FriarsMoor
Livestock Health

Newsletter
April 2024

BENCHMARKING HEIFER PERFORMANCE

By John Walsh

Recently we have been using a new benchmarking tool to assess how the dairy farms we look after are performing. One metric we have benchmarked, is age at first calving for heifers. This average can give an indication of heifer breeding efficiency and overall management of heifers within your herd. This metric is also commonly used by milk buyers to assess herd performance.

There are many benefits of achieving age at first calving targets and include: lower rearing costs per heifer, fewer heifers needed to be kept on the farm at one time, improved fertility, improved lifetime production and lower culling rates.

As with any average, age at first calving may be a true representative of a herds heifer breeding efficiency, but it can also hide areas of management that may not be optimal. For example, you may have a large spread of ages with some very young heifers and older heifers contributing to the average. Therefore, this figure may look good but heifer performance may not be optimal.

The average also doesn't take into account target weight at first service and calving – the risk of focusing on age at first calving is that it can sometimes compromise the performance of those animals because they've calved younger but might be below weight at first calving. This will have an impact on production and potentially survivability. It's very important when calving at around 24 months that you're hitting target weights right the way through the process, at service and when calving.

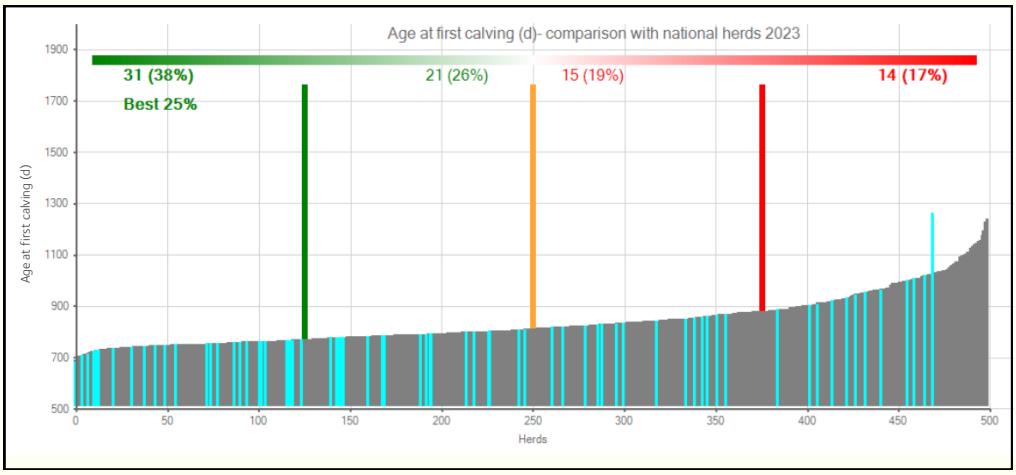

Fig 1. Shows how the herds we look after (in blue) are performing compared to national figures (in grey).

We have benchmarked our herds compared to national averages (see Fig. 1) If you want to know how your herd is performing, please speak to either your clinical vet or to one of our specialist youngstock vets.

These are several reasons that animals are not hitting the target age at first calving. These can be down to farmers choosing to breed animals at a certain age, poor growth rates, poor fertility or fertility management, high disease incidence or nutritional issues. Our specialist young stock vets will start by looking at the age of first calving as a guide to overall performance, but they will also assess how heifers are performing with target weights through to calving, how these animals are milking in their first lactation, how many heifers reach their second calving and heifer breeding performance. If you would like a visit to assess your heifer management please give us a call.

ROMANIAN MASTERING MEDICINES

11AM-2PM

This is a great opportunity to increase the knowledge and skill set of your wider team, who may previously not have had many options of courses that they could attend. It will cover identification and treatment of common conditions in both adult and young stock.

TUES
9
APRIL
2024

Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

A new consultation has opened on future wildlife control and Bovine Tuberculosis.

Follow the link to record your views:

https://consult.defra.gov.uk/bovine-tb/bovine-tb-consultation-wildlife-cattle/

NEW BUILD UPDATE

We are very excited to to see the inside of our building coming together! Follow our socials for regular video updates.

FriarsMoor Livestock Health

zoetis

SUBSIDISED MASTITIS INVESTIGATION

£70 of funding per farm is currently available from Zoetis to undertake some mastitis work on farm.

Areas that could be considered:

- SCC data
- Bactoscan
- Environmental control of mastitis
- Milking parlour routine

This funding can be used alongside animal health and pathway money. Available during April only. Kindly supported by Zoetis.

To sign up for a visit please get in touch with Eleanor via the farm office on 01258472314 or email us at farmoffice@friarsmoorlivestockhealth.co.uk

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

12 APR

FOOT TRIMMING COURSE

Friday 12th April, time TBC. One day foot trimming refresher/ foot first aid course. Location on farm - TBC.

24 APR

SHEEP PRACTICAL WORM EGG COUNT

Wednesday 24th April, 10am-1pm @ Friars Moor Sturminster Branch. An introduction into worm egg counting – worm identification, kit used and a chance to have a go. Will also include practical advice on pasture rotation, product usage and preventing wormer resistance. £100 inc VAT (25% discount for youngstock group members). To include the price of 2 quality control checks when you are doing this on your farm.

30 APR

CATTLE PRACTICAL WORM EGG COUNT

Tuesday 30th April, 10am-1pm @ Friars Moor Sturminster Branch. An introduction into worm egg counting – worm identification, kit used and a chance to have a go. Will also include practical advice on pasture rotation, product usage and preventing wormer resistance. £100 inc VAT (25% discount for youngstock group members). To include the price of 2 quality control checks when you are doing this on your farm.

7 MAY

POLISH MASTERING MEDICINES

Tuesday 7th May, 11am-2pm @ Friars Moor Sturminster branch. This is a great opportunity to increase the knowledge and skill set of your wider team, who may previously not have had many options of courses that they could attend. It will cover identification and treatment of common conditions in both adult and young stock.

9 MAY

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO LAMENESS MANAGEMENT

Thursday 9th May @ FMLH Closworth branch, Hamish's Farm Shop, BA22 9RF. 6:30pm for arrival and drinks with 7pm start, followed by food. To discuss the diseases causing lameness and how we manage them on farm. With Guest speaker James Wilson.

To book on our courses please contact the farm office on 01258472314 or sign up via our website.