



If they've got nuts, don't feed them nuts!

Most farmers will have already placed their orders for in-lamb ewe nuts and started feeding their ewes pre-lambing and once they have lambed. As the grass begins to grow, hopefully the ewes with their lambs at foot can benefit from some of the green stuff in their diet as well. However, don't be tempted to feed any of the left-over ewe cake to your tups...

Urolithiasis

What is it?

Uroliths are mineral deposits that form crystals and stones in the urinary tract of castrated or entire male sheep. These can lead to partial or complete obstruction of the urethra which blocks urine from leaving the bladder and emptying from the penis.

What does it look like?

Early recognition of signs is very important with this condition. Initially they may show a lack of appetite and separate themselves from the rest of the group, as well as grinding their teeth. The most common site for uroliths to occur in male sheep is at the vermiform appendage (also known as the urethral process) which is a small string of tissue at the end of the penis. There are likely to be multiple small stones like grit in the end of this tissue which can cause the male sheep to have abdominal discomfort, swelling underneath the abdomen, dripping of urine and straining to pass urine. Blood stains or crystals may be present in the hairs at the end of the penis.



Tups eating a specific tup coarse ration.

How can I prevent it?

It is very important to feed a correctly balanced diet, specific for male sheep in order to prevent the build-up of these minerals that can form the crystals – avoid feeding ewe nuts to male sheep at all costs! It also helps to feed more frequently rather than once or twice a day, making sure to include adequate forage. Access to a constant water supply is pertinent and this must be carefully checked when the weather gets below freezing!

If you suspect one of your male sheep to be suffering with this condition, then it is essential to seek immediate veterinary care.



Giving calves the best start

Many of you joined us in February for a great dairy discussion group meeting on the topic of calf health. For those that missed the talk we've tried to round up some of the key messages that were explained by Bobby Hyde from the University of Nottingham.

Despite many farms focusing on getting the best from our dairy calves, surveys across the UK have shown there is much room for improvement. A 2015 study showed that 20% of calves fail to receive adequate colostrum and nearly 50% suffer from pneumonia or scour. Looking at all registered births and deaths of livestock between 2011 and 2018, Bobby showed that an alarming 5% of registered female dairy calves die between 0 and 3 months, with little change in this figure over that period despite industry initiatives focusing on calf health. There is also massive seasonal variation with the number of calves dying through colder months hugely exceeding that through the summer.

Bobby shared data from his large scale study across UK dairy farms to look at which factors impacted on both calf mortality and daily live weight gains. Key findings were that shed temperature, volume of milk fed and frequency of pen cleaning all had a tangible impact on daily live weight gain. Whilst we cannot control the seasons, we can look at ways to improve our calf housing to control the impact of environment on their performance.



- Bedding – provide enough clean dry straw so calves legs are not visible when 'nested'
- Avoid drafts – ventilation is important, but drafts increase calves lower critical temperature above which they require energy to keep warm
- Temperature – jackets can be useful but **MUST** be clean and dry. Heat lamps are worth consideration but appropriate type should be considered and positioning to prevent fire risk
- Mucking out – calving pens should be cleaned every 3 weeks and calf pens fully mucked out <30 days

It is impossible to talk about calf health without highlighting the importance of colostrum. It is irrefutable to follow the 3 Qs of **Quantity** (3 to 4 litres or 8.5% body weight) **Quickly** (within 6 hours or as soon as the calf can sit up) and **Quality** (Tested using a Brix refractometer >22%).

One factor that may be overlooked is the impact of hygiene on colostrum quality. In Bobby's study, 1 in 3 of 270 samples of colostrum tested for bacterial content were too dirty. This can be assessed by taking samples for bacteriology which counts the number of bacteria per ml of colostrum. Colostrum must be kept clean from harvesting to the point it is fed to the calves and there are several key points that may be overlooked.



- The teat – is the teat prepared before the cow is milked to prevent contamination?
- Collection bucket – are the buckets clean before colostrum is collected into them and do they prevent additional contamination (from muck etc) before they reach the calf?
- Feeding equipment – are these clean for each calf?



