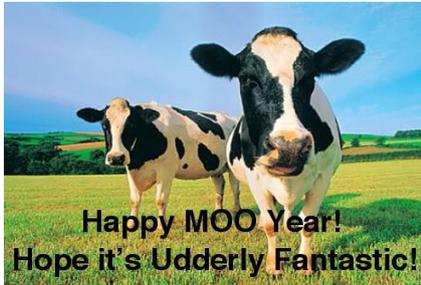


New Year's Resolutions

January 2019

Happy New Year!

Hopefully everyone's had a lovely Christmas and managed to find a little bit of time to relax.



The New Year is a great time to try and do some of those little jobs which might get forgotten about - here is a list of New Year's resolutions to try and complete over the next few weeks:

1. Clean out your water troughs

As milk is mostly water, high yielding cows require between 60 and 100 litres a day. Lack of water intake leads to reduced dry matter intakes, loss of body condition and lower yields.

Cows have a very sensitive sense of smell and will avoid drinking water that is dirty or tainted so giving water troughs a good clean out can quickly increase intakes.

2. Assess disease status of herd

A lot of you will be aware of the disease status of your herd but for those who aren't it is worth finding out if there are infectious diseases circulating in the herd. Although these may not be visible as clinical disease, they can cause production losses.



Free testing is available for unvaccinated dairy and beef herds to assess if there is BVD, IBR or Lepto in the herd.

3. Check your vaccinations are up to date

Following on from the above point regarding infectious disease, it is also important to keep vaccinations up to date. Bridget is very good at chasing up when the whole herd vaccination is due, but it can be difficult for us to keep track of young stock vaccinations as we cannot be sure exactly when animals are going to the bull. It is important that primary courses are completed at least 4 weeks prior to bulling, particularly for BVD as infection of a cow during pregnancy can lead to a persistently infected calf.

4. Check your Herd Health Plan is up to date

The new Red Tractor guidelines state that a vet must complete an annual herd health and performance review and an annual antibiotic review on every farm. We have a template for this which we can complete with you, but it is much easier if we have a bit of time, rather than having a phone call the day before the inspector is due!



Herd health planning can be a good opportunity to sit down with your vet and have a chat through how things are going - try to see it as a useful exercise rather than a box ticking exercise.

5. Get an independent mobility score of your herd

Many farms are already having regular mobility scores, either voluntarily or due to milk buyer requirements.

Average lameness levels in the UK are thought to be 50-70 cases per 100 cows per year, with 20-30% of the herd affected at any one time. Mobility scoring can help to flag up lame cows that may be missed on day to day observation of the herd.

Mobility scoring, followed by prompt, effective treatment of affected cows is the best way to reduce herd lameness levels. We have RoMs (Register of Mobility scorers) trained scorers at the practice if you are interested.

If a problem is flagged up on a mobility score, then Bea, Ed or I can undertake a full lameness review on farm.



6. Check your calves are receiving enough colostrum

Calves are born with no immunity so require 4 litres of good quality colostrum in the first 4-6 hours of life to ensure adequate passive transfer to protect them from pathogens in the environment. Lack of colostrum intake leads to problems such as scour, pneumonia and navel/ joint ill.

It is easy to assess if calves have received sufficient colostrum. Blood samples taken



from 5-10 calves, aged between two and seven days old, can be assessed for total protein to see how much antibody they have absorbed. If this is found to be low, we can review your colostrum protocol to ensure future calves are protected.

7. Tidy out your medicine cabinet

Another pre-Red Tractor prep point to avoid panic just before your inspection.

Red Tractor requires that medicines are stored in a locked cupboard/safe/chest/room. They also frown upon out of date medicines, so it's worth giving your cabinet a good clean out and disposing of anything past its sell by date every so often!

8. Assess cow comfort

Cows should be lying for around 14 hours per day (although they only sleep for around 20 minutes!)

The 'cow comfort index' is a quick and easy way of assessing cubicle comfort. It is measured as the percentage of cows in contact with a cubicle that are



lying down. This should be 85%. The best time to measure is when cows are relaxed so 1-2 hours post or 2 hours pre-milking.

If a lot of cows are standing in contact with cubicles but not lying down this suggests an issue with cubicle comfort, which can lead to lameness issues hock sores, as well as reduced yields due to reduced time spent lying down ruminating.

All the Best,

Sarah

