



St David's Farm Newsletter

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Footbathing

This summer has been particularly awful for lameness with soft feet, poached gateways and poor track surfaces.

Stone penetrations and white line lesions have been the biggest problem with severe cases on farms with usually impeccable records for lameness. The constant wet skin around the hooves and high bacteria levels in mud also make cows more susceptible to digital dermatitis and lure. With housing approaching for most people it is essential if you have not been footbathing throughout summer to start as soon as possible and prepare the cows feet for the change in environment. Starting before housing produces better results, and herds which footbath regularly during summer have lower levels of lameness.

What is not possible is to give out a standard protocol for footbathing. Every farm situation is different and the regime needs tailoring to the individual situation. Major considerations are organic versus conventional, the footbathing facilities, the predominant lesion types and the severity. This should be discussed with your vet. However, there are some good general considerations to follow.

Do you need to footbath?

If you see cows with digital dermatitis, foul in the foot, infected ulcers, slurry heel, growths between the claws or



rotted out toes then you need to start or improve your footbathing. The aim is to treat existing lesions, prevent new infections and to harden the claws.

Which animals need footbathing?

It is essential to do all the animals infected or acting as sources of infection in the herd. So, including the dry cows, the bull and the in-calf heifers in a footbathing programme is really important.

Footbath design

This is a huge topic in itself. The main advice has to be to have a system which is easy to set up and use and to think about the chemicals you are going to be using before siting the bath. It is particularly important if formalin is used to be well away from the parlour so that the fumes do not affect both humans and animals. The best advice on footbath design is the booklet produced by the MDC which can be downloaded from their website www.mdc.org.uk and follow the links to publications.

What compound?

This is where a specifically tailored regime is really important but some general guidelines are:

- When lesions are present already in the herd any regime is much more effective when an antibiotic footbath is used first. Severe cases will still require individual treatment.
- All products are more effective when the feet are clean on entry and this is best achieved by having a water bath before a treatment bath. Hosing in the parlour encourages dunging and usually upsets the cows unless it is done daily.
- Most products are more effective made up in warm, (not hot) water.
- The concentration of compound must be correct for the regime being used and at an effective level for the last cow through. Most compounds in a 200 litre bath need replacing every 200 cows, or every 48 hours – whichever is soonest.
- Many products have undergone clinical trials and been proven to be effective. These include antibiotics, formalin, copper sulphate and organic acids.

Example regime

An example regime for a conventional herd with some existing infected lesions (eg digital dermatitis, footrot and slurry heel) is given on the next page but please, please get your specific programme from your vet.

- An antibiotic footbath (eg erythrocin or lincospectin) for at least three consecutive days with individual cases picked up and treated with antibiotic spray. Milk withholds apply.
- Then use 3-4 % formalin every day for a week.
- Increase the concentration to 5 % formalin and use for 2-5 days every week thereafter depending on the degree of problem.
- Repeat antibiotic footbath if lesions start to occur again and for dry cows and heifers entering the herd.

- To reduce the use of formalin alternate weeks of 5-10 % copper sulphate could be used.
- If lesions are very well controlled the regime could be changed to a cleaning and disinfection programme using the organic acids (trialled) or possibly hypochlorite or other disinfectants like Virkon (not trialled) on a daily basis with less frequent chemical use.

In organic herds, cows with active lesions must still be treated with

antibiotics but routine use is not allowed, nor the use of formalin or excessive use of copper sulphate. Therefore prevention is better than cure. Regimes which clean and disinfect the feet daily are ideal, eg using parlour washings. Treatment regimes which use less copper sulphate are allowed for example Kling On blue, but this still needs to be done weekly for at least the first six weeks to be effective.

Emily Simcock – 07968305227

Liver fluke

This summer's weather might have been terrible for us but it has been great for flukes. This parasite is becoming more prevalent, appearing on some farms that never had a problem with it before. Time then for a reminder of the life cycle, disease and treatment of this parasite.



Life cycle

Eggs passed in faeces hatch and infect ground snails – each infected snail can produce 600 larvae capable of infecting most animals that eat them, but most significantly cattle and sheep. These larvae migrate through the gut wall to get to the liver where they tunnel through the flesh for 6-8 weeks before settling in the bile ducts. Adult fluke in the bile ducts lay eggs (up to 5000/day) which pass out in the faeces completing the cycle. How fast and prolific this cycle is depends on:

- Mud – the snails prefer wet mud. Poaching of wet ground by cattle creates ideal temporary snail habitat, boggy areas are permanent habitats.



