



FARM NEWSLETTER

NEW HERD HEALTH PLANNING INITIATIVE BY NFU

The NFU Health Planning Project is a great way to review the performance of your herd and/or flock and target specific areas to try to improve the profitability of your enterprise. Active health planning should not be seen as a 'tick box' exercise but it is meant to increase profitability by improving animal health, care and husbandry.

The NFU will pay for one and a half days of our time. This can be used to visit the farm, write the health plan and review the plan within 6-12 months.

On top of this the NFU will pay £200 for sampling and/or lab fees. This enables to establish the health status of the herd/flock for various infectious diseases like BVD or Johne's diseases. It can also be used to monitor worm egg counts or to start enrolment on a health scheme.

Unfortunately this project is only partly funded so all participants will be expected to contribute £150 towards the cost of setting up the plan.

FRIP

Farm Resource Improvement Programme or FRIP are grants up to £25K (40% or 50% funding) per farm for capital investment.

What is covered?

- Energy efficiency (50%, e.g. heat recovery devices)
- Nutrient management (50%, e.g. mechanical slurry separator systems)
- Water management (50%, e.g. fixed pumps, UV filtration systems, rainwater harvesting)
- *Animal Health and Welfare* (!) (40%)
- Renewable Energy (50%)

Animal Health and Welfare: the objective is to improve the health and welfare of farm animals.

- It cannot be used to meet legal requirements
- Must be 'over and above' standard farming practice
- Applications must be accompanied by a detailed Health Plan prepared by a vet
- Health Plan must include recommendation for capital investment

More information on FRIP can be found on:

<http://www.seeda.co.uk/what-we-do/european-investment/farm-resource-improvement-programme>

To arrange a visit for a health planning session on your farm please contact us.

MEETING ABOUT TB

18th of May, Plumpton college, 2.30pm

The NFU, DEFRA and ourselves are arranging a meeting at Plumpton College on May 18th in order to prepare for a change in wildlife management policy by the Secretary of State, and to lobby for this area to be included in future trials involving vaccination and/or culling of diseased badgers.

Mapping the presence of badgers, their setts and patterns of behaviour, and identifying individual farm badger avoidance strategies, as well as other measures controlling cattle to cattle spread are to be discussed.

Many of these measures are already being trialled in Wales. If you own cattle in the "hotspot" or close by we hope that you will be present to add weight to this TB Project in East Sussex.



BULL FERTILITY

It is found that **1 in 4 bulls are unfit for breeding!** Many of the bulls develop sub-fertility or sterility later in life. It is essential that these bulls are identified before losses have occurred. Good fertility in one season does not guarantee good fertility for the following season. As bulls only represent 2-5% of your breeding stock but are responsible for 50% of their fertility people should take bull fertility serious this spring.

Sweeper bulls in dairy herds should not be forgotten as these are faced with the most difficult animals to get pregnant. Therefore sweeper bulls need to be 100% fertile! This is particular important for those herds that try to achieve a tight calving pattern.

The significance of lameness should not be underestimated. If several animals are bulling at the same time a lame bull might not feel chasing all of them and give up after serving the first one.

Don't play lottery with your bulls. Make sure a MOT is carried out before the breeding season starts. Speak to one of us for more details

TICK TRANSMITTED DISEASES OF SHEEP

In view of the high numbers of ticks being seen this year locally, a reminder of their significance seems appropriate.

Ticks are most frequently found on sheep in the Spring and in some areas again in late summer.

Each tick requires three hosts to feed from, it feeds as a larvae for 3-5 days then moults and the next year feeds as a nymph for 3-5 days then moults and feeds for 14 days as an adult until it is mated and then lays eggs that hatch into larvae completing the lifecycle. Moulting and feeding are temperature dependant and in certain conditions a lifecycle can take many years to complete.

The tick only spends 20 days on the host in its lifetime the rest of its life it lives in vegetation. Ticks prefer damp vegetation mainly fell land and woodland areas. They are not active until the temperature reaches above 7 degrees this warming triggers them to look for a host.

Tick pyaemia results from physical injection of skin bacteria when the tick bites. Bacteria get in to the blood stream and can cause joint ill and wide spread internal abscesses in organs and the spine. Treatment involves antibiotics and antiinflammatories.

Ticks are also responsible for transmitting the diseases **louping ill** and **tick borne fever**. Ticks become infected when they take a blood feed from an animal that has virus circulating in its blood. The virus is then stored in the ticks salivary glands and injected into the next host on its next feed after moulting.

Louping Ill

Louping Ill is a tick transmitted viral disease mainly affecting sheep but also causing disease in man, cattle, horses, dogs, pigs llamas, and red grouse!

Once the offending tick feeds on the sheep and injects virus, high virus levels circulate in the blood so any other feeding ticks become infected. The sheep then produces an antibody response to the virus and becomes immune for life. Antibodies are passed to lambs in colostrum and the lambs are immune until about 2 months of age.

In the initial stages sheep show little signs but a rise in temperature, neurological signs develop 7-14 days after the tick infects the ewe. Diagnosis is challenging as clinical signs are inconsistent. Blood tests are available but by the time neurological signs are seen antibodies levels in the blood may have dropped. Post mortem is the most reliable method of diagnosis.

A vaccine is available for louping Ill. The normal practice is to vaccinate replacement ewe lambs in the autumn or well before returning to the hill in the spring.

Controlling ticks is difficult as they spend such a small proportion of their life on the sheep. Pour on and dips can be used but they need to be applied every 4-5 weeks during high risk periods.

Because of the long life cycle of the tick and wildlife hosts, control is difficult .

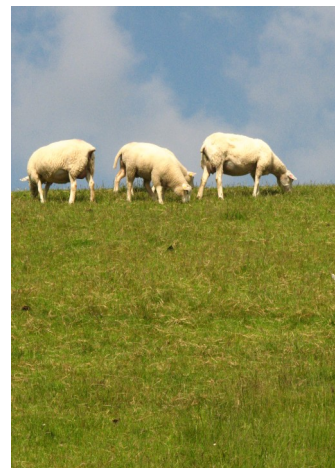
Tick Borne Fever

Tick borne fever is another disease transmitted through ticks feeding. In this disease the tick injects a small parasite that infects the sheep white blood cells. The sheep have a very high temperature for up to 3 weeks. Sheep are dull and in-appetant. The sheeps immune system is compromised and they become susceptible to other infections such as pneumonia . The prolonged fever may cause infertility in rams and abortion in ewes. Tick borne fever can be diagnosed by blood sampling . Sheep become carriers once infected and can relapse in the future.

The two most susceptible groups of animals are bought in pregnant ewes and new born lambs. Pregnant animals should never be moved from a tick free area to a tick infested area.

Uncomplicated cases can be treated with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories

No vaccines are available, prevention is by dipping or pour on applications when new borne lambs are returned to the hill.



NEW WORMER-'ZOLVIX'

This long awaited wormer by NOVARTIS is finally on the market. As you are all aware until now there were 3 types of wormers available (white drench, yellow drench and clear drench) and unfortunately there is resistance to all of these.

Zolvix is the first wormer of a new type, with a different mode of action, and therefore there is NO resistance to it (yet). It is active against most worms found.

As there is no resistance to it, we have to treasure this wormer and not use it as a routine treatment. It is recommended to use this wormer for:

- *Lambs mid-season;* at or shortly before weaning, clearing the lambs from any resistant worms at an important stage in their lives
- *Quarantine drench;* to remove all resistant worms before animals are introduced into your own flock.

To discuss a worm policy specific for your flock (which can be included in a flock health plan as mentioned) please talk to one of us.



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