

# SOUTH MOOR VETS

## FARM NEWSLETTER



May 2023

If you're Spring calving and/or lambing, how has it all gone? The season is just about drawing to a close, but it still seems very busy out there! It's just as well that you and us vets are just about the only people in the country who aren't on strike at the moment!

Hope you've had a good Spring so far, and are enjoying the fact that we've just had the wettest March ever recorded and are now in a hosepipe ban!

Roll on summer!

### MINIMISING PAIN WHEN DISBUDDING, DEHORNING AND CASTRATING CALVES

Disbudding, dehorning and castrating can all be stressful and painful events. This can be minimised by using local anaesthetic (a legal requirement) as well as an injection of pain relief.

For disbudding and dehorning, local anaesthetic is injected into the groove that runs beside the eye and towards the base of the horn, blocking the cornual nerve. Between 2 and 5 ml per side (according to the size of the

animal; older cattle will need considerably more!) is advised. Allow 15 minutes for the injection to take effect before commencing.

Local anaesthetic should also be used for all castrations, whether the testicles are being "squeezed" or "cut". Calves and lambs can be "ringed" without local anaesthetic only if they are less than a week old.

Local anaesthetic only numbs the area for a few hours, so it is important to provide an additional form of analgesia lasting a few days. Various studies have demonstrated that calves receiving pain relief at the time of disbudding and castration benefit from faster growth rates and are more likely to exhibit normal behaviour and social in-

teractions, compared to animals that go without pain relief.

A single subcutaneous injection of meloxicam (Loxciom/ Metacam/ Animeloxan) at a dose of 1 ml per 40 kg will ensure that calves are kept comfortable, happy, and continue to eat in the days following the procedure. For optimal pain cover, administer the pain relief at the same time as the local anaesthetic.

Farmers running block-calving dairy herds may want to further minimise disbudding associated stress by organising large sessions with sedation. Your vet will spend a morning or afternoon sedating calves in small batches and performing the procedure while they are unconscious. This resolves the issue of restraining small yet surprisingly strong calves, with the added bonus of them having little recollection of the whole experience. Let us know if this is something you would like to arrange.

We are also able to run on farm training if you would like a refresher on any of the above.



**MILKSURE COURSE**  
South Moor Vets, Ivybridge  
TUESDAY 23rd MAY, 1pm  
Book on 01752 892390



## FLY CONTROL IN CATTLE AND SHEEP

Flies are one of the biggest ectoparasite problems faced by farmers across the country. In addition to causing intense irritation and sometimes even self-trauma, they can limit productivity due to reduced grazing time. Flies can transmit diseases such as New Forest Eye (Bovine keratoconjunctivitis) and summer mastitis as well as the obvious issue of fly strike.

You will probably be all too familiar with fly strike. Attracted by long/dirty fleece, wounds or footrot, female flies lay up to 250 eggs each on the fleece. Upon hatching 12 hours later, the resulting maggots begin to attack the flesh itself.



**Ask your vet about the new vaccine for New forest Eye!**

### Reducing exposure

Prevention is definitely better than cure. Where possible avoid grazing near stagnant water or around overhanging trees during risk periods.

### Fly control options

#### Chemical sprays/pour-ons

An insecticide is applied as a water emulsion via a knapsack sprayer or spray arch. In sheep this needs to be done post shearing,



#### Pros:

- Effective
- Can be applied to specific parts of the animals, such as the udder area, during high risk periods

#### Cons:

- Good handling facilities are essential
- Applications are weather-dependent
- High labour requirement
- Difficult to apply spray evenly

#### Cost

Depending on size of animal and brand this will be between 50p and £1.70 per animal, and in an average summer, three or four monthly treatments are usually required,

#### Ear tags containing Cypermethrin (this is only for cattle)

#### Pros:

- Ease of use
- Very effective – most will kill flies on contact.

#### Cons:

- Provide little protection to the udder area
- Potential issues with resistance
- Use of synthetic compounds may come under pressure in future

#### Cost

Tags cost around £3 and give five months of cover.

#### Biological

Relatively new biological controls of flies are now becoming increasingly popular in calf sheds or intensive housed systems. These involve releasing fly parasites such as parasitic wasps which actively search for and destroy fly eggs, thereby to reducing the breeding population of pest flies.

As we head towards summer, effective fly control will once again be a really important tool for improving health and welfare, and productivity.



For up-to-date news and events

