

Newsletter December 2009

You may have heard by now about the proposed changes to the testing intervals of many of the farms in the South-West. From January 1st all holdings will now fall into annual testing parishes and will therefore all be required to carry out pre-movement testing prior to moving cattle between holdings. Defra have also decided to tighten up the regulation around overdue tests. From January all premises falling one month overdue will receive a hand delivered warning letter, after two months staff from Defra will arrive and attempt to test the cattle, the farmer will be liable to pay for all costs incurred in completing the test. If after three months Defra have been unable to complete the test then the farmer will be deemed to be in breach of the regulations and will face legal action. So there you have it!! The other change that is taking place is that inconclusive reactors will only be allowed one re-test before being deemed a reactor. This change in policy will have an impact on our own workload, we are unsure yet to what extent. As always we try to book your test at your own convenience, March and April are always hectic for us so I advise you to book your tests as early as possible to avoid the possibility of going overdue.

On the positive side of things there are some developments with regard to control of TB. A cattle vaccine based on the BCG in humans is ready to be rolled out, unfortunately at the moment there is no method of differentiating vaccinated cattle from infected ones, resulting in obstacles to overcome with regard to international trade. The NFU have blocked the use of the vaccine for now, for this reason. It would seem sensible to me that the Southwest corner of the UK adopt vaccination with the trade-off that these holdings are barred from export, or marking passports of vaccinated cattle. I urge you to lobby your MP or NFU representative to push forward vaccination as we are told it is still 4 years away from being available to the masses. Badger vaccination is currently undergoing trials; it looks as though this may be available on a wider scale in the New Year. Trapping and vaccinating will be the responsibility of the landowner and there is no method of identifying vaccinated badgers. Even so I feel that this is a positive step in a worsening situation. If we were (fortunate) enough to be Welsh then we may have had the possibility of a badger cull, this seems not to be popular in Westminster, so don't get your hopes up!

For those of you who have not replied yet, don't forget our cow signals day at Waldegrave Farms on the 10th December. We will meet at the Castle of Comfort at 10.15am and return there for some lunch after the farm walk. Please call the Redhill office for more information or to book your place.

We hope to hold a Foot Trimming Course in the New Year, and possibly an AI course (if sufficient numbers), so let us know if you are interested or if you would like us to run any other events, we are often able to fund courses and meetings with organisations such as DairyCo and Rural Enterprise schemes, so we welcome any ideas you have.

We all wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and thank you for your custom in 2009.