

St David's Farm Newsletter

June 2007



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St David's secure DEFRA funding for Farm Health Planning project

DEFRA recently made money available through the Cattle Initiative for projects to promote active farm health planning. St David's bid is one of just 27 projects across England to be successful in securing funding.

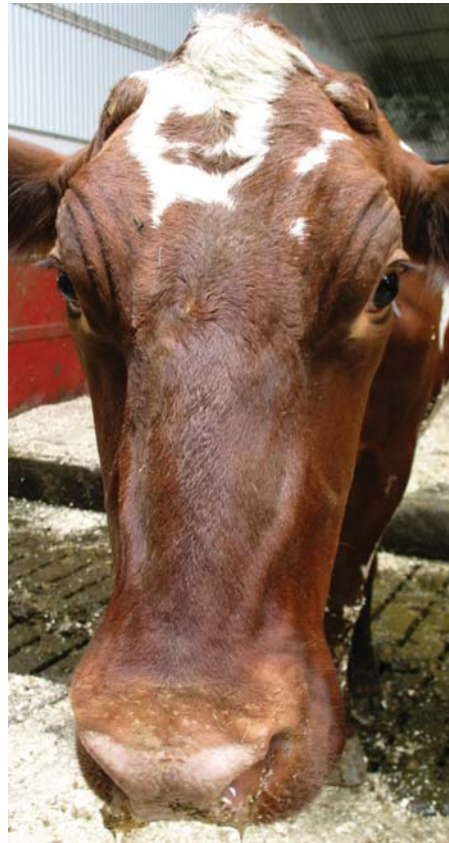
Aims of Farm Health Planning

The aim of all the projects is to show the benefits of health planning in terms of healthy animals and profits, to raise awareness of these benefits through communication and training, and to create advocates of this active approach within the industry.

St David's project

Along with various meetings and publicity the backbone of our project involves enrolling as many clients as

possible onto the active health plans where a baseline profile of your herd will be carried out and a plan made to meet various targets for health and productivity.



What will enrolment involve?

- An initial veterinary consultation to assess record keeping, health status, disease issues and costs and set targets for improvement.
- A baseline disease assessment on farms where this is not known.
- Production of an active health plan towards meeting these targets.
- A six monthly review to assess progress and review targets.

Look out for forthcoming meetings

The specific details of the St David's project will be launched in a series of forthcoming meetings. Here we will provide a background to the benefits of active health planning as a whole and explain more fully what enrolment in the project will involve for you.

We hope to have all of our clients enrolled – it really will be to your benefit. So watch out for details. Further information about the other cattle initiative projects can be found at www.defra.gov/fhp/species/cattle/cattle-initiative.htm.

Formalin to be banned

For those of you who don't already know, it's true... Formalin is to be formally banned.

Companies selling the product have six months to sell their existing stocks and farmers then have 12 months to use up

on-farm stocks. After this, it will be illegal to use or store Formalin on-farm.

The date from which this becomes effective, however, is yet to be announced. For further details and updates please visit:

www.pesticides.gov.uk/approvals.asp?id=2102.

If you wish to learn of footbathing using alternatives to formalin, we will be happy to discuss this at our next visit.

Alternatively, if you speak to Jayne in the St David's office, she will send you a footbathing protocol which has been devised by our vets.



Pneumonia – catch it early

We have witnessed a number of pneumonia outbreaks recently.

These have most likely been due to the changeable weather conditions.

However, there does appear to be an important common factor in the post-mortem findings. Although the calves are reported to have been ill for only a matter of days, or even hours, upon examination the lungs have been found to contain long-term abscessation as well as signs of well-established lung damage.

The take-home message... watch for those early signs. The calf that hangs

back just that little bit at feeding time should have its temperature taken immediately and, if required, be treated with both antibiotics and anti-inflammatories. The later into the disease the animal progresses, the less effect you will see from antibiotics.

If you are having problems with pneumonia, the best way to obtain a diagnosis is by submitting a dead calf to the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA). The specimens that are most likely to provide us with a diagnosis are animals that have been ill for a fairly short time and have not had antibiotic treatment. Animals that have been ill for weeks and have had numerous treatments are less likely to show the presence of the causative agent due to the high level of secondary bacterial invasion.

Please, please, please remember that no amount of antibiotics are a substitute for good husbandry and high standards of cleanliness.

There are a number of pneumonia vaccines available in order to help you overcome high levels of infection but, again, these products are an aid only and cannot by themselves eradicate infection if the husbandry is not satisfactory.

We recommend that, before choosing a vaccine, some investigation is undertaken to determine the initial causative agents. This way, the most appropriate vaccine can then be administered.

Sally Wilson MRCVS
Tel: 07920 496251

Pre-movement TB testing

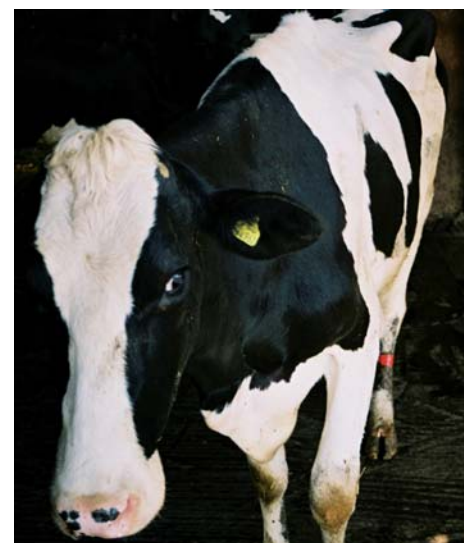
This has become a regular feature of our day recently – and is likely to become even more so!

