Summer Worming of Cattle

We are now well into the time of year when the level of worm eggs on the pasture has begun to rise, creating a potential disease risk for grazing animals. However, while all such animals are likely to be exposed to the same worm larvae and eggs throughout the season, control strategies for different ages of cattle differ substantially. Pharmaceutical companies and merchants can often be quick to push their products to farmers; always be sure that what you’re being sold is the right product for your animals, and that treatment is actually necessary at all! Here are the facts about two of the most important worms: Ostertagia (Brownworm) and Dictyocaulus (Lungworm).

**Ostertagia ostertagi** is a roundworm which lives in the abomasum (fourth stomach) of cattle. It’s almost identical to the equivalent parasite in sheep, and was for some time thought to be the very same species. Heavy infestation with the worm leads to destruction of the glands in the stomach wall, impaired digestive capability and leakage of protein from the blood into the digestive tract. The resulting symptoms are pronounced weight loss and diarrhoea, most commonly seen in first season grazing cattle aged seven to fifteen months. With a well managed first grazing season, cattle will develop a good natural immunity to this parasite, meaning that in subsequent seasons it is unlikely to be production limiting and treatment for it should be unnecessary. Immunity is strengthened after further exposure to the parasite in the second season.

Keeping low stocking densities and grazing fresh lays in spring can naturally reduce the chances of first season grazers being clinically affected. However, this is not always possible and as such, we sometimes have to use wormers in conjunction with pasture management to control the parasite in young animals (pulse release boluses, for example). One of the key principles of controlling this worm is that treatment *early* in the season will *reduce* the peak pasture contamination later in the year. Devise a control plan with your vet to address the risk of this parasite affecting your farm’s productivity! As always, faecal egg counting (among other tests) can help us assess the situation in your stock.

Cattle that have a high **Ostertagia** burden in the late Autumn can also suffer a second ‘Type II’ form of the disease; the worm larvae ‘hibernate’ in the glands of the abomasum over winter and then re-emerge en mass in the spring, often with dramatic consequences for the animal. Treatment at housing can prevent this; however, not all worming products will kill the worm in this state - speak to your vet for advice on this. Ideally, good control over the summer will prevent such numbers from being present at this time of year!

**Lungworm (Dictyocaulus viviparus)** is another major player in the parasite world, especially when we are talking about first season grazers. The adult worm lives in the bronchioles of the lungs and causes the characteristic ‘husk’ or ‘hoose’ presentation. Outstretched necks and frequent dry coughing heard from the animals are indicative of this parasite. It’s definitely one to avoid, as the onset of
visible signs suggest that the disease is already very well established in the animal, and the prognosis in heavily infected animals can be poor. As with *Ostertagia*, a well-managed first season will set the them up with a strong immunity for life. However, don’t be fooled into thinking that lungworm cannot affect adult cattle; the build up of natural immunity relies on the animal having been exposed to the worm in manageable quantities during the grazing season, so older cattle which, for whatever reason, have never come into contact with the parasite are just as susceptible to the disease as first season grazers.

This parasite is unique in the respect that there is a licensed vaccine against it, (Huskvac) which is extremely effective and, provided that cattle continue to be exposed to the lungworm parasite naturally, should set them up for life. For some people, production issues made it difficult to get hold of the vaccine this spring. In cases like these, as with *Ostertagia*, strategic worming and pasture management can be used to control the parasite.

Finally, a short note on fluke is in order. This is a topic of its own and you should speak to your vet to devise a control plan. While this parasite traditionally causes problems in the autumn, be aware that we may well see it rearing its head early this year owing to the mild, wet winter we have experienced. As such, you might consider bringing your treatment forward, as the damaging larval stages of the parasite could be present in your stock earlier than normal.

If you have questions about worming, or would like to buy worming products please speak to our SQPs, Barry and Rachel, or any of the farm vets.

Organic Column
Alternative Forages

Many thanks again to Henry Edmunds and Cholderton Estate for hosting a very successful farm walk on 11 June. Thank you also to Mike Hardcastle from Dairy Co and Ian Wilkinson from Cotswolds Seeds for sponsoring the event. We enjoyed a great turnout, great demonstrations and presentations from Henry and Ian, engaged weather and a delicious lunch provided by Cholderton Farm Shop. Especially sainfoin, but also lucerne and vetches are still highly underrated, and it was impressive what yields and feed values can be achieved using these forages, even on low input systems. In addition to nitrogen fixing (“free fertilizer”) and the provision of good quality protein, sainfoin contains condensed tannins which make proteins less degradable in the rumen (and therefore more available in the gut) and which also have a direct anthelmintic effect, which means they can reduce the worm burden, enabling us to rely less on conventional wormers.

The day finished with a guided tour through a wildflower meadow, and Henry really showed that good forage yields (even in dry weather conditions) and conservation can go hand in hand. 

The next meeting will be announced soon.

Shock Closure of Winchester VI Centre

We were advised some time ago that as part of the reorganisation of AHVLA the Winchester VI Centre at Itchen Abbas, an excellent purpose built (at a cost of many hundreds of thousands of pounds to the tax payer - you and me!) laboratory and postmortem facility commissioned to serve the local farming community only a few years ago would close in the summer of 2015. This date has, without warning, been brought forward to 1 June 2014; postmortem examinations of farm animals are no longer being carried out at the site. (It is possible, in theory, to arrange for carcasses to be transported for examination to the VI Centre at Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk but this seems, in reality, untenable.)

