

Newsletter September 2009

Ed, along with a group of (old) young farmers, has completed his cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats in a very good time of 11 days. Ed was riding on a homemade tandem and raised money for Cancer Research. Any one who would like to support this impressive effort can send cheques made out to 'Cancer Research UK' in to the office or donate online at: www.justgiving.com/Ed-End2End09

A lot of clients are reporting that their cows are scouring. Whilst this could well be due to wet, poor quality grass, we are diagnosing a lot of these animals with liver fluke.

Fasciola hepaticae or 'fluke' is a parasite of both cattle and sheep. Inside livestock the fluke live within the liver and cause damage to the liver tissue preventing the liver from working properly. Infestation with fluke can also lead to the liver being condemned upon slaughter. Fluke eggs passed in livestock dung require time to develop living within a fresh water snail before they can re-infect farm animals. Therefore the areas where fluke infection is most common are in lowland, wet locations where these snails live. Signs of fluke infestation can vary considerably but can include: loss of condition, scour, sudden death, poor carcass conformation, 'bottle jaw' and ill thrift.

The past three wet summers have meant more farms are having problems with fluke than before. Diagnosis is most easily made by looking for eggs in the dung of infected animals or by blood test.

Draining or, where possible, avoiding grazing wet areas will reduce the number of fluke eggs eaten by livestock. Infections can be controlled using flukicides of which there are a number of different products. The age of fluke that different brands kill vary, selecting the correct product is especially important in autumn treatments when killing young, immature fluke is required. Please get in touch with us if you would like to discuss which product you should use.

Our August meeting on BVD went very well, although the unusually fine weather meant that several clients who wanted to attend felt that they should stay at home working! Let us know if this applies to you - if we get sufficient numbers of clients who would have liked to come but were unable, we may re-run this talk at a later date.