



## OCTOBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

### INTRODUCING VaDia – DYNAMIC MILK MACHINE TESTING

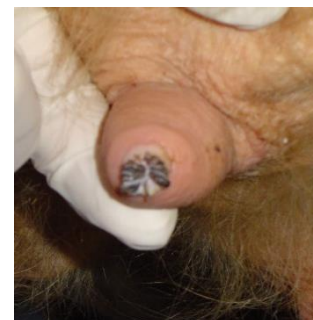
We are **very excited to announce that we can now offer dynamic milk machine testing**, using VaDia. This technology allows us to check how the **parlour functions** at the **cow level**, by attaching the VaDia to individual clusters. Ultimately, this will allow us to help you:

1. **reduce the risk of teat lesions**, including teat oedema and hyperkeratosis
2. **reduce clinical and subclinical mastitis**
3. **increase cow comfort** during milking, which usually has the added benefit of providing faster milking times and higher yields.



None of this can be assessed through the usual static milk machine testing, however, to complement the dynamic test, we will also perform a static milk test, including fall-off testing (how the parlour responds to open clusters) and pulsation testing (comparison between the milking and resting phases). We can test conventional parlours, rotaries, and robots.

**Why should I perform a dynamic test?** Inappropriate levels of vacuum on the teats increases the risk of hyperkeratosis and oedema in the teats. These conditions can have a significant impact on the levels of mastitis in a herd and can strongly influence cow comfort during and after milking. **Hyperkeratosis** (see picture) is caused by an increased production of cells at the end of the teat and causes a rough appearance of the teat. **Teat oedema** is a build-up of fluid in (part of) the teat after and during milking. Both increase the risk of bacteria being able to enter the teat canal through slowing the closure of teat sphincters.



**Inappropriate vacuum levels, bi-phasic milking, overmilking, poor liner fit** and/or poor **teat conformation** can all lead to oedema and/or hyperkeratosis. It is **only through dynamic testing that all of these can be assessed**. Even if you don't see many cows with these abnormalities in your herd, your milking parlour could still be having a large influence upon mastitis rates. In addition to a visual assessment of your cows during milking, we will also analyse your mastitis data, which can give an indication of issues being present on farm. It is also a Red Tractor recommendation to perform an annual dynamic milk machine test. **For more information, or to book your dynamic milk machine test, speak to Jonathan or Elske today.**

### TIME TO GIVE CALF PNEUMONIA VACCINES

Seasonal **Bovine Respiratory Disease (BRD)** in calves is frequently seen in all farming systems, but is particularly common in **autumn and winter**, predominantly due to **housing**. This often coincides with weaning for suckler calves. Bought-in calves have the added stress of **travel +/- mixing**. At this time of year, throw into the mix high swings of temperature between night and day, causing chills and suboptimal immune function. Reduce the risk of your calves getting BRD and pneumonia by providing a **sheltered but ventilated** environment, with **clean dry bedding**, and **vaccinating BEFORE the high risk period i.e. NOW!**

Discuss with a vet which vaccine would be most suitable for your system. **Intranasal** vaccines have the advantage of being given at a younger age for faster protection. **Injectable** vaccines generally have longer lasting effect. Knowing the pathogens on your farm will give us the opportunity to provide you with a bespoke vaccination plan for your farm: subsidised testing is widely available for us to do this.

## DISEASE FORECAST - GRASS STAGGERS AND ACORN TOXICITY

Grass Staggers occurs when a ruminant becomes acutely low in magnesium. This is most likely to happen when grass grows quickly in Spring and Autumn, without supplementary feed. It is more likely when there are other strains on blood magnesium levels, such as calving outside, concurrent milk fever or other illness that may affect their feed intake. Magnesium levels, calcium and phosphorus control are all interlinked and partly dependent on each other. Calcium and phosphorus have strict hormonal control and can be manipulated through nutrition in the dry period, but magnesium levels are highly dependent on how much is absorbed from the diet daily.

When magnesium levels are low, the animal may present with **tremors**, abnormal movements while walking, **thrashing** on the ground, apparent paralysis, or seizure-like activity. **Sudden death** is a common presentation so if staggers symptoms are seen then it is an **emergency** and action should be taken ASAP. As magnesium is poorly regulated in the body, a **constant source** should be provided in high-risk periods. Lick buckets may be used, but magnesium flakes in the water troughs is a more reliable source. Magnesium boluses are also available and provide cover for around 4 weeks.



Last year saw **several livestock deaths** from **acorn poisoning**. Some animals like the taste of acorns, they seek them out and eat them preferentially. In ruminants, the acorns break down into tannins and gallic acid that first affects the **gut**, causing **constipation then scour**. This can cause **severe dehydration, bloat, rumen stasis and pain**, even death. If the animal survives this stage, the toxins can damage the **kidneys**. This can cause **pain, depression, red urine** and death. There is **no specific treatment** other than supportive therapy. Fencing off oak trees and removing access to acorns for sheep and cattle is the most effective way to reduce cases. **Pigs** are highly resistant to acorn poisoning and can be used to clear areas.

## TUPPING EWES' VACCINATION STATUS – ENZOOTIC ABORTION

Enzootic Abortion in Ewes (EAE) is caused by *Chlamydia abortus* and **spreads sheep to sheep** very readily. Infected animals can still shed the disease into the next lambing season. If you have had previous issues and/or you have **introduced new animals** to the flock, the risk of EAE **abortion storms** can be greatly reduced by a **single injection** BEFORE the rams go in. As with all vaccines, it is most effective when given before the challenge period. This vaccine is not suitable for pregnant ewes. CARE: **Pregnant women** should not handle this vaccine as *C. abortus* can cause abortion in humans.

## DATES FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Vet **Jonathan Hobbs** is speaking on **Wednesday 11th October** at **Gooseford Dairy**, Whiddon Down. Along with other talks and demonstrations for a **Transition Cow Event**. See attached poster for more details. **Booking is essential**, please call the practice to reserve your place.

**On Tuesday afternoon 17 October** we are hosting a **practical meeting regarding Faecal Egg Counting (FEC), for both cattle and sheep**. We will discuss the importance of regular testing to aid in the responsible use of anthelmintics and teach you how to perform a FEC, using a microscope. This meeting is free for our Flock Health and Smallholder club members, but offer places are available to other farmers for £42 + VAT. Please ring the office to book your place or talk to our vets **Elske or Clare** if you want more information.



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