

# Smallholders' News

Castle Veterinary  
Group



Smallholders'  
Club

## Vets' Welcome

The last six months have somewhat taken us by surprise! Katherine and I have been busy lambing and calving rather more individuals than we might have thought thanks to the good grass growing conditions last year. In other news four of our vets have left and will be greatly missed, David Jones, Olivia, Lousie and this month Marketa. In the last couple of months we welcomed Kelly and Becca to the team, they are both keen to help us with the Smallholders side of things which will prove a great boost to the team.



## Bloat in Cattle

Spring and mid-autumn are risk periods for bloat in cattle because grass growth is at its peak. There are two types of bloat; a gaseous bloat and a frothy bloat. Gassy bloat is simply the build up of gas in the rumen. Gas is a normal product of rumination, it is removed from the system by belching (eructation) rather than via the back end - a common miss-conception! Gassy bloat tends to occur when the gullet is blocked or when a cow loses the ability to 'burp' due to milk fever. Frothy bloat is due to formation of a foam layer developing on top of the liquid in the rumen preventing the gases being released. Frothy bloat is often seen when cows are on a diet with high levels of clover and alfalfa. Gassy bloat is often seen with individual cows and frothy bloat usually effects up to 25% of the herd.

### Clinical signs

The most obvious clinical sign is bulge on the left side of the cow behind the ribs, before the prominent hip bone. Cows are often very painful, uncomfortable and bellowing. Bloat can be a true emergency as the cow can die within 15mins of developing bloat! It is important for the vet to determine whether it is a frothy or gassy bloat. This difference changes the treatment plan. The gas in a gassy bloat must be removed via a tube passed through the mouth or a whole in the animals side, whereas frothy bloat can be treated with a drench of anti-foaming agent.

### How to avoid bloat

Avoid grazing cattle on pasture with high clover content.  
Make diet changes very gradually to allow the rumen to adapt to the change.  
Restrict grazing either by reducing time spent in the field or the field size.

*Its just worth mentioning that anything that requires fermentation in its production like bread or beer should not be fed to ruminants even if they show an interest because the rumen will cause the rising process to start all over again!!*

## Fly Strike...

The sheer amount of flies that have been around this summer has been clearly noticeable. We have had to deal with an increasing rise of fly strike in sheep this year. All sheep should be observed daily and as a result any deaths that occur from fly strike can be held accountable under the animal welfare legislation.



The flies are usually attracted to any open skin lesion or heavy faecal contamination around the back-end of the sheep. When a sheep has fly strike the first thing that may be noticed is that she may be a bit depressed and away from the flock. On closer inspection a large number of flies on the fleece may be seen, the skin may be blackened and maggots may be readily visible with a strong putrid smell. Once the sheep has fly strike it is important to give us a ring and we can treat the sheep dependent on the severity.

This can be prevented by shearing the sheep in May/June before the peak fly season, reducing the incidents of scouring in the flock, and using products such as spot-ons to reduce the burden. *For any advice give us a ring at the surgery.*

## Ruminant Anatomy 101

To understand bloat a little better here is a quick guide to the digestive system of a cow...(or sheep or goat!)



This left sided cut through model shows the oesophagus (gullet) leading down past the chest organs into the first of the ruminant's four stomachs. Food enters the rumen, the giant fermentation vessel seen above (green) where it is broken down by bacteria. From here it moves into the reticulum which is a pouch at the front of the rumen sitting under the liver -the brown structure behind the diaphragm.



Sitting alongside the rumen on the right are the omasum – the round bulge on the right of the picture- and the abomasum, the stomach most like ours, which leads into the small intestine - lower right of the picture.

If you remove the rumen from the model you can appreciate just how much space it takes up!



Here the small intestine, large intestine and kidneys can be seen.

Any questions?

Give us a ring; 01566 772371

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## Did you know??

No double yolked eggs have ever been known to hatch and survive.



## Legal Aspects of Keeping Livestock

### Registration

Land where livestock is kept must be allocated a County Parish Holding (CPH) number. This is obtained from the rural payments agency.



All livestock needs to be registered with DEFRA.

**Cattle** – all cattle born after 1/1/98 must have a DEFRA approved ear tag in each ear (double tagging) with its individual identification number. All cattle must be tagged within 20 days of birth. Dairy cattle must have at least 1 tag in within 36 hours of birth. Both tags need to be fitted before a calf is moved off the holding where it was born – even under 20 days of age.

**Sheep and Goats** – must be identified with tags within 6 months if kept indoors overnight or 9 months if kept entirely outdoors. Again this must be done before any lambs or kids are sold or moved off the premises regardless of age. If young stock are being kept longer than 12 months they must have 2 ear tags, in sheep one tag must be electronic. If lambs are entering the food chain before one year of age they only need one ear tag.

**Pigs** – all must be marked with a herd mark, this can be done using a slapmark (permanent ink mark on each shoulder), ear tag, tattoo or – if being kept for less than 12 months - temporary paint mark.

**Chickens** – If you have more than 50 birds at any time then you must be registered with DEFRA. If you have less than 50 birds then do not have to register but it is encouraged to do so.

## In the next issue...

Find out the answer to our 'Quick Picture Quiz'.

A 'Case Review' based on a real clinical case seen by us since this issue.

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## Quick Picture Quiz??



Any thoughts as to the identity of this creepy crawly removed from a sheep and viewed under the microscope??

Find out more next issue!

Last issue's quick picture quiz answer was 'Biting Sheep Louse'

Lice populations are highest in sheep with poor body conditions as they are often also immuno-compromised or when the sheep are in poor housing conditions.

Many lice infestations are symptom-less however with a heavy burden the sheep rub against fences causing fleece loss or damage. Sheep are often also spotted nibbling their fleece. As vets, we diagnose this by microscopic examination of fleece samples.

