CHESHIRE FARM VETS

Tel: 01270 310010

Newsletter

August/September 2023

Good-Bye and Good Luck Mariska!

We have said Goodbye to Mariska this month.

Mariska is moving back to the Netherlands for a new Veterinary role.

We would like to thank her for all her support and hard work over the previous years at Cheshire Farm Vets and wish her the best of luck.

Come and see us at the Cheshire Ploughing Match 2023!

Wednesday 27th September 2023

Ashley Hall, Hale, Ashley, Altrincham, WA14 3QA

T.B Test Rule Change

As many of you will have heard by now, APHA are changing the rules regarding TB testing and animals entering an annual surveillance edge area.

From 1st August 2023 any holding within the annual testing region of the edge area will be required to post movement test any animals coming from a higher risk area. They need to be tested between 60 and 120 days after arrival.

The higher risk areas are:

- 6 monthly testing parts of the Edge Area
- High Risk Areas of England
- Wales

This test can be completed as part of the annual whole herd test if the timings work. Cattle can not be moved off farm until the test has been completed with negative results, with the exception of direct to slaughter. There are exemptions to this testing, which are explained well on the TB hub. APHA has stated that it is the keeper's responsibility to ensure that this testing occurs within the correct time period after arrival on farm and to pay for the testing. If the test becomes overdue, then a holding will be put under movement restrictions and a farmer may receive deductions to their basic farm payments. If you have any further questions please speak to your vet.

Gudair®

Johne's Disease Vaccine for Sheep and Goats.

Gudair is a one shot for life vaccine that provides a vital tool to aid in the control of Ovine Johne's disease (Mycobacterium avium subsp. paratuberculosis) in sheep and goats.

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Introducing Animal Health and Welfare Infrastructure grants

We're pleased to share the next steps of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway.

Through the first round of the Animal Health and Welfare Equipment and Technology grant, over £19 million will be awarded to more than 3,000 pig, cattle, poultry and sheep farmers. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) is now writing to successful applicants so they can begin to buy their new equipment.

Additionally, the Animal Health and Welfare Infrastructure grant will launch shortly with the Calf Housing for Health and Welfare grant.

The Animal Health and Welfare Infrastructure grant

Grants of between £15,000 and £500,000 are available for large infrastructure projects that help to continually improve the health and welfare of your animals.

Initially, the grant will be available for cattle keepers to co-fund new and upgraded calf housing that improves social contact and the ambient environment.

In time, we'll extend the offer to include grants for adult cattle, pig and poultry housing.

This grant represents an opportunity to fund changes on farm that will improve productivity and futureproof calf housing.

Upgrading or building new calf housing with an ambient environment will help to produce healthy calves that are more likely to be resilient and productive in later life.

Better housing provides a comfortable temperature, protection from humidity and draughts, as well as allowing social contact between animals.

It's positive for the animals and the increases in productivity will benefit your bottom line.

For example, you could get funding for an A-frame building to house dairy calves from birth to weaning, or a mono-pitch building on a beef unit to house calves between 3-6 months. You can also apply for funding for permanent open-sided structures with igloos/ hutches and other types of calf housing.

This is also an opportunity to adapt your calf housing and ensure it's ready to meet the demands of extreme weather conditions and changing climate.

Through this grant you will be able to access funding for rooftop solar panels, a great source of thermal insulation and low-cost energy for your calf housing.

Applying for a grant

You'll be able to apply for a grant later this summer.

To help you prepare, we've published guidance at the following address:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/calf-housing-for-health-and-welfare-2023

The guidance explains:

- the application process
- the information you will need to supply
- the features your calf housing should have
- how the RPA will assess your application.

You will be required to seek advice from your vet as part of the application process.

This is to make sure the infrastructure changes funded by the grant reflect the specific health and welfare needs of the calves on your farm.

One way to get this advice is to apply for an Annual Health and Welfare Review. Available through the Pathway, the Review is a fully-funded visit by your choice of vet. It provides bespoke advice on health and welfare of your animals, as well as access to testing for endemic diseases and conditions.

What is a somatic cell count (SCC)? NADIS:

Author: Richard Laven PhD BVetMed MRCVS

High cell counts cost money. The cost of a high cell count doesn't just come from the penalties imposed or bonuses foregone when targets are not met; high cell count cows produce less milk than low cell count cows. A high cell count herd will also have more clinical mastitis. So reducing cell count can provide substantial savings - on average, reducing the bulk cell count from 250,000 to 150,000 will result in savings of around £40 per cow per year, most of which comes from a reduction in production of around 0.5L more of milk per day. So cell counts are a valuable tool which can be used to identify a problem, assess the cost of the problem, give a guide as to the solution, and to monitor the response to control programmes.

The stimulus for this invasion is tissue damage. This releases a range of chemicals including some which attract the white blood cells to the damaged tissue and some which activate them. The white cells then attack and attempt to destroy the invading bacteria. Most commonly, the white blood cells envelop the bacteria and internalise them. They then attempt to digest the bacteria using enzymes.

Somatic cell counts simply measure the number of cells in the milk; the higher the somatic cell count the greater the chance that the udder or quarter is infected. Uninfected cows and quarters often have a milk SCC of <100 000/ml, and almost always have a SCC <200 000. The same applies to bulk milk SCC - on average, the higher it is the higher the proportion of infected cows in the milking herd. With good mastitis control, the bulk milk SCC should be below 200 000.

Can cell counts be too low?

For an individual cow the ideal cell count is 100 - 150,000. Below 50,000, there is some evidence that cows respond more slowly to infection, particularly with E. coli, so they have an increased risk of mastitis. So as reducing bulk milk below 100/150,000 may increase the proportion of very low cell count cows, it may also increase the risk of clinical mastitis. Nevertheless because of the other benefits of low bulk cell count the answer is not to increase cell count but to maximise immunity (such as by minimising negative energy balance) and to keep the cows in as good an environment as possible.

Using cell count data

Individual cell counts tell you what the current infection status of the cow is likely to be. However a single figure on its own is of limited value. Firstly there is the masking problem discussed above. Secondly, the most obvious cows on a single herd test are those with the highest SCCs. These cows are likely to have long established infections that which will not respond well to treatment. These cows need to be managed to reduce the risk they pose to the rest of the herd, by techniques such as culling, early drying off or milking separately, but for the highest cell count cows the time is long past for simple identification and treatment. The more important cows are those with persistent infection but lower cell counts (see Fig 5); early detection and treatment of these cows is likely to have the most benefit. The best use of SCC is as a dynamic test with multiple results per cow; this will allow early identification of persistent rises in cell counts in cows to < 400 000 (Fig 6).

Working with your vet, you can use your routine herd test to identify what the underlying cell count problem is, what the main risk periods are and what are likely to be the best solutions for your herd. Herd testing provides individualised data to be used in an individualised herd health plan; the underlying principle of the DairyCo mastitis plan

Summary

- o High somatic cell counts, either bulk or individual, mean money is being lost.
- o When a cow has mastitis, white blood cells move to the udder to defend it. It is this movement of white blood cells which causes the rise in cell count.
- o Effective mastitis control should keep bulk milk and individual cell counts < 200 000
- o Bulk milk cell counts are available from routine test and provide useful data, but for effective control monthly herd testing of individual cows is required
- o The California milk test is a cheap, but time consuming alternative to herd testing, that is best saved for individual cows or emergencies
- o The use of computer programmes has revolutionised the value of herd testing. they can quickly identify trends in cell count and identify target areas for mastitis control