against this disease.

Again the first step is to attend an awareness meeting. Following this, we can visit to discuss the risk and control of BVD specifically on your farm after assessing the current level of infection.

**We will be running a BVD awareness meeting on Wednesday 30th March, at The Merry Harriers, Westcott. The meeting will run from 11.00am until about 2.30 pm and will be sponsored by Intervet Schering Plough. Give us a ring for further details.** Please remember that you must attend a meeting before we are able to enrol you onto the rest of the BVD program.

So please contact us as soon as possible to book a place at the meeting.

### **Lameness and Mastitis**

These parts of the project are slightly different in that there is no requirement for an initial group meeting.

We have started to deliver the mastitis control plans, and are ready to start the lameness control plans. Please contact us for further information and to get started.

**Still to come: Respiratory disease in beef herds and lameness, parasite control, nutrition and breeding in sheep. Watch this space!!**

## **COW MAGNETS - NOTHING NEW BUT.....**

So why all the fuss about cow magnets? They are not a new idea.

Well it all started with the EU's Health Commissioner who suggested that magnets should be inserted into cows' stomachs as a response to the threat posed by an increased risk from Chinese lanterns during the Chinese New Year on 3<sup>rd</sup> February. Surely a better way to deal with this would be to make the frame of biodegradable materials such as wood or plastic rather than metal which has the potential to get chopped into small sharp fragments by forage harvesters eaten by cows and cause 'hardware disease'



## **SO WHAT IS HARDWARE DISEASE?**

Bits of wire or other metallic objects can be inadvertently eaten by cattle, get into their stomach and go on to cause problems. Metal from baling wire or electric fencing particularly if it was chopped up by the forage

harvester was perhaps the commonest source years ago but a variety of sources have been reported over the years. Wire from old tyres used on silage clamps can be a common source with the worst cases being where a tyre has got in to the feeder wagon. Other reported outbreaks have been from cows getting access to bonfires in fields where objects with metal in have been burnt, wire from careless powerline workers repairing pylons on grazed land and of course most recently the metal from Chinese lanterns. There have even been reports of straights being delivered with free metal shards in it so beware and check what you feed your cows.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IN THE COW?**

These metallic objects, particularly if they are sharp, can stick in to the honeycomb lining of the second stomach (the reticulum - there now you know!). The action of the stomachs churning over, mounting during oestrus or sometimes the strong contractions during calving can cause the 'wire' to push through the stomach wall allowing leakage of stomach contents often setting up an infection. This traumatic reticuloperitonitis as it is called is a localised or small area of peritonitis (infection and adhesions) which can vary in its severity depending on where it is. The objects can penetrate the diaphragm (the muscle which separates the abdominal organs from the heart and lungs) and will then be millimetres from some pretty vital organs most notably the heart. If it penetrates the sac around the heart and sets up an infection there the cow is generally beyond saving - so this is potentially a very serious disease. Occasionally they can penetrate the spleen or liver which may then become infected. Sometimes the wire may penetrate the reticular wall and not hit anything important but the cow can still be off colour for a few days from the resulting infection. This makes diagnosis quite difficult as symptoms can be quite vague on occasions.

## **WHAT DO WE SEE?**

Early on you may get lack of rumination, reduced dung, a slight temperature and a sharp fall in milk production. The cow exhibits an arched back, an anxious expression (wouldn't you!), a reluctance to move and an uneasy, careful gait. They may grunt when getting up or down or we can make them do it by putting pressure in the right area with a fencing stake or crush bar under the chest. We can get clever by listening for the grunt with a stethoscope over the windpipe and applying pressure or pinching the withers at the end of an inspiration. Once the case has been going on a bit it becomes difficult to diagnose.

## **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

Some of the cases where it hasn't hit anything important may get better with just antibiotic right up to those needing an operation to remove the offending bit of wire from the stomach. Some of course are beyond help and will be culled or occasionally die from complications. If there is a herd problem with lots of cases it has been said that magnets will help in early cases attracting the metal back out of the stomach!

## **SO MAGNETS THEN....**

Cows on TMR and when grazing can be exposed to metallic objects. Magnets will attract and capture ferrous bits of metal that cattle have inadvertently eaten in their need to keep their bellies full. When you are a cow eating 50kg of forage you can't be too choosy!! A few will be regurgitated up but most will stay down for life. One enterprising farmer burnt the cow number on the magnets with a soldering iron so he knew who to give the magnet back to if he found one spat out!!!

## **OTHER PLACES TO PUT MAGNETS**

Many foragers have metal detectors and forage wagons often have magnets on the chute as the mix is delivered to the feed trough to catch metal that may have got in the TMR and they work it out and have a look at yours if you have one.

**THEY COST ABOUT £2 EACH AND  
LAST THE LIFETIME OF THE COW**

(pretty much!!)

**The Vale Veterinary Centre  
2 Duchy Road,  
Heathpark Industrial Estate  
Honiton EX14 1YD**

**Tel: 01404 44095**

The new surgery opens on Monday March 21st!

After several years of looking and six months of renovation, the surgery is now ready.

The surgery offers all the facilities you would expect in a modern progressive practice, including three consulting rooms, and an operating, xray and ultrasound suite. There will also laboratory facilities and kennelling for companion animal patients.

More importantly for some of our farm clients, this surgery will offer a much more convenient place for collection of medicines. The surgery will be stocked with most of the medicines that our farm clients will need. Some of the less

commonly used drugs, and large volume medicines including vaccines will not be kept routinely in stock, but can be delivered to the Honiton branch within 24 hours.

We are holding an **open day** on Saturday April 9th so new and existing clients can come and have a look around. So if your interested in seeing behind the scenes of the new building, please drop in between 11am and 3pm. There may even be a bit of light refreshment!!

The existing computer system will synchronise all the records between Cullompton and the new Honiton surgery. This means that your account details will continually be updated between practices.

For farm calls and for medicines orders, please continue to call the Cullompton number. For medicines, it would be very helpful to state where you are collecting the medicines from!

