

Newsletter July 2010

The drought like conditions are causing a number of issues on our farms at the moment. As I write we are hoping for some rain but this seems like too little too late!

We commonly see poor bulling activity in cows during hot spells, cows seem too busy seeking shade to bother chasing others around the paddock. A lack of forage is presenting us with a problem also. Some of you have started feeding first-cut silage already to maintain yields, so we definitely need a growth spurt soon! We see heat stroke occasionally in cows during sunny weather; it is essential that dairy cows have access to plentiful clean water and adequate shade. Particular attention should be paid to downer cows at the moment. Outdoor pigs need a wallow more than ever at this time of year as they are particularly prone to sunburn.

We have seen on a number of occasions both cattle and sheep with an unexplained scour. These have been attributed to scavenging; either looking for water in contaminated ditches or ponds only now used due to low water level, or forage in hedges and marginal grazing due to grass shortage.

The recent spell of hot weather has seen the emergence of the dreaded fly population! Summer Mastitis and New Forest Eye are without doubt the most common problems that flies cause, but the effect on milk yield and live weight gain shouldn't be underestimated and can be as high as a 60% and 35% drop respectively. Treatment of all stock is obviously a solution but consideration should be given to the use of environmental controls such as stacking manure heaps away from farm buildings and removing rotting vegetation. There are also some products on the market specifically aimed at reducing flies in the environment.

Conversely, wet areas of fields where fluke burden was high have dried up, and significantly reduced the level of infection in cattle and sheep. Attention still needs to be paid to ponds and ditches where there are muddy conditions. Be aware that cattle grazing pasture that is short will be vulnerable to worm infection especially if we now have a period of rain. We can run worm egg counts of a faeces sample pooled from a group of cattle or sheep for just £10 + VAT. This can save a significant amount of wormer and remember the fewer number of times that you worm animals the less resistance you will build up, and so the better it will work when you actually need to use it.