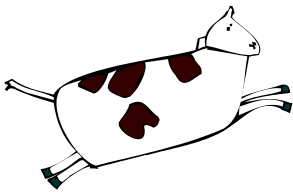


Friars Moor Veterinary Clinic



March 2010 Newsletter

Bluetongue Vaccination

After the coldest winter in over 30 years, spring is only just round the corner. By the end of April the rising temperatures will bring about the start of another midge season, and with it the risk of bluetongue infection once more.

Bluetongue infection remains a real risk for 2010, especially for livestock farmers in the south of England. Last year 2 strains of bluetongue were circulating near the north coast of France, meaning these viruses were present in the local midge population only a short distance from livestock in Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire. The worry is that bluetongue virus will overwinter in France and pose a risk to the southern counties of the UK later this year.

We know that the vaccination programmes across northern Europe have been very successful in controlling the disease. This has been shown very clearly in France – more than 29,000 farms were infected in 2008, while in 2009 following a compulsory vaccination programme less than 100 farms were infected. The French have already initiated a further compulsory vaccination campaign for 2010 against both strains of bluetongue.

We must therefore continue to vaccinate susceptible stock in 2010, to prevent bluetongue returning. If through widespread vaccination we prevent bluetongue from circulating in the UK then we may be able to declare ourselves free of the disease. But if vaccination levels are not sufficiently high then we may fail to eradicate the disease, resulting in it becoming endemic for many years, necessitating continuous annual revaccination. The expert opinion is that we need one final push on vaccination in 2010 to finish the disease off once and for all.

There are some who are considering not revaccinating this year until or unless bluetongue is detected in the UK. There are 2 problems to this approach. Firstly cattle vaccinated in 2009 are likely to have gone without a booster for more than 12 months - they will therefore need 2 doses 3 weeks apart requiring extra handling and extra cost. Secondly and more importantly this is a high risk approach against a nasty disease. It will take until at least 3 weeks after the second dose for full immunity to develop – this means it will take 6 weeks for cattle to be protected from the day a decision is made to hastily vaccinate, and in that 6 weeks bluetongue could have spread across several counties. The advice has to be don't hesitate, vaccinate!

Currently only strain 8 vaccines are available in the UK. These do not protect against strain 1. However if strain 1 is detected in the UK then the strain 1 vaccine in use in France will then be permitted for use here. The risk of strain 1 'hopping' the Channel is likely to be less than strain 8 as in 2009 less than 10% of the farms in France infected with bluetongue were affected by strain 1.

Sheep require a single dose of vaccine. Cattle vaccinated less than 12 months ago also require only one dose. Cattle not vaccinated last year need 2 doses 3 weeks apart. For convenience, bluetongue vaccines can be administered at the same time as some other vaccines – please speak to one of the vets if you have any questions.

Please phone the surgery to place orders for vaccine. This year the manufacturers are providing self-sterilising vaccination guns free of charge.

Finally the use of pour on insecticides for fly control such as Spot On, Swish and Flypor will also help control midges provided they are applied at least once a month. However they are not a substitute for vaccination.

DON'T HESITATE, VACCINATE!!

