NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2016 EDITION

Spring calving suckler cows – what can be done to minimise problems at calving?

Dr Ruth Lawson
- 07725 263050

Careful formulation of rations for suckler cows and assessment of body condition through winter can help alleviate problems at calving.

Many grass silage analyses are showing low crude protein values. Some are too low for dry suckler cows, at less than 12%. Sometimes straw is included in the diet to reduce the energy content of the ration in order to prevent cows getting too fat. Unfortunately although this helps to correct the energy level of the diet, it makes the protein problem even worse. What is needed is protein supply without too much energy. Supplementing diets with **Stock pro 38** works well. Signs of protein depletion are thin cows, which people often think are short of energy so they feed some barley for example, which actually makes the protein problem worse.

The problem of protein depletion in spring calving suckler cows is common and widespread. Many farms will have cows that go thin over winter or even lose a cow due to protein depletion.

Mineral supplementation can also help to minimise problems at calving. Over much of winter sucklers will be fine with either Cattle General Health or Cattle Sustain mineral. However, on the run up to calving, great results can be achieved using Transition cow minerals. Supplementing in this way will avoid issues such as retained cleansings and result in vigorous calves at birth.

Please get in contact with us to discuss diets for spring calving cows.

Christmas openings

Christmas eve – until 12 noon

Closed 26 & 27 December

Closed 2 January

TEL: 01765 689666

Hit the ground running

Liz Lunn - 07803 116410

Very early introduction of dry feed can reap benefits in terms of calf growth rates and health.

Calf weaner pellets can be introduced immediately after the colostrum phase and water should be available from birth. The aim is to have calves eating 100g of calf weaner a day by the time they are 7 days old. This can be achieved by ensuring feed is fresh and by providing clean water. Providing forage is important to stimulate calf weaner intake – chopped straw results in great intakes. Research shows that calves do better when group versus individually housed before they are 3 weeks old. Feed intakes are higher in group housed calves and subsequent growth rates higher due to social facilitation.

Please contact us to see if we can help with calf rearing.

Don't over-do it

Andrew Grayshon - 07809 906644

New research shows that care must be taken when supplementing iodine in late pregnancy for ewes.

Studies have shown that supplemental iodine reduced absorption of immunoglobulin G (IgG) in colostrum and hence lamb blood IgG level. Diets for pregnant ewes should contain no more than 9.9 mg I/kg DM. In practice, this level is sometimes exceeded if ewes have access to more than one mineral source. It is important to consider all feeds, so sheep cake, buckets and molasses; as well as drenches and boluses, so that ewes aren't over-supplied.

For more advice on feeding ewes in late pregnancy please give us a call.

Growing up on a farm is good for you!

Stuart Holmes - 07894 595194

Farmers' children are said to be 54 per cent less likely to have asthma.

Also 57 per cent less likely to have allergic nasal symptoms than their urban peers because of the amount of contact they have with animals – that includes dogs and cats, as well as livestock. It is thought that greater exposure to microbes living on and around animals boosts the immune system.

Maximise forage production = reduction in your feed bill

It's a realistic target to increase output from your grassland, whether grazed or conserved, that would benefit profitability and sustainability, as grass is your cheapest source of feed available.

So why not use it?

Sue Sutcliffe - 01765 689666

The field on the right was reseeded early 2016 and has had 3 cuts taken off, while the field on the left is old pasture and full of unproductive weed grasses

Top livestock performers in the UK were achieving 15t of dry matter per hectare, yet the average quoted was just 7.6t DM/ha. This highlights the majority of farms are falling well below their maximum potential, causing higher usage of concentrate feeds.

The average milk from forage in recorded herds was on average 2,000 litres/cow, just half that achieved by the top 10% herds who are making far more of milk from forage. Grass and grass silage always works out substantially cheaper than bought in feeds so there is a massive opportunity for dairy, beef and sheep farmers to grow more, better quality grass. **This will increase milk yields, or meat produced from the cheapest feed, resulting in higher margins.**

A good starting point is to re-seed more frequently, as many farmers will leave leys in for too long.

Assess reseeding when the ryegrass content falls below 30%

It's also the perfect opportunity to introduce clover to the sward which has been proven to have the greatest potential impact on dry matter intake (DMI) and animal performance, especially red clover in silage. Studies have shown herbage legumes have a higher feed value and encourage higher intake than fertilised pure grass leys.

30% clover in a sward will fix up to 150kg N/ha day

Extending the grazing season in autumn or early spring has considerable potential for reducing production costs. Then improving soils, selecting the right mixtures and correct establishment and management all contribute towards maximising forage production and reducing feed costs.

In an industry with low output prices increasing efficiency is of paramount importance, and the solution is growing under your feet! **If you need a soil sample or advice on grass leys please don't hesitate to contact us.**


Old pasture grass


Reseeded ley

Follow us on Twitter

Find us on Facebook

Did you know?

David Lewis - 07710 600848

There are lots of useful things you might not know about your silage analysis.

Firstly, the crude protein figure may also contain any residual nitrogen fertilizer that remains in the sample. This is not a measure of available dietary protein. If this figure is high, the extra protein tends to be in the form of rapidly degradable protein and may not be utilised properly by the rumen microbes. These silages have often been associated with high blood and milk urea readings. High blood ureas have been associated with reduced fertility and lameness issues. Very careful balancing of the concentrates is needed.

High ash values would suggest that there has been soil contamination whilst making the silage, sometimes from low cutting heights or mole hill contamination. Soil is a rich source of iron, that locks-up copper, and also of aluminium, which may interfere with phosphorus uptake, so careful mineral supplementation is needed with high ash silages. Also, palatability can be reduced so forage intake is not so good.

Dietary fibre is required to promote rumen function and development. However, too much fibre can slow fermentation leading to a reduction in intakes; too little can allow fermentation to occur too rapidly, leading to acidosis. Neutral detergent fibre level is best in the average value region, however, the physical nature of the silage is also important and chop length will affect fermentation more than the actual level of NDF.

The Volatile Fatty Acid figure comprises of acetic, propionic and butyric acids. Butyric acid is normally present only in trace amounts but can increase significantly in cases of poor clamp consolidation. Silages of this type often have a high pH and strong ammonia smell. High VFAs not associated with butyric acid are usually dominated by acetic acid. Silages with a high proportion of acetic acid are not very stable (acetic acid is a weak acid) and this may lead to secondary fermentation (heating up).

Normally the main acid in the well preserved clamp is lactic acid. A low lactic result combined with a high VFA value would indicate that the clamp may not be very stable, especially when the face is exposed to air, deterioration could occur. Lactic acid is a powerful acid and so very high levels (greater than 100g/kgDM) could give rise to acidosis type problems. In these situations, buffering is advised. These very high levels are often seen with very wet silages.

For advice on making sense of your silage analysis please ring us and ask to speak to David Lewis or Dr Ruth Lawson.

Congratulations to R&J Myers winning the mule gimmer lamb at Ruswarp autumn sheep sales using hogg blend and intensive lamb creep. Also, Miss J Robinson, Skelder Cottage, Commondale who won with Scotch Blackface wether lambs.