



Is your winter housing up to the job?

Improvements made to winter housing over the next couple of weeks can lead to an increase in animal performance over the winter months. Here we explore some of the critical factors behind ensuring housing cattle is stress free for all concerned.

Ventilation

This is vital when looking to control moisture, remove bugs and harmful gasses, remove dust, control temperature, and reduce wind at animal height (draughts).

As cattle breathe out warm air, which may contain bacteria and viruses, it rises to the top of the building in the absence of wind. Providing there is an adequate outlet this stale air leaves the shed at the ridge drawing fresh air in to the shed from under the eaves. This is called the stack effect.

It's important to note that the average 650kg cow respire 10 litres of moisture per day and produces 25 litres of urine per day, quickly turning a barn into a stagnant, humid environment if the outlet area is inadequate. Raised ridge caps only provide 20% of outlet needed per unit length. Opening a ridge up (with or without a cover) often provides an immediate improvement. When considering the air inlet (gaps in the sides of the shed under the level of the eaves) you should aim for at least 2x the outlet area (4x ideally).

Space board gaps should be no more than 1 inch, any wider will allow rain through. The inlets should be spread between the 2 side walls, not the gable ends.

Small, often relatively inexpensive changes can result in vast improvements to the environment. The use of smoke bombs is a cheap and quick way of assessing ventilation. We are able to help calculate outlet and inlet recommendations for your shed to optimise ventilation based on it's size, pitch of the roof, height to the eaves and stocking density.



Calf housing will usually always benefit from some form of mechanical ventilation. This is due to the absence of heat production by adult cattle within the space. Young calves are unable to generate sufficient heat to drive the stack effect.

Two types of mechanical ventilation system exist:

Positive pressure. This is the most common mechanical ventilation system used with air being blown into the shed. Typically tubing is fitted to fans positioned at the gable ends of the shed. Strategically positioned and sized ducts in the tubing distribute the fresh air along the full length of the duct (typically up to 30m).

Negative pressure. This involves the use of exhaust fans to suck air out of the shed. Whilst less common this can be useful in low volume areas such as small calf houses, buildings with low roof heights and old buildings in which the roofing would be difficult to change.

Temperature

The lower critical temperature (LCT) is the lowest temperature the animal can be at without having to use energy to keep warm. A day old calf has a LCT 15°C. Any draught, moisture or cold wet surface will only increase this. Energy utilisation to keep warm results in a decrease in daily liveweight gain and can result in stress which can make animals more susceptible to disease. Ensure stock are well bedded and consider the use of calf jackets on the youngest calves during the winter months.

Moisture

High levels of moisture in a building increases the survival time of bugs both in the air and in the bedding. It reduces ambient temperature, increases the LCT and of course increases requirements for bedding. Ensure drainage is adequate so that as much moisture as possible can leave the shed. Consider porous floors or a suitable fall in the floor. Ensure guttering and water troughs are not leaking.

Feed and water access

Feed and water should be easily accessible. If this is restricted due to overstocking or poor access then performance of the animals will be affected and negative effects on animal health will be encountered.





Focus on spring calving suckler cows

As we move into the winter months a number of you with spring calving suckler cows will either have recently brought them in, or be imminently doing so. There are many management procedures that are important at this time, and as much prior planning as possible is the key to success.

Fertility is a main driver of profitability in a suckler herd, with profitability directly linked to the number of calves reared and sold per cow bred per year. The cost of production per cow per year is in the range of £350-800, which is a hefty sum taken out of profits from selling a calf. Therefore any barren cows that get a free ride through the year are costing and pulling down that margin of profitability further. For spring calving herds PD'ing your cows before or soon after housing allows early identification of empty cows, thereby allowing removal from the herd and savings on feeding over winter.



As well as ascertain pregnancy status this time of year represents a great chance for us to monitor cow body condition score (BCS). Body condition scoring represents the best guide to the correct feeding of suckler cows. It estimates the energy reserves of the animal and should be done regularly at key stages in the production cycle (calving, housing, weaning etc.). Scores range from 1, very thin to 5, very fat.

	Spring-calving herds	Autumn-calving herds
Calving	2.5 (3 for first and second calvers)	3
Service	2.5	2.5
Housing/weaning	3-3.5	2.5-3

The dry period represents the best time to add/remove condition to/from your cows. Your cows should be condition score 3-3.5 at housing (weaning) and 2.5 -3 in the run up to calving (*see chart to left*), but the later you leave trying to alter the condition of your cows the more you risk large calves if putting condition on, and poor quality colostrum if trying to remove condition.

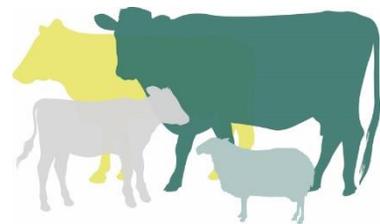
Calving and fertility problems can be seen in cattle at both extremes. Excess fat around the pelvic canal can lead to complicated and assisted calving, plus cycling problems and delays in conception. Over thin cows lack stamina and can have problems with weaker calves, poorer colostrum and lower milk yield. For these cows, breeding competes with early lactation nutrient demands. This can delay cycling and embryo losses can be high.

