Of Flies and Icebergs

By Barry Ewens R-SQP (Livestock Service & Sales)

What have the flies you see buzzing around your animals and icebergs got in common? The answer: the greatest danger comes from what lies beneath! Just like the tip of an iceberg, only 15% of your farm’s fly population can actually be seen, the remaining 85% is hidden away as eggs, maggots and pupae waiting to wreak all kinds of havoc on the health of your livestock and the profitability of your business.

So how do we prevent this iceberg sinking us? Firstly, know your enemy. Nuisance flies fall into two distinct groups, biting and non-biting. The non-biting group consist of the House Fly, Head Fly and Face Fly. These flies feed on body secretion and tend to be attracted to the muzzle and eye areas of livestock where there is always an abundant food source. But these flies are not fussy eaters and will quite happily move restaurants should other goodies like pus, blood or milk become available. It is because of their choice of fine dining that this group of flies are associated with transmitting two commonly seen diseases in summer grazing cattle; New Forest Eye and Summer Mastitis. Both are distressing for the animal and costly to your business.

The biting flies most commonly associated with livestock are the Stable Fly and Horn Fly. These flies tend to be seen later in the season, July-September. Stable flies are usually found on the legs and underbelly and will take a blood meal only once or twice during the course of a day spending the remainder of the time resting in the shelter of bushes, buildings or on fences. The Horn fly on the other hand will spend the entire day on its chosen meal and can be seen predominately on the backs and flanks of animals. This fly will take in excess of twenty blood meals a day and if the population goes unchecked are capable of draining 200ml of blood per animal per day. As with any insect which takes a blood meal from its host there comes a risk of disease transmission, warts being the obvious where these flies are concerned. But without doubt the greatest risk posed by these flies is the extreme irritation and stress their biting causes resulting in a great deal of lost grazing time. It has been found that high populations of these flies can mean a milk loss of up to 0.5kg/cow/day in dairy herds and a reduced DLWG in beef herds by 0.28kg/head/day, equating to as much as 130kg of milk and 26kg of growth over the summer grazing season. You do the maths for your herd!

Both species life cycles start as an egg laying female. A female can lay up to 900 eggs which she deposits in warm, moist areas high in organic matter, areas such as slurry lagoons, dung heaps and calf pens for example. Within hours the eggs hatch into tiny white maggots which in turn will pass through three growth
Disbudding calves

Practical advice on parasite control in association with the vet

Mobility scoring

Follow up treatments (eg: intravenous injections and infusions, stomach pump, etc)

Mobility scoring

On farm data collection for farm reports

Practical advice on parasite control in association with the vet and sale of products at competitive prices

Practical advice on dairy hygiene products and supply at competitive prices

Practical advice on mineral, trace element and garlic licks and supply at competitive prices

RESTRICT

REDUCE

REPLACE

REPLACE

REPLACE
Safe Use of Medicines Course

Wednesday 9 October 2013,
10.30am-3pm
at Endell Veterinary Group Equine Hospital,
Southampton Road, Clarendon, SP5 3DG.

The aim of this course is to help increase understanding of the commonly used products, potential problems and safety issues surrounding the use of veterinary medicines. If you would like to attend, please contact us on 01722-333291.

(Lunch will be provided.)

Staff News

Welcome back Will!
We are very pleased that Will Sheppard has rejoined us after a year’s spell in the “Wild West”. He needs no introduction as you all know his friendly, hardworking and high standard approach, and he can’t wait to meet you all again.

Reproductive News...
As the last newsletter was written a while ago (and the editor is normally the last to know about things), just a quick update:

- Louise, became the proud mother of a son, William, on 23 May and although currently on maternity leave can be seen regularly coming into the practice, catching up with veterinary things and gossip
- Katy gave birth to her daughter, Matilda Grace, on 4 September.
- Leanne, Jim’s wife, gave birth to a daughter, Anabelle Eden, on 7 September.

Our congratulations and best wishes to them all!

