

Newsletter January 2010

Happy New Year to you all, I hope you all enjoyed the festive season and found some time to put your feet up! The frosty beginning to 2010 has come as a bit of a surprise, apparently it is all to be expected with climate change!

The chilling North-East wind we have been experiencing has caused a few issues with regard to calf pneumonia. Sheds are often designed to protect cattle from the prevailing westerly wind to prevent driving rain and wind from causing a chill. When the wind changes it can leave the cattle exposed and so we should be ready with obstacles such as big bales and panels to break the wind. Dry bedding is particularly important to prevent calves becoming cold; they readily lose heat through wet hair as their insulation layer is compromised significantly. When stopping draughts, we must be mindful not to prevent ventilation which could cause more problems! If anyone is considering modification of their sheds then please feel free to consult us on design with a view on minimising disease; often many of the solutions to a problem are not expensive but extremely cost effective.

We are seeing a few more cows with displaced abomasums (twisted stomachs). This is probably due to a poor transition from dry to milking rations but could also be a dietary change e.g. changing from first to second cut. These cows require early diagnosis for the best outcome, so watch fresh calved cows that go off their concentrate or fail to chew their cud; associated with a milk drop. Be careful when starting new silage clamps. A gradual change from one feed source to the next is always advisable to help prevent dietary upsets. Make sure you have had the feed analysed and adjust supplements accordingly. We can help you formulate a diet if you wish.

Many of you will shortly be starting lambing; the harsh winter weather could make this more of a challenge this year. If lambing out be aware that lambs will require a significant amount of colostrum to prevent hypothermia. Extra supplementary feeding of the ewes may be required to achieve this. Colostrum intake will be particularly important if you need to keep couples housed for longer than expected, to help prevent scours and pneumonia in the lambs. It is vital that lambs receive sufficient colostrum in the first six hours of their life to aid their immunity fight disease. Colostrum is the best vaccine or treatment you can ever give to a new-born and you only get one chance to do it right.

Anyone wishing to learn the art of DIY AI, we will be starting another course that will begin on Friday 29th January. For more details please call the Redhill surgery.