

THE ARK NEWS

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2006

BULL FERTILITY- How much attention do you pay to your bulls?

At this time of year we are preparing ourselves for the forth-coming calving season. At this time we should also be considering assessing your bull's fertility. They are half of the equation. If one cow is not fertile she will not get in calf. If one bull is not fertile fifty cows will not get in calf!

A fertile bull run with fifty normal cycling cows would be expected to get 60% pregnant at 3 weeks and 90% pregnant by 6 weeks. **What if the bull is subfertile?**

Subfertile bulls will get fewer cows in calf increasing your culling and replacement rates and leaving you with fewer calves to sell. Cows that do get in calve will calve later, prolonging the calving period and may slip out the pattern in subsequent years.

In the practice we have found in the region of 20-30% of bulls tested were subfertile. We would therefore advise you contact the practice to arrange testing of your bulls pre breeding season.

HUSKVAC

It's again the time to be considering vaccinating your calves against parasitic bronchial pneumonia or HUSK. Vaccine is obtainable within 24 hours so please contact the surgery with numbers needed.

LAMBING

Now is the time of year to pay particular attention to the nutrition of your ewes. 85% of foetal growth occurs in the last six weeks of pregnancy and supplemental feeding is crucial over this period. Undernourished ewes, along with those that are too fat or carrying twins are prone to

twin lamb disease. Regular condition scoring will help to identify susceptible animals.

Twin lamb disease is a disease of energy deficiency similar to acetonaemia in cattle; affected ewes are inappetent, often blind, show behavioural changes and eventually become recumbent. There are a number of oral and intravenous treatments available and severely affected ewes can be aborted if necessary.

If you have any drugs orders for lambing, it would be appreciated if you could phone the surgery first so they can be prepared for you.

CAMPYLOBACTER (Vibrio)

This is a bacterial infection that leads to infertility in cows. The bacteria *Campylobacter foetus* is asymptotically carried by bulls in the penis and prepuce, whereby transmission is venereally at service. The disease history in infected herds is infertility with the occasional abortion.

Diagnosis - based on:

- history
- Sheath washing bulls
- Obtaining vaginal mucus from at least 6 cows served in the previous 2 months
- abortion samples

Control- this is based on 3 disease features

- transmission is venereal
- untreated bulls are permanently infected
- Cows/Heifers develop immunity over 3-6 months

Therefore

- Use AI on all stock (infected cows are classed clean after 2 normal pregnancies)
- Use AI or clean bull on clean stock ie maiden heifers. However if infected bull is still being used on the infected cows the infection will be prolonged or at worst never be cleared
- Sheath wash infected bulls with Antibiotic.