Giving calves the best start cont.

Like your milking machine, equipment that is used for handling colostrum requires cleaning appropriately to ensure there is no build up of fat deposits or bacteria. Use of hot water to clean colostrum collection equipment could reduce the bacterial count in colostrum by as much as 50% and use of a disinfectant such as hypochlorite could further reduce this count. Handling of colostrum following harvesting is also an important factor especially in warmer weather when bacterial counts can rise if colostrum is not fed immediately. Any colostrum that is to be stored for later feeding should be chilled rapidly and warmed again prior to feeding. Pasteurisation is a useful tool for reducing bacterial counts but must follow a suitable protocol to prevent damage to the crucial antibodies.



As we head into the warmer months, the challenges your calves face may be declining, but considering how to implement some of these strategies now may have a tangible impact on their health into the future.

Thirsk here we come!

Exciting news, we are opening a new surgery in Thirsk later this year. This will help ensure we continue to deliver an excellent service to our farm clients in the Thirsk area and provide a new medication collect point. We look forward to sharing more updates with you as the journey progresses.



Product Updates

Hi-Mag Buckets are now available to help with the prevention of staggers and boost vitamin and mineral intake
Prices from £14.50 each



Now is the time to get your fly control products for sheep and cattle ordered. These products can be ordered through us in confidence, as they fall under our price match promise.

All available on our weekly FOC delivery service or for collection at branch

Speak to our qualified SQP Philip Bowes on 07860 662165 for more information



RAFT Update

RAFT are now settled at our new home at Sunley Raynes Farm after our move in August, with state of the art facilities for training and advanced breeding. We have welcomed our first residential advanced breeding donors in our purpose-built breeding unit where they are provided with a bespoke programme and feeding regime to try to optimise outcomes. Our SemenRate lab has also expanded to accommodate the growing number of samples we have been receiving.

During the restrictions of COVID-19 RAFT have been running their Mastering Medicines course as an online learning module. The course is vet-led, interactive and Red Tractor approved and covers all the same materials as the face-to-face courses. This has taken the form of a live webinar session alongside a workbook to support learning with a certificate of attendance once complete.

Now that COVID-19 restrictions are beginning to lift, we will be running our popular 3-day DIY AI courses again – these consist of a day of theory and practical training at the RAFT facilities followed by two days on farm with live cattle. The course covers all aspects of AI including the theory behind the procedure itself, semen thawing and handling, basic anatomy, as well as practical experience on farm.

If you are interested in attending any of our courses please email training@raftsolutions.co.uk or call 01765 645893 to reserve your place.

Upcoming course dates

Course	Dates
DIY AI	19 th -21 st April
Mastering Medicines	7 th May
Mastering Medicines	7 th June
Mastering Medicines	16 th July
Mastering Medicines	3 rd September
Mastering Medicines	7 th October
Mastering Medicines	5 th November
Mastering Medicines	13 th December



Sad Farewell

Unfortunately, in April we will be saying a sad farewell to Rosie Lyle, who has been a big part of the farm team for the last 5 years.

We wish Rosie all the best for the future and in her next role.

"After almost five and a half years at Bishopton I will be moving to pastures new in Somerset with my Husband Ben, who has been posted to Bristol with the RAF. I would like to thank you all for the enjoyable times working together over these years. Particularly those who I have worked closely with as part of their regular routine vet team and health scheme. It has been a pleasure to see and play a role in how your businesses have progressed and adapted to the changing world of food and milk production.

I have loved working as part of the farm team at Bishopton vets. I would like to thank Bishopton for their continued support and the opportunities they have provided me with to expand my knowledge and skills.

I am looking forward to starting my new job as a Farm Vet in Somerset and if the farmers are anything like those in Yorkshire it'll be 'reet'."



HD Farming based near Thirsk are currently looking to purchase local beef cross dairy calves 2-4 weeks old.

Willing to pay good prices for quality local stock. Please contact Hannah Dyke on 07398 825726