Others
Peter is going to run the Berlin Marathon in September in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. If you would like to sponsor him, please go to:
http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/PeterPlate

Schmallenberg Update
We had a well attended and lively meeting on Schmallenberg, but to remind you of the key points and to update everyone who could not make it, let us summarize a few points:

Symptoms:
Deformed foetuses and abortions are the most prominent sign, increasingly observed in our cattle herds and sheep flocks.

Other symptoms have been recorded as well, like milk drop and a high temperature in acutely infected cows, with or without diarrhoea and “dummy calves” - calves appearing to be “retarded”, not really sucking reducing colostrum and milk intake, which can lead to septicaemia, fits and deaths.

Immunity and vaccination:
In better known related viruses exposure leads to a long lasting immunity. We hope this is the case in Schmallenberg as well, but it is too early to be certain about this although there is some anecdotal evidence in support of this view.

A vaccine has recently been launched (Bovilis SBV) and can be given to breeding females before service. The regime is as follows:

- **Cattle:**
  Two injections four weeks apart, with the second injection given about four weeks before the breeding season

- **Sheep:**
  Single injection given about four weeks before tupping

These are current recommendations. As the vaccine was licensed in a “fast track” way, no information is yet available about safety in pregnant animals. This advice may change quickly, and it is best to talk to one of the vets about whether vaccination is indicated on your farm and what the most suitable schedule is.

We can also carry out surveillance to assess the level of infection in your herd of flock via blood sampling different age groups, which can then be the basis for decision making.
Smallholder Club

We are proud to announce the creation of a smallholder club for our non-commercial clients. The club will allow members to attend meetings tailored to the needs of their farm and meet new friends within our client base. We had our first meeting at Salisbury Livestock Market on the 7th of August. If this club interests you then please contact us for information on how to join and what you'll get for your membership. Likewise, if you know of anyone that may be interested please give them the contact details below:

Neil: neil@endellfarmvets.co.uk  John: john@endellfarmvets.co.uk

Nursing the Down Cow

There are numerous reasons why a cow (or bull/steer/heifer) might become a ‘Down Cow’ including trauma, neurological disease, metabolic disease and mastitis amongst many others. The difference between getting these animals up again or not is not solely due to prompt medical care. The nursing care that you provide the animal with is vitally important to its survival chances and it is often overlooked. These are some helpful hints for looking after these cows, how many of them do you do?

1. Provide the cow with plenty of food and water
   - If you give her one bucket of water, then think about giving her two.
   - Replenish her water as often as possible.
   - Give her a plentiful supply of good quality silage or hay.
   - Try to ensure that if you feed cereals, other animals are not taking it.

2. Bed well with clean straw in a sheltered area
   - Use clean, dry straw and bed deeply to increase comfort and prevent mastitis.
   - Move the cow inside, out of the elements.
   - Isolate if possible.

3. Stick to the treatment protocol
   - If you start the animal on a course of antibiotics it is important that you give the full course unless we tell you otherwise.
   - Likewise, if we give you drugs for the animal stick to the instructions given with them.

4. Turn or lift the cow regularly
   - The muscle damage caused by a cow lying on her side for an extended period of time is the most common reason for losing these cows.
   - Try to move her onto her other side as often as possible.
   - Ideally have a means of lifting these cows (ie: a hoist or harness) and do so regularly. They will often stand unassisted for a while when you do this.
   - If you do not have a harness or hoist you can buy or rent one from us. Please contact us to enquire about a price.

5. Don’t let the animal suffer too long
   - Unfortunately, some down cows will never get up again and it’s important that their welfare is given the highest priority. They shouldn’t be left to suffer if there is little chance of recovery.
   - The longer a cow stays down, the less chance she has of getting up again. Therefore, points 1-4 above should be carried out promptly.

With autumn fast approaching now’s the time to make the most of our competitively priced own brand

“Hi-Mag” Mineral Bucket

Our bucket is suitable for both cattle and sheep in 20kg, 100kg buckets and a whopping 500kg block

For more details speak to your vet or call Barry on 07876 823912

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