FriarsMoor Livestock Health

Newsletter
September 2023

ENVIRONMENTAL MASTITIS

By Eleanor Livingstone BVSc MRCVS

During the summer months we have seen more cases of environmental mastitis than we do in some years, undoubtedly in part due to the bizarre weather we have had recently. These cases have presented as both clinical cases and increased SCC.

When considering mastitis as a whole we must consider whether the origin is environmental or contagious (typically contagious mastitis has a less clear seasonal pattern, it is spread in the parlour with little seasonal variation). Environmental mastitis can be further broken down into lactational or dry period (DP) origin, with DP origin being defined as occurring within the first 30 days after calving and lactational origin being 1 month from calving onwards. These definitions apply to both clinical and subclinical (high SCC) cases.

What can we do about environmental mastitis?

The environment:

- Historically people may have discussed increased prevalence during the months of winter housing. On some farms this is still true with cubicle management being vital for successful management during the winter and for all year round housed herds. Passageways should be scraped 2x daily, the backs of beds should be cleaned off 2x daily and depending on the bedding type new bedding should be applied frequently. Considering the use of Lime may help in some herds but beware of the drying nature of the substance and the risk of sore teats.
- Summer grazing management can have an impact. Aspects to consider include; the stocking density, how long do cattle stay in one field before moving on, how many days rest does pasture receive before cattle return to it, is there any capacity for back fencing, what condition are gateways and troughs in and can this be improved upon. In very hot weather animals will often huddle under the shade of a tree or hedge but this can in turn lead to higher than expected contamination on one area of ground. To decrease bacterial contamination it is recommended that pasture is rested for 3-4 weeks before animals return to graze it again.
- Fly control is an important aspect to consider especially in hot weather where huddling occurs.

The Parlour:

- Premilking teat disinfection and stripping of cows is the most important tool against environmental mastitis within the parlour. Spraying or dipping cows with a teat disinfectant and allowing it 30 seconds of contact time is recommended to decrease the bacterial contamination on all teats, even those that look visibly clean. A robust milking routine also helps to stimulation and milk let down.
- Exactly which pre milking chemical to use is a matter of personal choice but Iodine, Chlorhexidine and Lactic Acid are all recommended.
- Wiping the teats dry with paper towel or a hygienically maintained udder cloth is vital to decrease liner slip, improve hygiene and for cow comfort.
- Dry wiping is not recommended as it has no antibacterial properties.

We regularly conduct mastitis audits on farm, discussing environmental factors and assessing milking routine and success of teat disinfection. The funding from the DEFRA animal health and welfare pathway could be used towards a mastitis investigation on your farm. Please contact the practice for more details.

NEW BUILD UPDATE

Here is a CGI update of the new build, which some of you may have seen at the Gillingham and Shaftesbury show! We are hopeful that the building will start very shortly.

We will be at this years Royal Bath & West Dairy Show and will hopefully have some more updates to share with you!

BULL FOOT TRIMMING

Autumn calvers: getting your bulls ready for serving

With only a few months before the start of the autumn service period, checking that your bulls are fit for service would be very timely in September and October.

Combining foot trimming with bull fertility testing provides a great opportunity to give your bulls a complete MOT. It also allows us to use the foot trimmers crushes' for the procedure, which allows the bull to be contained comfortably and safely and makes the procedure very efficient.

Testing and trimming the bulls two months before they are to be used, gives sufficient time for the feet to recover if lesions are found and for new bulls to be purchased if they are found to be sub or infertile.

Please ring the practice to book this in.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

22 SEPT

MILKSURE COURSE

The course focusses on how medicines are used on dairy farms and how increasing awareness of medicines usage can reduce antibiotic usage and decrease the risk of bulk tank failures. Part one location TBC and part two on your own farm with your own vet. Friday 22nd September @ 11am. Cost is £75 + VAT.

22 SEPT

SMALLHOLDERS MEETING

Join us for a farm walk at their goat dairy to learn more about what they do, their goat ice cream, and common goat husbandry issues that you may see in your goats. Friday 22nd September, 6pm start. Kindly hosted by Richard and Sophie. Address on RSVP. Cost will be £10 to non-members. Please bring clean wellies. RSVP to the practice.

25 SEPT

AI COURSE

This is a three-day training course, which consists of one theory training day followed by two practical training days. DAY 1: Theory day 25 September @ Friars Moor Sturminster Newton branch - 10am-2:30pm, lunch included DAY 2: Practical 28th September @ Longmoor with Kate H - 10:30am start DAY 3: Practical 3rd October @ TBC with John - 10.30am start. Cost is £500 + VAT.

13 OCT

YOUNGSTOCK DISCUSSION GROUP

Feeding the weaned dairy heifer: fundamentals and new development. Join us for an on-farm discussion with Lyn Smith, Ruminant Technical Support TBA. Friday 13th October @ 11-2pm Venue - TBC. Lunch is provided. Any dietary requirements – let us know. Please send details of concentrates currently being fed pre and post weaning to Lucy ahead of the meeting. Please wear clean wellies. Non youngstock group members are very welcome - £10 per person.

TBC

CALF REARING LEVEL 2

To register your interest for our Level 2 Calf rearing course please contact the farm office and we will add you to our list! Winter, date and time to be confirmed. This course is for those with experience of rearing calves who are looking to advance their knowledge to improve their rearing success.