

FOREST HOUSE VETERINARY SURGERY

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Farm Animal Newsletter
October 2004

Toxovax supplies

Many of you will have noticed that Toxovax vaccine is currently unavailable. We have been told that supplies should become available again at the end of October or early November.

Toxoplasma gondii, the organism that causes Toxoplasmosis in sheep is a parasite with a very complicated life cycle with several successive stages, first in cats then in mammals (sheep and humans). The manufacture of Toxovax involves the replication of one life stage, which normally exists in specialised immune cells of infected animals.

The manufacture of the vaccine is technically very challenging and requires tissue culture under specialised production conditions. These are difficult to achieve even on a small scale. Add to this the difficulties of producing commercial quantities of vaccine to the stringent quality and consistency standards of the national regulatory agencies and this explains why production problems sometimes occur and is one of the reasons why no other manufacturer produces a Toxoplasma vaccine.

Considerable investment was made by the company to upgrade the production facilities following the problems experienced last year. The regulatory agencies introduced an unexpected quality control test which produced a number of laboratory challenges. By the time these problems were sorted out vaccine production was much delayed.

The only other product for the control of Toxoplasmosis is Deccox. It is not a vaccine. Ring us if you require advice regarding this product.

Liver Fluke warning

Disease results from the migration of large numbers of baby flukes through the liver or from the presence of adult flukes rummaging and munching in the bile ducts (or both).

Liver fluke can infect all grazing animals, and man, but mainly affects cattle and sheep.

The incidence of liver fluke disease is greatly influenced by the weather, particularly rainfall.

We had a flock badly affected with it last year which was a relatively dry year. This summer has been very wet.

Signs of Fluke in sheep

Severe disease:

Sudden death or dullness. Breathing difficulties. Pale gums. Swollen abdomen and abdominal pain.

Mild disease:

Weight loss, pale gums, swelling under the jaw ('bottle jaw') and swollen abdomen

The signs in cattle are similar although not as severe. Diarrhoea is usually present.

Control and treatment protocols

In average rainfall years:

- Dose cattle once in December or January.
- Dose all sheep in October and January with a *drug effective against immature stages*. Dose in May with a flukicide active against adults only.

If rainfall heavy in the previous year:

- Dose out-wintered cattle in May.
- Additional doses may be required for sheep in November and June – use a drug against immature stages.

Treatment intervals depend on the activity of the drug against immature stages.

Triclabendazole is generally the drug of choice.

Johne's disease

We have just got the blood samples back from a thin, scouring adult dairy cow confirming the presence of this disease on a farm. A few days beforehand the farmer had filed the leaflet from Defra about this disease in the usual place!! I sent him another one and page 11 is pinned up on his notice board for everyone involved to read.

The Veterinary Investigation Centres say Johne's is a ticking bomb waiting to go off.

The main problem is the prolonged incubation period – two to five years!! During this time a seemingly healthy cow can be shedding the organism and infecting calves with the wasting disease.

It causes major production losses and is spread in contaminated colostrum, dung, contaminated feed, pastures and water supplies.

We can screen your herd for the disease via blood (and faecal samples).

If you are a clean herd, implement measures to keep this nuisance disease out.

If you are an infected herd then you should implement steps to control and eventually eradicate the disease. There is a vaccine.

The Defra leaflet 'Guidance on control of Johne's disease in dairy herds' is excellent.

Beef herds can get the disease too.

Farmers' meetings

We have one meeting confirmed for **the 1st December at Hopper Lane at 7 – 7.30 pm**. Tony Andrews is coming from Hertfordshire to speak to Dairy farmers about **feeding in the late lactation period**.

It is a major coup for us to get Tony, as he is a world authority on cattle medicine and has written the definitive text on the subject. Tony has also written a world renowned book called 'The Health of Dairy Cattle'. He is a great speaker with bags of common sense advice. The meeting should appeal to everyone as Tony has a good sense of humour, understands the difficulties of farming and regularly gets his boots covered in cow muck.

Please feel free to bring along dairy farming friends. Gillian will contact you nearer the time.

Richard Green from Semex has agreed to do a light-hearted talk about **breeding and conformation**. This will be of interest to Dairy and Beef clients. He is passionate about his subject and also entertaining to listen to. He enjoys stirring up debate and discussion! He will be coming in January.