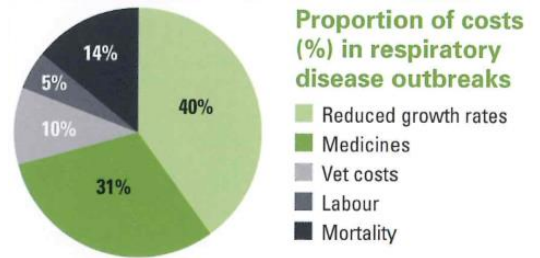




SEPTEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

WINTER HOUSING: CALF & YOUNGSTOCK PNEUMONIA

Time stops for no one. Housing – and unfortunately the start of the calf/youngstock pneumonia season – will soon be upon us. Calf pneumonia is incredibly costly, with both direct costs (drugs, vet fees, death) and indirect costs (decreased live weight gain, delay to first calving etc). The percentage breakdown of these costs is shown in the pie chart. It is widely accepted that a typical cost of a pneumonia outbreak in a group of 25x 6-month-old suckle calves, where 5 individual animals may be treated and one death expected, is **£82/calf when spread across the group. Vaccination** prior to disease in this case would have given a **cost benefit of around £70/calf.**



This picture is from a post mortem showing the lungs which we performed two years ago. The pale areas are normal, which equate to approximately only 25% of the entire lung tissue; it is no wonder that this animal died. The lungs are unable to fully heal following pneumonia, so even if this animal had survived, it would have been left with a much-reduced lung capacity, greater likelihood of pneumonia in the future and poor performance throughout its life. Several different vaccines are available, and we can recommend the correct one for your individual farm, based on the age of the calves, the bugs you have and your production system. **Most vaccines need to be given at least 3 weeks before the challenge period, so you need to plan now!**



Whilst vaccination is an important tool in reducing pneumonia, consideration of the environment, including the

FARMER MEETING: Red Tractor have made it a **requirement** that “at least one member of staff responsible for administering medicines has undertaken training in the handling and administration of medicines”. We are therefore running our “Deciphering Drugs” course once again on **Wednesday 29th September from 10am – 3pm at North Tawton Rugby Club.** We have had excellent feedback from the 70+ people that have attended the previous meetings. The course covers:

- different types of antibiotics, wormers and flukicides; which products to use when and for what disease,
- how to safely and effectively reduce antibiotic usage on farm,
- the correct usage of anti-inflammatory drugs,
- the different types of vaccines including how they work,
- and correct handling, storage and administration of all medicines.

The cost for this training is **£60+VAT** (£30+VAT for any additional staff from the same farm). Please book through your branch surgery – lunch provided (please let us know of any dietary requirements). All those attending will receive a certificate of attendance to include in your Red Tractor paperwork

PREPARING FOR TUPPING

Early lambing flocks will already have introduced the rams to the ewes already, but for the majority, now is the time to ensure your rams are in shape ready for the season.

The main things to check are feet, body condition (BCS) and testicles. Rams should be **sound**; any lameness should be resolved now. **BCS** should be 3.5 to 4. **Testicles** should be firm and even sized without any lumps, move freely and be about the diameter of a beer can. Woolly testicles should be clipped as sperm production is optimum when 4-5°C below body temperature. Also check the prepuce, teeth and eyes. Replacement rams should be on farm for at least a month before being used. **For peace of mind and to maximise efficiency and performance of your flock**, we offer ram **pre-breeding examinations, including semen morphology analysis**.



Don't forget the ewes either. **Vaccination** for abortion should be complete at least 4 weeks before tupping. Feet, udders and teeth should all be checked, any with serious problems should be culled. Three weeks before tupping ewes should be flushed on good quality forage to increase ovulation rates which will increase the overall lambing rate. Limit Red Clover intake in the month prior to tupping as there are chemicals within Red Clover which can lead to temporary

Some of you may have experienced intermittent difficulties contacting the practice via telephone over the past week. This has been due a hack on the internet phone system we use and has affected several companies. We have been informed that the matter has now been resolved, but if further cases are encountered, please continue to the out-of-hours service and they will be able to contact the vets. We apologise for any inconvenience this has caused.

STAGGERS

We are likely to start seeing cases of staggers (hypomagnesaemia/grass tetany) as the weather changes and we enter autumn. Staggers affects cattle and sheep and is caused by low levels of magnesium within the blood, due to decreased dietary intake. Intakes can be reduced when there is rapidly growing lush grass, as there is insufficient uptake of magnesium by the grass, or when the grass is very wet following significant rainfall, as this reduces the dry matter intake of the livestock. We occasionally see outbreaks as a result of livestock avoiding grazing in particularly bad weather, being instead more inclined to hide under a hedge! Staggers causes neurological signs such as restlessness, excitability, trembling, seizing and ultimately death if not treated swiftly enough; staggers is one of the very few *true* veterinary emergencies. Treatment involves the prompt administration of Magniject under the skin.



Prevention is by supplementation, either by mineral buckets, magnesium chloride in the water, magnesium bolus or by buffer feeding with silage or hay to increase dry matter intakes. There is no store of magnesium within the



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