- Temperature – usually only May to October is warm enough for egg development, but the mild winters could be extending this. Eggs that develop could be infective later into the year.
- Moisture – the past two wet summers/autumns are ideal for the life cycle of fluke.

Disease

Needless to say the migration of fluke through the liver causes serious damage – the disease depends on the time of year and level of infection:



- In the autumn through to the winter disease is caused by the immature flukes tunnelling through the liver. Disease of this kind is most often seen in sheep since cattle have a bigger liver and so can cope better, but cattle can still be affected. Signs include milk drop, lethargy, pallor, abdominal pain and

even sudden death. The time of year means that it is a major cause of sub-performance in ewes at tupping time with the associated poor fertility results.

- Chronic disease is caused when the adult flukes settle in the bile ducts of the liver so is most common in late winter and spring following a wet year. Signs are milk drop, weight loss, pallor and swelling under the jaw. Depending on the level of infection and nutritional demands placed on the animals chronic fluke can be fatal or a long term ill thrift.

Diagnosis and treatment

Diagnosis depends on the life cycle of the fluke and so the time of year.

- At this time of year blood tests are the best way to look for evidence of exposure. Blood tests detect flukes within two weeks of infection. For dairy herds bulk milk analysis give an indication of herd exposure to fluke with its likely significance, but can be insensitive if only a few animals are affected so individual blood tests could still be useful.
- In the winter and spring egg laying adults will have reached the bile ducts so we can analyse faecal samples for eggs. We can do this in the practice with the advantage of very quick results.

Treatment

Which drug is most suitable to use should be discussed with your vet because some drugs are more effective than others against young flukes, there is resistance developing, and withholds are certainly an issue in dairy cattle.

We often see problems where dosing has been miss-timed so ineffective. Here is some advice on the common drugs and our prices but please get advice from us and plan effective year round control before treating.

Endofluke 10

- Contains Triclabendazole as an oral drench. Only treats fluke not worms.
- Kills all flukes from two weeks old – this makes Triclabendazole the best drug for grazing season treatment as young flukes will be killed (see also Fasinex below).
- Some fluke are resistant to Triclabendazole, this will become more of a problem – make sure to dose for the correct weight, and in housed animals where adult fluke will be present it is best to use another drug. We can test the effectiveness of treatment with pre and post treatment tests.
- Milk withhold is two months so use in dairy cattle is limited, and impossible on organic farms. Fasinex has a shorter withhold, see below.

Fasinex 10%

- Also contains Triclabendazole as oral drench – as with Endofluke kills immature and mature flukes so best grazing season drug. Does not kill worms.

- Also resistance issues as with Endofluke.
- Has advantage that can be used in dry dairy cows up to seven days from calving, even on organic units where the withhold will then be 21 days.

Combinex

- Contains Triclabendazole so same fluke properties as Endofluke and Fasinex but also contains Levamisole so is broad spectrum wormer.
- Can be used in dry cows up until seven days from calving.

Endopsec SC

- Oral drench containing Albendazole – this treats adult fluke, it does not treat immature flukes so use in grazing season and early winter will not kill all developing flukes.
- Also kills worms and contains some selenium and cobalt supplement.
- 60 hour milk withhold so very useful for lactating cattle. Also short meat withhold at 14 days.



Trodax 34%

- Contains Nitroxynil as sub cutaneous injection.
- Kills flukes from six weeks old. It kills some worms but cannot be relied on as a general wormer.
- No resistance so best drug to use when cattle are housed.
- Not for milk producing animals.

Ivomec super

- Contains clorsulon as sub cutaneous injection, with ivermectin as wormer.
- Only kills adult fluke, so should only be relied on in late winter/spring. It is not appropriate at grass or in recently housed animals.
- Not allowed within 60 days of calving in dairy cattle.

Peerd Davies – 07826916935

	Price	Dose/500kg	Cost/dose	Dose/pack
ENDOFLUKE 10 2.5L	£44.10	60ml	1.08	41
ENDOSPEC 10% 2.5L	£42.46	50ml	0.85	50
ENDOSPEC 10% 5L	£73.50	50ml	0.74	100
FASINEX 10% 2.2L	£73.00	60ml	1.97	37
FASINEX 10% 5L	£128.00	60ml	1.54	83
TRODAX 34% 1L	£132.44	15ml	1.98	67

Should I be using Molasses in the ration?

With raw material prices falling over the last few weeks it has made us all stop and think about the best, and I guess the most cost effective way, of putting the cow ration together.

