FriarsMoor Livestock Health

Newsletter

October 2024

PRECISION FARMING

By Bogdan Butnaru MRCVS

Given the current economic climate and the climate change it has never been a better time to be introduced to the concept of precision livestock farming (PLF). To start with the whole concept can be quite intriguing. So, after doing a bit more research and having participated in a few meetings on the subject I discovered a whole lot of very useful information about how farms can use PLF to gather livestock data, which can be fed back into the business to generate or to save money. What intrigued me is the word precision. The more I learnt about it, I started to look at how farms can operate with more precision, enhancing what they are already doing to maximize the profit, help with the labour shortage, the climate change and how vets can add value.

The challenge for dairy farms in general is to achieve the best possible standards of animal health and welfare, together with high lactation performance and minimal environmental impact. For larger farms, this may need to be done with a much lower ratio of husbandry staff to animals. Recent engineering advances and the decreasing cost of electronic technologies has allowed the development of 'sensing solutions' that automatically collect data, such as physiological parameters, production measures and behavioural traits. Such data can potentially help the decision-making process, enabling early detection of health or wellbeing problems in individual animals and hence the application of appropriate corrective husbandry practices.

Precision livestock farming is an opportunity for farms to put these new technologies to good use. There are a lot of technologies available now from cow monitoring systems (ear and neck tags, intraruminal devices & pedometers) which give very accurate data about the health, reproduction and feeding of the animals to large scale automation systems (robot milking, ventilation fans, robotic manure collection, automated feed pusher & herd vision). And that`s just a few examples.

Good news is that access to grants can significantly ease the financial burden of adopting new technologies in precision livestock farming. The farming and equipment grant for 2024 is closed now but there is hope it is going to open again in the spring of 2025.

Recently few of our farms have implemented GEA cowscout neck tags which gives data on heat detection health monitoring and cow position.

Andy Roberts at Higher Farm in Margaret Marsh who fitted the GEA cowscout in the spring of 2024 said: "Using the collars & segregation gate has eliminated the need for scratchcards and also significantly reduced the time our dairyman spends on drafting bulling cows during milking".

But PLF is not only about using the newest technologies. Faecal egg count to monitor the worm burden, applying the right vaccines at the right time, good youngstock management, a good diet and accurate feeding to yield, good pasture management with incorporating of herbal leys to boost livestock health, soil fertility and encourage biodiversity, are all part of the precision livestock farming.

Fine-tuning and enhancing attention to detail in precision livestock farming (PLF) can lead to better animal welfare, improved productivity, and more sustainable practices.

NEW BUILD UPDATE

The anticipation and excitement is increasing as we fast approach the take over date for the new building.

We hope to take over the building on 21st October and once the furnishing is complete we will be announcing a grand opening day that you will all be invited to.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

5 NOV

FIRST AID FOR FEET COURSE

This Lantra approved course will cover foot dissection, tool kit requirements & treatment protocols.

6-7 NOV

TOTAL DAIRY CONFERENCE

19 NOV

MASTERING MEDICINES

10am to 1pm. Location TBC

11 DEC

MILKSURE

11am to 2pm. Location TBC

TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST FOR UPCOMING MEETINGS PLEASE CALL THE FARM OFFICE ON 01258 472314

STAFF NEWS:

We would like to wish a warm welcome to Andrea Batho who joined the office team this month.

We are extremely proud of Marianna, our Vet Tech who recently graduated from Harper Adams University as the very first Vet Tech with a Vet Tech Diploma.

We said goodbye to Eleanor for a little while as she begins her maternity leave.

FriarsMoor Livestock Health

In collaboration with GVS Goat Veterinary Society

Dairy Sheep & Goat Conference

27th & 28th January 2025

Scan the QR code for our secure online registration to the Dairy Sheep & Goat Conference

Blue Tongue Update

There are now 3 vaccines available for BTV-3. All are available through us on a general licence. All unused vaccines should be returned to the practice. As of this week we are not in a restricted area but parts of Hampshire are. All suspect cases should be reported for investigation. Please speak to one of the vets for more information on clinical signs or to discuss the vaccines as there may be different dosing regimes for sheep and cattle. We will have a bluetongue vaccination round for small numbers of doses.

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