

# FARMGATE VETERINARY GROUP

November Newsletter

2020

## “What’s the Plan?”

Planning is an important part of any enterprise. The saying goes “Fail to plan means plan to fail” is true in almost all cases. Planning may seem very difficult in the times we find ourselves in with restrictions and fear of Covid 19, however it is vital to carry out periodically. Now, around housing, is a good time to revise and update plans. Restricted social lives at the moment gives everyone an added opportunity!

The first thing to consider is what is your core activity. Is it producing weanlings/store cattle, kgs of milk solids, finishing cattle or lambs for the factory?

Then the question is how do I produce more from the stock I have? Where am I losing ground? Is it late calvers, poor thrive, disease outbreaks, lack of housing, poor quality silage etc.?

Then consider what you would most like to change on the farm for 2021. Once you have come to this point all you need then is the “how”.

For example if you have poor conception rates in heifers and a spread out calving season, then improving the conception rate in the heifers will over time reduce the calving spread. This allows you to wean heavier calves or produce more milk. Next years breeding season might seem like a long way off but if heifers are not target weight you will be on the back foot. Checking the situation with the heifers now will give you the opportunity to get them to target weight on time.

Another example might be outbreaks of scour/pneumonia in calves—have you a plan to prevent the same problem next spring? Now is the time.

We can help you start the process of planning all the way up to the “how”. Contact us for assistance.

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### *Do you need help at*

- *Planning for next year*
  - *Preventing known problems*
  - *Ideas how to get more output from your livestock*
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## In This Issue

- Planning for 2021
- Pneumonia in Weanlings
- Scanning Cows
- Drying Off Cows
- Sheep Management in Winter
- XLVet Services to Clients
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- Covid 19 Measures

Contact us if you need help



## Scanning Cows

Calves are being weaned at the moment and dairy cows are entering the last month of lactation. If you haven't scanned your cows already it is time to do it. Empty cows are unproductive and should be set aside for fattening or in the case of dairy cows in winter milk herds, milk them on further than normal.

The next question answered by scanning is the degree of calving spread and the percentage empties. There are some reports of high empty rate in dairy herds this year, while calving spread is a huge issue in suckler herds. This represents a serious loss to you, the farmer.

Use your scanning results to benchmark your herd—assess where you are. Then plan for where you would like to be regarding fertility.

We are proficient at conducting fertility investigations and have the advantage of being able to look at cows and examine the records to understand the complete picture.

We are available to scan cows, discuss the results and design a simple action plan for improvement

## Pneumonia in Weanlings

Cattle have small lungs compared to their body size - they are prone to respiratory disease or pneumonia.

Most winters in the west of Ireland are particularly bad for pneumonia due to warm and poorly ventilated sheds.

- Freshly weaned animals should be bedded on straw and eating meal.
- Watch for signs of pneumonia – early treatment is important. Grade weanlings into 3 categories. Grade 1 are eating normally. Grade 2 are “picking” at food. Grade 3 are not eating.
- Grade 2 animals need treatment and the majority of them need veterinary attention. Grade 3 animals need immediate veterinary attention. Delay in treatment can result in losses, lung damage and ill-thrift.
- Monitor temperatures of coughing animals –those with temperatures  $>104^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $39.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) need treatment as well as animals not eating.
- Treatment should continue for 48hours after the reduction in temperature—that means at least 3 days. Not completing treatment can result in relapses and lung damage.
- Vaccination reduces the incidence of pneumonia and cattle thrive better. Contact us for advice.

# Drying Off Cows

At drying off we have two main concerns

- 1) To allow the udder and cow regenerate before the next lactation
- 2) To cure any existing infections in the quarters (reduce SCC)

Cows need at least 6 weeks of a dry period for regeneration and to come back up to a BCS of 3.0-3.25 at calving. First lactation heifers probably need more time. Thin and/or lame cows need more time also—this is critical.

Most farmers are used to using blanket dry cow therapy with antibiotic tubes. Some farmers use sealers also. A few are using Selective Dry Cow Therapy. Important points to make are

- All dairy cows should be sealed at drying off to prevent new infections entering the teat end during the dry period.
- Cows with existing infections (high SCC >150,000) or that had a case of clinical mastitis this lactation should be treated with antibiotic + sealer. If you don't have this information then selective dry cow therapy is not a runner.
- Because of the risks I would strongly advise anyone thinking of selective dry cow therapy to contact us for advice in advance of drying off. A free Dry Cow Consult is available through AHI.

# Sheep Management in Winter

Each year many farmers find sheep dead in the field. These are significant losses as they are potentially carrying an average of 1.9 lambs as well as their own value. Our figures from the first year of KT suggest that only 25% of sheep farmers met their mortality targets. Last year that doubled to 48%. Therefore these losses are easily preventable. The most common issues are

- Acute and sub-acute fluke
- Stomach worms (lambs)
- Clostridial disease
- Going on their back
- Pneumonia
- Lameness

Most of these can be prevented with a proper flock health plan. If you want a flock health plan contact us and we will draw one up for you and advise you on strategies to minimize losses.

## Ram Management

The last raddles are going on most rams now. Plan when the breeding season will end and take the rams away. Rams are a significant investment and many need some TLC over winter.



## XLVet Services Available to Clients

XLVets have secured support from Skillnets Ireland to encourage upskilling and training for clients of member practices. These supports usually take the form of training events and the mentor programmes. Mentor programmes subsidise the laboratory costs of many of the tests required to determine the health, fertility and mineral status of your herds/flocks, so that together we can determine how to approach common herd/flock health issues.

The latest addition to this suite of services is **ParasiteMentor**. This programme has a limited number of places. In summary the programme entails

- 6-8 faecal samples per year at times that suit you/ your farm to determine when dosing is required
- Performing a faecal egg reduction test to see if wormers are working effectively
- A parasite control plan for your farm for the year

Anyone that might be interested in this programme should contact us to discuss it. This programme will be very valuable to a lot of farms

## Winter Dosing

If cattle were dosed at the correct time and with suitable products after housing they will not need a turn-out dose. It is very satisfying to see that the majority of faecal samples taken on the BEEP Scheme indicate that last winters dosing regimes worked 100%.

This year contact us before you winter dose for practical advice to suit every situation/system

## Have We Your Correct Mobile Number?

Prescriptions and other practice updates are sent via text message. If you are not receiving them please call us so we can update our system.

## Contact Us

Give us a call for more information.

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Visit us on the web at

[www.farmgateveterinarygroup.ie](http://www.farmgateveterinarygroup.ie)

## Covid 19 Measures

Our Covid 19 protection measures are still in place. A reminder that only one customer at a time in the office (ring ahead where possible), deliveries to anyone that is cocooning/isolating.

On farms we aim to socially distance/ treat ourselves where possible. For routine work we can send two vets where this isn't possible—ring ahead

If you are test positive/close contact let us know .

More info [www.farmgateveterinarygroup.ie](http://www.farmgateveterinarygroup.ie)

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