For more information on the benefits of pregnancy diagnosis and body condition scoring speak to one of the vets.

Weekly medicines delivery service



Don't forget we now offer a FOC weekly delivery service. Order by 4pm the day before to receive a delivery on your regular weekday slot. Speak to dispensary to find out your delivery day if you don't know already. Deliveries are conducted by our qualified SQP Philip Bowes. Working closely with the vet team Philip is able to provide a huge range of products relating to animal health. *See next page for more information.*



This Autumn we've got your animal health needs... covered for cattle and sorted for sheep!



Wormers

- Pour-ons, drenches & injectables available for cattle
- Drenches & injectables available for sheep
- It is advisable to worm cattle at housing
- Carry out worm egg counts in growing lambs at the end of the grazing season

Flukicides

- Pour-ons, drenches and injectables available for cattle.
- Drenches and injectables available for sheep .
- Treatment plans tailored to the farm.
- We can detect exposure or infection with muck and blood samples – *speack to a vet for more info.*



Minerals & Vitamins

- We can investigate/monitor trace element deficiencies with a combination of blood samples, tissue samples and forage analysis
- Decide how best to deliver minerals to suit your system – boluses, bags or buckets



Sheep Scab

- Injectable prevention and treatment
- We can blood sample to test for exposure to sheep scab mites

Lameness Control

- Footbath chemicals for footbaths designed for both sheep & cattle
- Footvax for sheep needs to be given before risk periods



Vaccines

Pneumonia Vaccines

- Intranasal & injectable vaccines
- Speak to a vet to learn more about the different vaccines and to find the one most suitable for you*

Calf Scour Vaccines

- Protection against Rotavirus, Coronavirus & E. coli (K99)
- A single 3ml dose needs to be given to pregnant cows 12-3 weeks pre-calving

Abortion Vaccines

- Protection against Chlamydia (Enzootic abortion) & Toxoplasmosis in sheep
- Vaccines need to be given at least 4 weeks pre-tupping – *speack to a vet for more info*

Clostridial & Pasteurella Vaccines

- Heptavac P+, Ovivac P+ and Ovipast
- Important to booster growing sheep over autumn/winter and pregnant ewes 4 weeks pre lambing.



Tupping Equipment

- Ensure your tups are in tip top condition ready to mark the ewes
- Different coloured raddle, harnesses and crayons will help grouping at lambing time

For more information speak to our qualified SQP Philip Bowes on **07860 662165**



Online Dairy Discussion Group

It is unknown when our dairy discussion group meetings will resume, so in the meantime we have decided to move our dairy discussion group programme online. Following the success of our first meeting titled 'Better Breeding = Better Business' in early September we are delighted to announce details of our next (**international!**) meeting.....



Transatlantic transition success



Wednesday 21st October 7.30pm

Professor Stephen LeBlanc (University of Guelph) and Dr Reg Winton (Kirkton Bovine Services, Ontario).

This meeting will take the form of a Q&A session exploring how management in the immediate period before and after calving affects health and productivity. Please submit your questions via your herd vet. These will be submitted to Stephen and Reg in advance of the meeting and answered on the night.

Look out for further details and instructions on how to register.



RAFT Solutions Update



Sunley Raynes breeding centre NOW OPEN!

This brand new facility, less than a mile from our Ripon surgery, will provide much needed additional space for Bishopton Equine and RAFT, enabling them to grow while still maintaining the excellent service they offer, and free up space at our Ripon surgery. The breeding centre has already hosted a successful tup testing day this summer – *results from the tup testing season to be reported in the next newsletter* – with plenty more breeding work planned. If you are interested in finding out more information or booking in some breeding work, please phone the RAFT Solutions Advanced Breeding Team on 01765 645893



Training courses – *Keep an eye for the up and coming dates!*

RAFT have been running their popular Mastering Medicines course as an online learning module. The course is vet-led, interactive and Red Tractor approved and covers all of the same materials as the face to face courses. You will receive a live webinar session alongside a workbook to support learning. Once you have completed the course you will also receive a certificate of attendance. To register your interest email training@raftsolutions.co.uk or call 01765 645893.



Welcome

Welcome to the newest member of the RAFT team, Angie Lockwood, who joins us as an assistant project manager.

Practice News

Congratulations to farm vet Katharine and husband Pete on the birth of baby Heather Alice Shepherd who was welcomed into the world on Friday 17th July – sharing the same birthday as Katharine!

Congratulations to Harriet from the RAFT team and husband Michael on the birth of their daughter Margaux Ada Ann Shepherd who arrived on Tuesday 1st September.

We are pleased to welcome a new member of the farm team – Dominic Fox will be joining as a foot trimmer in October.



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