Burrenvets Newsletter

Bringing farmers evidence based knowledge on improving your herd health, welfare and production.

Photosensitization

Photosensitisation occurs when accumulation of photoreactive agents beneath the skin results in skin becoming ill affected by sunlight. Photosensitivity is not the same as sunburn because with the latter the skin damage is independent of these agents.

Photosensitisation is either a primary condition following ingestion of photodynamic agents from plants commonly St. John's wort. Or a result when these substances are produced by the body itself due to a rare, congenital disease in the metabolism of blood pigment.

Most common though is secondary photosensitisation due to liver damage. Bile excretion is disturbed resulting in retention of the photosensitising agent phylloerythrin. Phylloerythrin builds up in the blood and increases under the skin where it will be activated by light. The initial liver damage can have varies causes and is worsened by Liver Fluke. One of these causes is ingestion of Ragwort in silage even as long as 4-6 months earlier.

Animals with photo sensitisation show swelling and redness on the nose, teats, vulva and non-pigmented skin. Swelling can cause the ears to droop and eyes to close. Some animals look for ease in rivers and shade. The affected skin may ooze serum or bleed. During the later stages, the affected skin becomes dry and sloughs off.

Animals must be housed in the darkest building to prevent further exposure to light. Treatments are symptomatic and depend on severity, stage and whether the animal is in calf. Anti inflammatories, painkillers and antibiotics can all be used.

In the case of primary liver damage caused by Ragwort other symptoms can be seen too. Clinical signs are: diarrhea, tenesmus (unnecessary forcing on empty rectum), colic, weakness, weight loss, oedema, jaundice and nervous system abnormalities. Unfortunately when animals display these signs it is almost always fatal.

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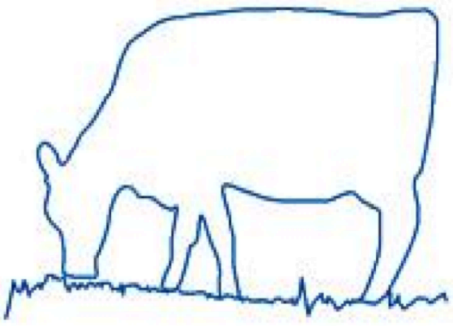

Health Calendar July, August, September

Calves

- Booster with blackleg vaccine all calves according to product directions, generally 4-6 weeks after first dose and in August.
- Start worm dosing suckler calves now and follow dosing plan.

  Or choose to dose only when needed. To do this you have to monitor weight gain and take 8 fresh, dung samples of calves. We can send these of to the lab to get worm egg count done (*see newsletter April 2012*).

Burrenvets is now at Facebook

Yearlings

- Monitor weight gain and/ or take dung samples and worm dose accordingly
- Flycontrol in heifers and dry cows prevent summer mastitis.

Cows

- Monitor infectious diseases in bulk milk 2nd annual screen.
- Booster vaccine Bovivac S, 3-4 weeks before drying off to reduce abortions due to Salmonella.

We have a **new scanner** which is accurate, light and works on a battery therefor we can scan on out places without mains electricity. Early scanning from 35 days pregnancy onwards will help deciding which cows can stay and which cows will not, conserving feeding and tighten calving season next year.

Would you like to know how you could improve your mastitis control? Learn how at a CellCheck Farmer Workshop. These workshops are run by teams of CellCheck service providers, who are trained by Animal Health Ireland. Every team will combine the expertise of a farm advisor, a vet, a milking machine technician and a co-op milk quality advisor. Cost of the workshop is €30. If you are interested let me know 0657084019.

Major mineral Magnesium and Trace element Iodine deficiency

Magnesium (Mg) deficiency is the cause of "grass tetany" or "staggers". At first the cow walks uncoordinated but soon she will go down, thrashing and looking anxious. It is a rapid, deadly illness sometimes even after a quick responds of farmer and vet. It is mostly seen in spring and autumn because fast growing grass is low in Mg, but also because fresh grass passes the cows digestion system rapidly and bad weather reduces the feed intake. Adding a fibre such as hay or straw reduces the rate of passage of leafy grass that way increasing Mg absorption. Lastly the stress of weaning is a trigger and restricted feeding at drying off increases the risk of tetany and therefor cows diet should not be changed.

Magnesium can be supplemented in many ways; in pasture nuts (this will be enough when fed 1-2 kg daily), dusting of pastures with calcined magnesite, Mg added daily to the drinkwater (Flowmag) or Mg boluses (Optimag 3).

Research by Teagasc found that Iodine deficiency is most prevalent (69%), followed by Copper(19%) and Selenium (11%). The status is worse at the end of autumn and in beef cattle. Iodine deficiency results in fertility problems i.e. cows not coming into heat, early embryotic deaths and abortions. Although infertility has many causes, a mineral deficiency should not be overlooked. Bloods tested for I, Cu and Se will reveal your cows' mineral status.