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OCTOBER 2019 NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR NORTH PARK & OUR SHEEP CLIENTS!

The joint work between North Park and yourselves with regard to reducing antibiotic usage in lambs at birth was recognised as a significant success at the recent Sheep Veterinary Society Autumn Conference in September. In spring 2019 54% less oral antibiotics were sold compared with 2018, with over two-thirds of all farms that used antibiotics seeing a reduction in the amount sold.

The data gathered by Jonathan over the past three years, together with other collaborative research that he has been involved with, has been presented to the **RUMA (Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture) Taskforce** and will be published in the 2019 review later this year. RUMA act as a link between government and non-government organisations and this work will contribute towards directing policy going forward. The work demonstrates that vets and farmers are taking the issue of antibiotic stewardship seriously and will ensure that antibiotics remain available for use; not so long ago it was looking like lots of products would be permanently taken away from us. Thank you all once again for your hard work surrounding this topic and taking the brave steps to reducing antimicrobial usage on your farms.



REMINDER TO ALL DAIRY FARMERS – you need to have your Johne’s Disease Management Plan Annual Review completed **by 31st October**. This requires another risk assessment on your farm and a review of progress from last year by a BCVA Accredited Johne’s Veterinary Advisor (Martin & Elske). Please book an appointment through your branch surgery in plenty of time to ensure you do not miss the deadline.



REMINDER – RED TRACTOR MEDICINE USAGE TRAINING

Due to further demand we are running our “Deciphering Drugs” course again on **Tuesday 8th October from 10am – 2pm at the North Tawton Surgery**. We have had excellent feedback from the 60+ people that have attended the previous meetings and we still have some places available.



This course fulfils the Red Tractor recommendations that *“at least one member of staff responsible for administering medicines has undertaken training in the handling and administration of medicines”*. THIS IS NOW COMPULSORY FOR ALL DAIRY FARMS but please note that “MILKSURE” meets this standard. The Deciphering Drugs course is open to **ALL** producers (beef/sheep/dairy). The cost for this training is **£60+VAT** (£30+VAT for any additional staff from the same farm). Please book through your branch surgery – lunch provided (please let us know of any dietary requirements). All those attending will receive a certificate of attendance to include in your Red Tractor paperwork.

A BUSY MONTH OF LEARNING FOR JONATHAN & ELSKE!

All vets working in practice in the UK are required to undertake 35 hours of continued professional development (CPD) each year to ensure they keep up to date and Jonathan and Elske both spent time in early September at some really interesting conferences.

Jonathan attended (and lectured at) the **Sheep Veterinary Society Autumn Conference** in Wareham. The first morning covered a workshop on the UK's largest sheep flock of pure bred Dorset Down sheep and discussed cost/benefit analysis on sheep farms. Some interesting figures came out – including the average “cost” of a lamb at birth being £25 from the point of selecting a ewe for breeding to the lamb hitting the ground. This shows just how important it is to minimise neonatal losses and protect your flock against abortion. Feed costs by far and away are the highest variable costs, ranging from £15-40/ewe/year. Aiming to feed “from grass” and producing quality conserved forage really does pay. The net margin for sheep producers is shockingly low – the top 25% indoor lambers run at +£29/ewe, the average -£9/ewe and the bottom 25% at -£75/ewe; with forthcoming changes to CAP and the uncertainty of Brexit, improving production efficiencies will be crucial.

Other topics discussed at the conference included Johne's disease in sheep and OPA (or Jaagsiekte) and ways to manage this crippling “iceberg disease”, including how to perform rapid flock level ultrasound scanning of lungs to determine those ewes with lesions before they show clinical disease. This allows those animals to be selected for slaughter and removed from the farm whilst they still have a cull value, before losing weight and becoming worthless. Another farm workshop was spent looking at sheep housing.

Elske attended the **European Bovine Congress** back home in the Netherlands. Aside from seeing former colleagues and students, three days were filled with lectures on different cattle-related topics. With an emphasis on dairy, main topics included transition period management and discussed metabolic diseases, nutrition and their relative effects on fertility. The management and control of diseases such as IBR, *Mycoplasma* and *Mannheimia haemolytica* in other countries was discussed and will be helpful in dealing with these in the future. A number of UK researchers were present discussing welfare in UK dairy cows and investigations into the health of Scottish beef calves.

In November it is Roger's “turn to learn” when he attends the Pig Veterinary Society Conference.

PD YOUR SUCKLER COWS NOW - For economic efficiency it is crucial that a suckler cow produces one calf per year. AHDB data shows that the total cost of production for English suckler herds is around £450–£800/cow/year. This means that any **empty cows cost between £1.23 - £2.19/day, or £37 - £66/month**. Can you afford not knowing whether your cows are in calf? With the use of our ultrasound scanners, we are able to diagnose pregnancy from **one month after service**, allowing you to know your situation sooner rather than later, and take any action that may be required.

ANOTHER WELCOME

Our new vets **Mary Nelson** and **Rya Jones** have both settled in very well over the past month and have already met many of you. This month our final new vet joins the team – **Harriet Christie**. Harriet is a new graduate from the Royal Veterinary College, London, and joins us as a mixed vet doing 50/50 farm and small animal work.



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