We are fortunate within our farm animal team to have considerable expertise in postmortem technique including vets who have worked within the VI service. Careful case selection and a detailed postmortem examination can prove very valuable in the investigation of health issues that might affect your stock allowing a swift diagnosis to be reached on many occasions and appropriate treatment or preventative measures to be implemented on your farm to limit or prevent further loss. If you feel that such a service from one of our vets may be beneficial to you on any occasion please contact the practice in the usual way to book a visit or to speak to a vet about your options.

Upcoming Events and Opportunities

- **DairyCo Discussion Group** - the future of antibiotics in Europe, Wednesday, 6th August, Equine Hospital
- **AI course** TBC, early August, two places still available
- **Dairy Co Mastitis Control Plan** - we have secured funding to carry out the plan on two farms - farms will be selected on a first come first serve basis.

www.endellveterinarygroup.co.uk
Changes to TB Testing

All of you will be aware of the moves by AHVLA to put the provision of OV services, and particularly TB testing, out to competitive tender. This is progressing and the country has been divided into regions with interested parties being invited to tender for the provision of testing, to include clerical infrastructure, training and quality audit and assurance and contingency planning, within these areas. We now know that the testing that we currently carry out will be split between two areas. Farms with holding numbers starting with 45 (Wiltshire holdings) or 11 (Dorset holdings) will be included in area 2 (Wessex) and farms with holding numbers starting with 15 (Hampshire holdings) will be included in area 3 (the South-East).

Within area 2 the six XLVets practices (ourselves, Drove, Friars Moore, Shepton, Synergy and Tyndale) have set up a company, XLFarmcare (Wessex), of which we have a seat on the board, with a view to tender for the work in this region. Talks with other practices in the area are ongoing but progress is slow. XLFarmcare (Wessex) has decided, therefore, given that time is marching on, to prepare a tender bid alone based on three components; the cost of testing, the cost of administration, training and quality inspection and assurance and the cost of maintaining contingency capacity. All practices currently testing within the region will be offered a position as a subcontractor to XLFarmcare (Wessex), should the XLFarmcare (Wessex) bid be successful, so that they can continue to perform the testing that they currently do should they wish to.

We have been notified that any company submitting a tender bid will have a better chance of that bid being successful if it is already trading. The statutory testing previously carried out under the Endell Veterinary Group name will now move to be carried out under the XLFarmcare (Wessex) name. This will not be the case for pre-movement or other private testing. If you receive notification of a TB test becoming due stating that you should contact XLFarmcare (Wessex) to organise this please continue to contact Endells in the usual way to arrange the necessary work.

Endell's People: Hannah Bradon

Why did you get into the profession?

My childhood dream was becoming a farmer and I spent a lot of time in my wellies! This led me to aspirations of becoming a farm animal vet in my early teens. I have always been an outdoorsy type and enjoyed all of my veterinary work experience placements whilst at school. Once I had my mind set on this career I couldn't think of any other job I would rather be doing - and I still feel that way!

Where have you worked before?

This is my first veterinary job since qualifying from university. Previous jobs before my student days include working on a hobby farm, coffee shop assistant, supervisor in the co-op and a dance teacher!

What is the most amusing thing that has happened to you on farm?

This was probably an occasion during my university farm elective on a routine fertility visit where I stepped backwards, slipped on a dirty, lube-covered rectal glove on the floor and one leg fell between concrete slurry drainage slats that happened to be the exact same width as my leg. I was wedged with one leg stuck halfway up my thigh, other leg splayed on the concrete and hit my chin and wrists on the way down! The farmer came to try and lift me out and mused “Well nobody's ever done that before”.

What do you do with your spare time?

When I am not at work I can be found hanging from a climbing wall or running around the hockey pitch. I am at my happiest hiking up a mountain, though since moving 'Down South' the lack of hills has made this difficult!

Pepsi or cola? Cola

Football or rugby? Having both Welsh and Scottish blood in me I have to say Rugby!

Fruit or Veg? Fruit

Cheese and Onion or Salt and Vinegar? Salt and vinegar

Cats or Dogs? Rabbits!

Disbuds or dehorns? Either, although I do find dehorns extremely satisfying!

Skoda or Volvo? Skoda
Other News

Goodbye...
It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to Katy Dalton, who has decided not to return after her maternity leave. After four years of service for the practice she will be greatly missed by clients and colleagues alike. We wish her and her family all the best for the future.

Congratulations!
Congratulations go to Jim who has now signed into the partnership (as well as signing away his life’s savings), which means the farm department now has two partners. After successfully completing his Diploma in Cattle Health and Production, getting married, becoming a dad, buying a house and joining the partnership all within two years, we are wondering what his next move will be!

Sporting Success
For those of you who don’t know (which I suspect is few as she talks of little else) Jo recently took part in the UK Ironman 70.3 triathlon, completing it in a lightening time of 5 hours and 56 minutes despite a puncture on the bike leg. The race took place in Exmoor consisting of a 1.2 mile lake swim, followed by a 56 mile hilly bike and 13.1 mile run. Watch this space for her next challenge...