

Dear All,

Welcome to our Summer Newsletter. I'm almost managing to get these out regularly now!

As always if you want to discuss anything in this newsletter please do give us a call on the usual number, or you can email me on ashley.rubens@moorgatevets.co.uk

As I write this it's drizzling in Bovey, but hopefully the sun will be back at some point. It does, however, mean the grass is growing well! Surprisingly we have seen a few cases of stock eating poisonous plants – ragwort and bog asphodel. Normally we would expect to see that when they are short of grass and tempted into the boggy pastures by the remaining greenery, so worth considering when walking your pastures if there are more of these plants about than usual?

The new Ovacyte machine is busy running worm egg counts in house, I'm really pleased that it has sped up and standardised the process for doing these, and soon they expect it to be able to check for fluke as well, which will be very useful to test animals during winter housing. Don't forget that if you're thinking about worming a group of animals then dropping in a fresh dung sample (ideally a couple of piles mixed) is a good idea to check if worming is needed for them all and could save a lot of time and money.

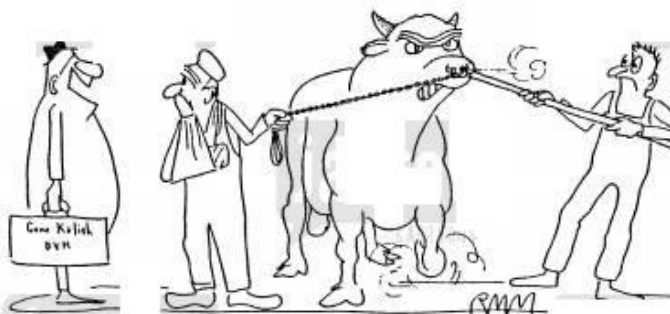
We have just started to be able to follow up on some of the pathway funding, as ever with anything APHA it isn't quite as simple as it first appeared. A lot of people have said to me that when they have gone online to apply the webpage is still only advertising that you can register your interest, rather than apply. It turns out that to apply you need to go through this registration and then you will receive details to apply – so there is another step.

If you would like to access this funding for your herd or flock please do go online and "register interest" at <https://apply-for-an-annual-health-and-welfare-review.defra.gov.uk/apply>. You are entitled to £522 for beef herds and £436 for sheep flocks. It's almost like they are making it deliberately awkward to access this funding!

We will have our usual stand at Chagford show, which promises to be a good day, so please drop in to say hello and grab a piece of cake!

Update to Red Tractor Guidelines

Some of you may have noticed (or been asked about at inspections) the updated guidelines for pain relief of calves, the update states that the need for these procedures should be reviewed and reduced where possible. The guidelines now state that:



"Would I advise castration? If you can run faster without them, go ahead!"

In addition to local anaesthetic, additional pain relief (such as Meloxidyl or Loxicom) is required when carrying out any disbudding or dehorning. Dehorning is only permitted by a stockperson up to 5 months of age.

Cauterising paste is only allowed for calves under 1 week of age and the use of pain relief is recommended for beef calves and required for dairy calves. Interestingly when using the paste in research studies the pain response wasn't seen until half an hour after application, when most people would have moved onto the next job!

Pain relief is required if castrating calves using burdizzo techniques up to 2 months of age. Over 2 months of age, a vet is legally required to castrate calves. Use of burdizzo has been proven to be the most painful method for castration, more so than surgical castration.

Where possible I would encourage farmers to use a rubber ring for castration (within the first week of life) although I appreciate that this is not always possible on the moor or outdoors with a particularly protective Mum.

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Blackleg

What is Blackleg?

Blackleg is a frequently fatal bacterial disease of sheep and cattle. It predominantly affects young cattle (6-18 months old) but can affect sheep at any age. It is usually the animals in good condition who are affected.

It is one of the clostridial diseases, most commonly caused by the bacterium *Clostridium chauvoei*, but other clostridial bacteria can be involved.



How is Blackleg caused?

Clostridium chauvoei is very hardy and can survive in the soil for many years as a spore. The spores are ingested from the pasture and can then enter the bloodstream where they travel to the muscle and become embedded. The spores can stay in the muscle for a while without causing a problem but trauma to the muscle, either by excessive exercise or wounds such as from shearing, castration and injuries at lambing or calving, can cause the spores to germinate and multiply, resulting in the clinical signs of Blackleg and often proving fatal.

What are the signs of Blackleg?

The multiplication of the bacteria causes a sudden inflammation of the muscle tissue. All muscles can be affected but it is most common in the limb muscles. If the limbs are affected then the animal will often present with sudden, severe lameness and the leg may also be hot, swollen and painful when touched. Sometimes the limbs can feel 'crackly' when pressed, like bubble-wrap, due to the gas produced by the bacteria. Internally, the muscles become dark red-black in colour, hence the name Blackleg.

Affected animals often have a fever, are depressed/lethargic and inappetent as the bacteria produce toxins which enter the bloodstream. The disease is rapidly fatal (often causing death within 24 hours) so, sometimes, the only sign seen is sudden death in a previously healthy animal.

What can I do about Blackleg?

The only effective way to control Blackleg in cattle and sheep is through VACCINATION! In unvaccinated adult animals a primary course of 2 doses, 4-6 weeks apart, is usually required. The second vaccination should be given 2-3 weeks before the period of risk e.g. lambing/calving, with a booster vaccination a year later.

Ideally, animals should receive annual boosters, 3-4 weeks before calving or lambing. This ensures antibodies against Blackleg are passed from the mother to their offspring in the colostrum, protecting them when they are most vulnerable.

Calves are often vaccinated from 3 months of age and lambs may be vaccinated from 3 weeks of age onwards.

Vaccinations are available for Blackleg only or you can give a clostridial vaccine, such as Covexin, which protects against *Clostridium chauvoei* as well as other clostridial diseases. Unfortunately, by the time an animal is diagnosed with Blackleg they often will have too great a build-up of the bacterial toxin, and too much tissue damage to be treatable.

If you would like to discuss Blackleg vaccinations further, please don't hesitate to contact us and speak to one of our vets. eliza.daniel@moorgatevets.co.uk

PRACTICE FACILITIES

24 Hour Emergency Service
In-House Laboratory
Ultrasound scanning
Lambing Club
Herd and Flock Health Planning
Red Tractor Reviews
Bull Breeding soundness examinations
Semen Collection

BOVEY TRACEY SURGERY

Mill House, Station Road,
Bovey Tracey, Newton
Abbot, TQ13 9AL
TELEPHONE – 01626
833023
EMAIL:
admin@moorgatevets.co.uk

MORETONHAMPSTEAD SURGERY

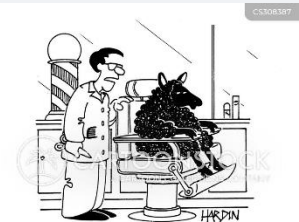
31 Court Street,
Moretonhampstead,
Newton Abbot, TQ13 8LG
TELEPHONE – 01647
440441

CHRISTOW SURGERY

Old Mines Road, Christow,
Exeter, EX6 7PL
For appointments/repeat
prescriptions etc.

FOR OUT OF HOUR
EMERGENCIES PLEASE
TELEPHONE: 01647
440441

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"Just a trim or the usual three bags full?"