One raw material that appears to be increasing in cost as against last year, and other raw materials is Molasses. Temptation would be to add more cereal to rations in its place from strictly a cost point of view, but there are other valid benefits to molasses. With the quality of grass silage this year in many cases disappointing there

could well be a good case for adding sugar to the diet. Published work has highlighted the need for sugar in dairy rations. The amount of sugar required is related to yield with higher yielding cows requiring more sugar to stimulate effective rumen fermentation.

The table below shows the recommended dietary sugar levels depending on yield based on a typical dairy ration at 3.8 %

Milk Yield (litres)	Recommended dietary sugar levels
25	4.3
30	5.1
35	6.0
40	6.9
45	7.7

(Independent published data: Wilkinson & Chamberlain)

The addition of molasses can also encourage higher dry matter intakes and help stop sorting of the diet by the cows. In most situations there is no substitution effect as there is with some other feeds.

What is meant by substitution effect is that the cow usually eats molasses as an extra feed and not at the expense of any other part of the diet, thus genuinely adding extra nutrients to the diet.

Look at the ration, see if it would benefit from the inclusion of extra sugar and add the appropriate product. If in doubt please do not hesitate to ask us.

Paul Baker – 07785751396

The Dutch are leaving

We are sad to announce the departure of Marieke and Abel from the practice. Marieke has been with us for over three years and Abel for over two years.



Marieke (left) and Abel – moving on

They both arrived during the recent expansion of the practice from our traditional base to the outer reaches of Devon and beyond! Marieke initially arrived in a TB testing role but was soon expanding her horizons beyond that! Abel arrived wishing to further his dairy knowledge – he has certainly

done that with his enthusiasm and keen interest for all aspects of dairy production.

They are returning to take up positions in a new practice in Abel's home town. They will be sorely missed by the practice and all the clients. Many of you have already expressed your disappointment at their leaving and there has been nothing but praise for both of them. From my own point of view they have helped push the practice forward and I am very grateful for all their hard work.

We are having a leaving party. This will be held at Rattery Village Hall on Friday 24th Oct. This is just off the A38 near the Marley Head junction. Food and drink will be provided. Please let Jayne know if you wish to attend as we do need to know how many to cater for.

Peers joins St David's

Peers Davies is the newest vet to have joined the practice.



He grew up on a beef and sheep farm in North Wales and ran his own flock of commercial Texel cross ewes before graduating from Cambridge in 2008. He is particularly interested in sheep medicine and production and will be aiming to make flock health planning an important service offered by the practice. His other interests include cattle production and lameness.

Raw material update

Soya – As predicted Soya fell in price over the past few weeks, spot price ex dock is now at 241p/t. Uncertainty in both the US and the world economy will keep the market bearish, winter position £246p/t this now £50 lower than its peak looks attractive but while there is turmoil in the financial markets a further reduction is possible.

Soya Hulls – Further decreases in cereal prices have reduced Soya hulls by around £20p/t, as a good source of digestible fibre hulls will offer excellent value for money.

Sugar Beet – Trident have allocated prices for the winter, on farm costs of £185p/t will test even the most ardent users.

Wheat and Barley – The worst harvest ever! To see Combines working fitted with tracks summed it all up, but while we struggled in a local basis the eastern side of the country got away lightly.

Raw material prices

	July 08	Aug 08	Sep 08
Hipro Soya	£280	£263	£241
Sugar Beet	£187	£187	£185
Soya Hulls	£167	£152	£130
Rapeseed Meal	£182	£151	£133
Wheat	£132	£115	£103
Barley	£127	£109	£101

As forecasted we have had a world record harvest and prices reflect this. I suspect grain prices could remain fairly flat for the winter also leading into the summer.

Molasses – A hefty increase in prices for this winter has surprised farmers and ourselves, but we are assured its only supply and demand driving these higher costs. All said and done Molasses will still offer a economical way of balacing sugars in your diets, combine this with added regulated release protein demand will be hig.

Rapeseed Meal – Following Soya markets, Rape has fallen significantly

and looks a good purchase at the moment compared against a few weeks ago, perhaps to take part cover for the winter would be prudent.

Minerals – If you require product for the winter speak to us now, we can supply either an off shelf or bespoke mineral for your individual needs.

Protected Fats – We can offer an excellent price on Megalac and Megafat at the moment so please speak to your advisor or ring the office as listed below.

Steve Symons – 01884 256256
(Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays)