



FARM NEWSLETTER – JULY 2024



“First Aid on the Farm” is the next topic for discussion at NPVG SHC. This talk will be a **collaboration with Equus Vets**, held on the evening of Tuesday 13th August 2024. More information to come.

Dr. Angus Cunningham DVM MRCVS

Angus was strapped into a car seat to watch his first Caesar aged about 2 years old, incised a uterus aged 11 years, bled hundreds of boars and cows for NPVG and has assisted at countless calvings, prolapses, bull exams etc since then.

So it was with enormous pride and joy that the whole family recently celebrated his graduation after 6 years at the University of Kosice, Slovakia. Angus has already started work – a job in Norway doing mixed farm work. There are too many to thank individually for their time, patience and for passing on their experience during the last 24 years, so thank you everyone so much for helping him get over that finish line.



HEAT STRESS With warmer weather on the horizon, it is time to think about heat stress. Cows have a **comfort zone (thermoneutral zone) of -15°C to +25°C**. Above 25°C, cows take actions to help to control their body temperature, they do this in two ways:

- **Increasing heat dispersion:** achieved by evaporation, increased blood flow to the skin surface. Cows may be seen **panting and drooling** to help with cooling. These activities increase energy needs by 20% at an environmental temperature of 35°C.
- **Limiting heat production:** Rumen fermentation produces heat, so they will **reduce Dry Matter Intake (DMI)** and rumination by <30%, resulting in reductions in milk yield. Lying down time is also reduced (to disperse more heat), further decreasing rumination.

Lactating animals produce more heat than non-lactating, so **high yielding dairy cows** are more susceptible to heat stress than beef cattle and small ruminants. Heat stress also causes decreased fertility, less bulling activity, increased rates of mastitis and higher chance of embryonic loss/abortion.

MANAGEMENT OF HEAT STRESS:

- Limit the feeding of higher fibre poor quality forage, as these **require the most fermentation**. Energy dense feeds such as concentrates will **maintain energy requirements with lower DMI**, but **care** must be taken to **avoid ruminal acidosis**.
- **Feed animals during the evening/night** to allow majority of fermentation to occur when it's cooler.
- **Ensure water is readily available and close to shade and feed** to limit necessary walking distance.
- **Increase natural ventilation** by ensuring there is good air flow in to sheds/yards. **Remove vegetation** around doorways and windows, if easy to do then remove boarding and covers over inlets and outlets to **increase air speed**.
- **Mineral salt** availability can replenish electrolytes lost through sweating.
- The use of **fans/ artificial ventilation** can dramatically reduce heat stress and are worth the capital investment if you have enacted all the other measures.



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CASE OF THE MONTH: UMBILICAL HERNIA CALF

Our vet Amy was called to check over a 5-week-old suckler calf with a painful abdomen and swelling over her navel. **Swellings in the navel area** in newborn farm animals are usually one of two things; **navel abscesses** or **umbilical hernias**. The vet may be able to feel the hernia (a defect in the muscle layer creating a **hole that abdominal organs can fall through and get trapped**) or the vet may use a needle to carefully check for evidence of infection, such as pus. An abscess is likely painful to the touch, a hernia may be painful or non-painful, depending on what abdominal structure has fallen through and whether or not it has been **twisted or crushed**. This young heifer had **herniated intestines** present on exam. The section of gut had been **strangled**, it was discoloured and **on track to die** which would cause leaking of the intestine contents into the calf's abdomen and lead to massive infection and death. As Amy has relevant surgical experience, she was able to surgically remove all of the damaged gut, re-connect two healthy ends and repair the surgical site. There was a **high risk** of the surgical site becoming infected and breaking down, especially in the immediate 72 hours. The young calf had a course of antibiotics and pain relief and was re-examined by a vet just over 2 weeks later. She had **recovered well**, was able to move about, pass normal dung and was still growing and suckling well. A very lucky calf on the road to recovery, thanks to the farmer's vigilance and Amy's surgical skills.



EWE ABORTION VACCINES UNAVAILABLE

As you are aware, Cevac, our usual **enzootic abortion vaccine is not available until September** at the earliest. Unfortunately, this means that most flocks will miss the window to vaccinate prior to tupping. We have tried to source an alternative vaccine and looked at importing the vaccine from abroad but this has not been successful. We advise you to look at **online pharmacies** as they may still have a stock and we will be able to write you a **prescription (16.67+VAT)** if this is needed.

There is a vaccine available that is **EAE combined with Salmonella (Inmeva)**. This is an inactivated vaccine and the **ewes will need 2 injections, 3 weeks apart, to be given at least 5 weeks prior to tupping**. Ewes will **only be protected for 12 months** after and will need another injection of the same vaccine or Cevac the year after. This is likely to make the vaccination significantly more expensive but if you are interested, please let us know and we can get updated prices for you.

If you are **unable to vaccinate** your replacement ewes this year, there is obviously now a risk of enzootic abortion. It is even more important to be aware of **biosecurity** in this case. We recommend that you:

- **Do not mix** unvaccinated and vaccinated ewes from tupping until lambing
- Do not mix **recently purchased ewes** with the existing flock for this time
- **Avoid contact with neighbouring stock**; breaking in/out and nose-to-nose contact through fences/hedges. Ideally a 3-metre boundary with neighbouring stock at all times.

We appreciate that these measures can be difficult to implement so please contact us for advice if you think this might not be possible on your farm. We will then try to find a solution together.

We are able to supply Toxovax as normal so please let the office know if you are in need of this.

Thank you for your patience while we were trying to find a solution for you.



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