



Tern Vets Ltd

FEBRUARY 2017

PUTTING CARE INTO PRACTICE

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Your dedicated farm
team available 24/7



SCHMALLEMBERG 2017

Farmers are being urged to submit animals with suspected Schmallenberg virus (SBV) for subsidised post-mortems as the number of confirmed cases of the disease grows. The disease has been detected on local farms as well as across the UK.

Treatment: At present there is no treatment and no vaccines available for Schmallenberg.

Transmission: Schmallenberg is transmitted by midges – but not animal to animal – and when pregnant sheep and cattle are bitten by an infected midge it can cause severe malformations of foetuses in the womb. The very mild Autumn of 2016 may have contributed to the recent outbreak as it meant midges were able to survive much longer than normal.

History of Schmallenberg: The disease emerged across Western Europe in November 2011. By July 2013, calves, lambs and kids with severe skeletal deformities had been reported in at least 24 European countries. No cases of Schmallenberg virus causing deformed calves or lambs were confirmed in 2014/2015, possibly as a result of immunity built up by animals following the 2011/12 epidemic.

What are its effects? Symptoms are quite mild, but usually affect a number of animals in a flock or herd. You may see: loss of appetite, diarrhoea, loss of production but these all disappear after a few days. It has serious effects if the animal is pregnant when the midge bites: you can get delayed abortions, difficult births, affected new-born animals may have deformed, twisted limbs and spines +/- brain defects leading to the birth of weak and blind calves and lambs.

PLEASE PHONE US IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT SCHMALLEMBERG IN YOUR CATTLE OR SHEEP. 01630 656300

OFFICE NEWS

Some of you will have met our new vet Jonathan Mayer who started last month; he is a local dairy farmers son and graduated from the University of Nottingham in 2016. Jon worked in a dairy practice down in Somerset before coming back home to Shropshire. He has a particular interest in young-stock health and dairy cattle lameness which led him over to America where he had an extended placement in the 'Mid-west'. When he's not working (either at home or at Tern!) he's a keen cyclist, chef and climber.



Heat Detection part 2:

In part two of our focus on heat detection we will look at **factors affecting heat behavior in dairy cows**. Various factors related to environment, cow health, nutrition and herd mates can affect heat or oestrous behaviour.

1. Footing Surface

To what extent does a slippery footing surface affect expression of heat? Research conducted in USA compared heat activity of high-producing Holstein cows that were observed for one hour every eight hours, 30 minutes on dirt and 30 minutes on grooved concrete. Duration of heat was longer for cows observed on dirt, and mounting and standing behaviour nearly doubled when cows were checked for heat on dirt as compared to concrete. Some of our farmers who use sand cubicles would agree with this; the sand that is kicked off the beds hugely increases grip on concrete passageways and they notice an increase in bulling activity, duration and number of mounts. Spreading sand on concrete areas (loafing areas, collecting yards, passageways) can be a simple and very effective way to assist heat detection on every farm, as well as reducing slips, falls and accidents for the cows.

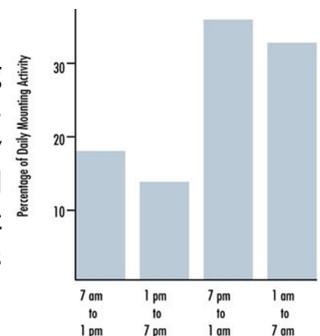


2. Feet and Leg Problems

Cows with sore feet or legs or poor conformation exhibit less mounting activity, or they stand to be mounted when **not** in heat because it is too painful to move and avoid being mounted. One UK study involving 770 cows with nearly 1500 lactations showed that lameness caused by specific lesions on the hoof was associated with a 7-day increase in days to first service and added 11 days to the calving interval compared to herd mates without lameness. These differences were greater for cows with sole lesions that started between 36-70 days after calving, the time when cows should first be detected in heat. For those cows the interval to first service increased by 17 days and added 30 days on to the calving interval. No-one wants lame cows, and the effect on heat detection is huge. Make sure cows have a routine trim before dry off and any early lactation lameness is dealt with immediately. Our foot trimmer Craig comes highly recommended if you need a hand with getting on top of lameness issues on your farm, his mobile number is 07779 017878.

3. Variation During the Day

We often hear farmers remark that most mounting occurs in early morning or during the evening. In a study conducted in Canada, video cameras monitored oestrous activity in a cubicle shed 24 hours a day. This study showed that nearly 70 percent of the mounting occurred between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. This observation suggests that cows are most likely to exhibit mounting activity when they are not distracted by farm activities such as feeding, milking, and scraping out.



4. Herdmate Status (Stage of Estrous Cycle)

Pregnant cows are the least likely group of herd mates to mount a cow in heat. Farmers must rely on the other non-pregnant cycling herd mates to detect heat. In one US study, a bulling cow individually met each of 19 cycling herd mates in a barn for 10 minutes. Herd mates close to, or in oestrus mounted the oestrus cow 2.5 times in the 10 minutes, whereas cows in mid-cycle mounted less than once overall. Therefore mid-cycle cows are poor heat detectors so farmers must rely on cows in or near heat to detect other oestrous cows. In small herds, most of the herd may be pregnant at certain times and as more animals become pregnant, the number of potential heat-detecting animals is reduced. The situation is similar for seasonal herds; after an intensive breeding period, when a high percentage of the herd is pregnant, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify the few non-pregnant cycling cows in heat.

5. Nutritional Factors

It is usual for cows to lose up to 0.5 Body Condition Score (BCS) after calving, but mounting activity has been shown to decrease in cows that lost more weight after calving than herd mates with minimal weight loss. It is a good idea to monitor **BCS change** between late dries and post-natal checks at your regular vet visits.

NEXT MONTH:

TIPS TO INCREASE EXPRESSION OF HEAT BEHAVIOUR