In order to keep your costs to a minimum, we urge you to plan ahead when considering which animals need testing.

The additional paperwork that our vets are required to carry out after completion of the test means that we must bill a

visit charge plus minimum time of 20 minutes at both visits. It is therefore in your interest to organise as many animals as possible for each test.

Remember that the test remains current for 60 days after the day of reading; therefore you have 60 days in which to move the animals. Thus two batches of animals could be tested together, with one batch being sold immediately and the second batch six – eight weeks later. This would obviously halve the visit charges.



What's it worth? Grazing sampling results – May 07

The results for May show a downturn in energy (11.4ME vs 12.8ME) and a slight increase in protein (22.3% vs 21.6%) against April.

For cows eating 60kgs fresh weight of grass, this equates to a 14.7 ME shortfall – a two litre per cow per day deficit compared to April's excellent conditions. The similar, but slightly improved protein figure means that in many cases, this yield drop hasn't materialised in the bulk tank as the protein has continued to drive production. This suggests a potentially more worrying scenario – that the 14.7 ME shortfall could instead equate to nearly 0.5kg of weight loss per cow per day.

Assuming 60kgs intake, on these average results would provide

	DM %	ME (MJ/kg)	CP %	Sugars % fresh
Devon	18.4	11.4	20.8	1.6
Somerset	17.9	11.5	21.8	1.3
Dorset	18.2	11.7	26.4	1.1
Cornwall	15.4	10.8	20.2	1.2
Average	17.5	11.4	22.3	1.3
07 season average	17.6	12.1	22	–



Charlie King, Three Counties Feeds

Maintenance +10 litres in energy terms from grazing. It's surprising how many

people expect double this. On a good day it may be fair to allow for a few more litres from grass but relying on 20 litres a day as an ongoing basis for a ration is over optimistic.

The protein in the grass may well drive production, kidding you into thinking the goodness is there, but keep an eye on cow condition, especially on those fresh calvers.

Phil's article (Don't milk the grass) presents some good practical advice towards bridging the energy gap these results suggest.

Charlie King – Three Counties Feeds
Tel: 07917 203790

Don't milk the grass

Feeding dairy cows at Spring turnout does not have to be complicated. By putting good practical measures in place it can be very rewarding, even in the present climate.

For many dairy farmers there is an increasing need to buffer feed the milking herd at grazing to maintain milk production, milk quality and cow condition. From mid-Summer onwards limited forage intake will affect all of these; grass can be very inconsistent on a daily basis as dry matter will vary dramatically on rainy days.

To help maximize DMI clamped grass, maize and whole crop silages are the ideal buffer forages; the latter two probably would affect milk quality most as they will slow down rumen function to maximize the utilization of the protein from grazed grass. Course hay and

chopped straw also offer good effective fibre if other forage is not available.

It is not always possible to offer these forages throughout the day, but routine is the answer. To maximise intake the forages should be offered late afternoon or post milking. This will also reduce the associated workload. On wet days, where intake would be affected, forages should be made more available. Possibly on an ad-lib basis; more so in late summer and early autumn when grass quality will not be at its best.

Trough space is also a major factor as heifers will tend to get pushed out. Ideally allow two feet per cow so that all of the milking herd can feed at once. If concentrate/blend is also offered, then trough space is more important to make sure all cows get their correct amounts.

To help maintain butterfat and milk yield at grass try to avoid high levels of the following:

- Compound feeds in the parlour
- High starch feeds

- Wet grains
- High oil content
- Low fibre grass silage

Protein levels at grass can also vary on a weekly basis; levels can be higher than 25% on good growing days where grazing is kept at a restricted height. This is where blood/milk urea levels increase – buffer feeding can help to utilize the excess protein as discussed above. Maize and wholecrops are a popular choice – they are palatable, and with the starch inclusion at 20 – 30%, and at around 8 – 9% protein, they make ideal buffer feeds. Good levels of UDP (undegradable protein) will balance grazing as it can be utilised better by the cow. This can be very effective, helping to maintain body condition and also goes a long way to help stopping the faeces shooting through the eye of a needle!

Hopefully the above are useful practical feeding ideas that make life easier for looking after man and the beast!

Phil Stoneman – Three Counties Feeds
Tel: 07887537509

Devon County Show

This year was the first time St David's Farm Practice attended the Devon County. We all thoroughly enjoyed it and we would like to thank all those clients who called in to say hello!

The winners of our quiz were drawn from the all those that got all ten

questions right. Congratulations to **John Quick of Quantock Farm, West Monkton** who won first prize of £100 non-prescription drugs/products. Our runner-up was **Carol Pledge of Summer Farm, Witheridge...** enjoy your champagne, Carol and don't drink it all at once!!!

We look forward to seeing you all again at The Dairy Show at Shepton Mallet in October.



Knife sharpening service

Blunt knives can longer be your excuse for lame cows!

We are now offering a hoof knife sharpening service at St David's at a special introductory price of £1 per knife (plus post and packaging if you want them returned immediately). Postage costs for a pair of standard knives is £1.49.

Please either give them to your vet wrapped up safely in a labelled bag, or post them to the practice and specify whether you need them posting back or delivering at your next vet visit.

