



THE CHALLENGES OF DROUGHT

By Alice Miller
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We share your concerns as we continue to experience extraordinary drought conditions across the UK. The Met Office reported an average rainfall of only 15.8 mm (0.6 in) across

England for this last month, making it the second driest July since records began in 1836. This is just 24% of the total rainfall that is expected for an average July. Many grass fields are looking barren as growth has reduced, or completely stopped. This presents worrying challenges for all livestock keepers who are figuring out how best to support the nutritional requirements of their flocks and herds.

It is important to also consider that animals with limited feed sources will be forced to forage for alternatives. If animals have no other option they will eat from unsuitable hedgerows, ditches and verges, where ordinarily they would leave these often-unpalatable plants alone. As a result, it is not uncommon to see problems due to plant poisonings.

Many are already buffer feeding to mitigate for the low volume and lack of nutritional value in the grass. Hopefully with good early cut forage available there are options other than drawing out insufficient grazing. It is important to discuss your flock and herd requirements with your nutritionist first. One of the biggest concerns is ensuring there are enough supplies to see you through the winter, so, it is vital to forward plan now. When increasing concentrate levels, it is important to only feed what is required as a supplement or instead it ends up as an expensive substitute. For example, when concentrates are fed and grass is still available, cows will eat less grass, so the grass quality will just deteriorate if too high a residual is left. It is also important to monitor for signs of acidosis. Prevent acidosis by avoiding sudden dietary changes and by limiting the volume of concentrates fed at once.

It is important to monitor production to establish the impact the drought is having on your herd and flock. Regular body condition scoring of adult animals and regular weighing of youngstock, and animals intended for breeding or finishing will help establish growth rate trends. We can also take blood samples to quantify the nutritional status of animals. It is important to mitigate these losses sooner rather than later, since the knock-on effects can be long lasting. It takes much longer for animals to regain weight, compared

to when they quickly lose it. Nutritional stress will reduce milk yields and impact animal health and fertility. We see an increased number of cystic cows as well as seeing reduced cyclicity. Cattle and sheep in poor BCS will not have good conception rates at re-breeding so it could be worth considering early weaning or supplementary feeding of lambs and calves to ensure they have enough time to recover. If heifers are not meeting body weight targets for breeding, not only will there be economic impacts due to extended rearing times, but they will be older by the time they calve in. Dairy heifers who calve in over two years of age have a lower lifetime yield, poorer fertility and lower survivability potential.

We are more than happy to help advise you further, but it is also important to remember you are not alone in this, and if you wish to discuss financial or mental health support both the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) and the Farming Community Network (FCN) are great places to start.

UDDER HEALTH SURVEY - HELP US HELP YOU!

Take part in the Udder Health survey to **help us better understand your approach to udder health management**. With your help we can work with you to develop a tailored plan to address your needs. **Remember to name us as your vet practice before hitting submit** so we can see your responses, For every survey submitted a donation will be made to the Farming Community Network.

Use this link to access the survey or find it on our website under 'news': www.surveymonkey.com/r/99Y9PQB

The Farming Community Network support farmers and members of the farming community in times of difficulty. Whether the issue is personal or business-related, FCN can support you via their confidential e-helpline help@fcn.org.uk, or national telephone helpline **(03000 111 999)** which is open every day of the year from 7am to 11pm. Their volunteers provide free, confidential and practical support to anyone who seeks help, find out more here [fcn.org.uk](https://www.fcn.org.uk).

DRUGS UPDATE:

Spirovac - Unfortunately we are unable to get 25 dose packs at the moment, we can only get 5 dose packs.

#FUTUREPROOFYOURFARM

zoetis



REGENERATIVE FARMING PRACTICAL COMPOSTING ON FARM

Thursday 11th August 2022 - FREE OF CHARGE

Arrive 10:30am for tea/coffee, 11am start, 2pm finish

Mount Pleasant Farm, Woolland, DT11 0EX

Lunch will be provided, please RSVP to the office on 01258472314 or by email to let us know if you would like to attend and if you have any special dietary requirements.



SMALLHOLDERS MEMBERSHIP

We are excited to be launching our new smallholders club. You can sign up as a member to include the following benefits:

- £50/year
- 4 faecal worm egg counts
- 4 meetings
- 10% off all VPS products
- Access to our members What'sApp group
- Sign up to receive our monthly newsletter

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:



3 day AI Training course

Friday 23rd, Monday 26th and Friday 30th September. £500 incl. VAT. **Day 1 at Friars Moor, Sturminster Newton. Day 2 & 3 Leweston Farm.**



Smallholder's Club Meeting - Flock husbandry and health, including pre-tupping checks.

Thursday 29th September. Free to members or £10 to non-members. **Venue: Spring House, Maperton, Wincanton, Somerset, BA9 8EH.**

More information on our courses can be found on our website at www.friarsmoorvets.co.uk/calendar/



#ColostrumIsGold

This autumn we are running a second 'Colostrum is Gold' campaign after the success in Spring. We have funding to blood test up to 10 calves per farm this autumn. We are looking at Total Protein levels to indicate the success of passive transfer of maternally-derived antibodies from colostrum to calf. Calves need to be between 1 and 7 days old to test and sampling will be free of charge.

A meeting to discuss the findings will be run after the results have been analysed. If you are interested in joining the campaign, please contact Becca or Lucy at the practice to arrange a visit.

Available dates:

Friday 12th August & Tuesday 30th August

STAFF NEWS:

We are delighted to welcome Anais Leboucq to our team!, you may have seen her out and about already! Congratulations to Anais who has recently graduated from Dublin vet school and will be joining us to start her RVC internship.

We also welcome Fiona House, who is joining our office team!

