

July 2011.

Unfortunately from September 9th Lawrence is leaving Trefaldwyn vets. We shall all be very sad to see him go but the lucky devil is going travelling round the world so we wish him well in his maritime endeavours. We have employed Andrew Rose to start at the beginning of August. Andrew has worked on a farm for a year so he should hit the ground running.

MRSA has recently been found to have caused **mastitis** in a few dairy herds! So what.

1. What is MRSA? It is basically Staph aureus which is resistant to a certain antibiotic. Staph aureus is a bacteria many of the dairy people will have come across. It is a bug which is spread from cow to cow during milking. Hence good parlour hygiene esp teat dipping is paramount.

2. How many cases of MRSA are there every year in Britain? Estimates of MRSA carriage range from about 1:350 to 1:100 of the general population (i.e. detection of MRSA with no signs of disease).

3. How many farms will be infected? It is thought that approximately 1 in 40 dairy farms will have this bug. ie 3%.

4. Is it safe to drink milk from a farm with MRSA? The discovery of this strain in milk does not represent any disease risk to humans. Pasteurisation kills S Aureus.

5. Can people contract MRSA from beef? *S. aureus* in cows is not known to cause disease other than mastitis. The calves of dairy cows are fed unpasteurized milk when they are born and a proportion of these calves will be raised for beef. It is possible that a small proportion of beef carcasses could be infected although if meat did contain MRSA, normal kitchen hygiene and the cooking process would prevent any infection risk to those consuming it.

6. Is this the result of the overuse of antibiotics by the cattle industry? We do not know. Farms are under considerable financial pressure to increase milk production and reduce margins as a result of the purchasing power of supermarkets; this inevitably leads to more mastitis. Vets and farmers are not going to allow cows to suffer when they get mastitis, and will use the most effective treatments available. Everyone in the industry believes that prudent use of antibiotics is an important issue.

7. How long has this strain on MRSA been in milk? We don't know. Only looked at samples collected in cattle samples from 2006 to 2007. There is evidence (from a single human sample found in Denmark in 1975) that it has been in existence for almost 40 years in people.

8. Is there a risk to farm workers or people who visit farms that have MRSA? Although farm workers, vets and abattoir workers are more likely to carry MRSA, cases of disease caused by MRSA in these people are very rare.

Neospora. What is it? **A headache to all concerned!**

- Important, infectious disease of cattle that results in **abortion and still birth.**

Economic losses include: Abortion, premature culling and reduced milk yields.

- The eggs are produced by infected dogs which are then poo'ed out.

Cattle then eat them.

- Infection is spread from mother to cow during pregnancy and often over subsequent generations.
- Abortion occurs when the Neospora multiplies in the developing calf or placenta which causes damage and abortion.

The earlier in the pregnancy the infection occurs the more damage occurs.

Control is difficult as there is no answer in a bottle.

1. Stop dogs mucking on silage / hay / straw.
2. Prompt disposal of placentas / fetuses / stillborn calves.
3. Culling cows that are infected!!! Costly.

It is thought that once a cow aborts from neospora it is less likely to abort again from this.

Itchy sheep.

The majority of sheep will now have been shorn so this is the **best time to control the parasites** that cause itchiness in sheep. My preferred method of control is to use a **sheep dip**. A dip will effectively control and prevent scab, lice and flies. However many of you for obvious reasons **don't like using dip** and so the alternatives for **lice are a pour – on** such as **crovect or dysect**.

For blowfly use clik, clikazine or vetrazine.

For scab use an ivermectin type injection.

- The best time for the pour ons is a couple of weeks post shearing so don't miss the window. Also please read the label on how to apply them. The product is only guaranteed if applied with the right gun the right way!