

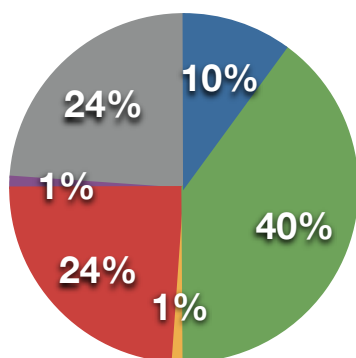
March 2010

## Lameness in the Dairy Herd

A typical UK dairy herd will be losing 1ppl through lameness with approximately 25% of cows showing some degree of lameness at any one time. As part of our LANTRA herd health planning projects we have been mobility scoring some of our own herds and have found prevalence rates of lameness of between 25-50% so far.

The cost of lameness varies according to the type of problem with sole ulcers not surprisingly being the most costly at £500 per case and a case of digital dermatitis less so at £75 per case.

What may surprise many of you is that the treatment costs are just a small part of the overall cost of lameness; reduced fertility and milk yield, together with increased culling accounts for 88% of the cost as the graph below illustrates:



- Medicine Costs
- Fertility Costs
- Vet Costs
- Culling Cost
- Labour Costs
- Reduced Yield

### Digital Dermatitis

Digital Dermatitis is one of the commonest causes of lameness. Once diagnosed on farm it has never been eradicated but can only be kept under control by the following measures:



- Increase lying times and reduce standing times to minimise exposure to slurry.



- Increased hygiene - the bacteria which cause digital dermatitis live in slurry so pay particular attention to areas where slurry may not get cleaned away regularly, such as around water troughs, cross passageways and potholes.

- Treat individual clinical cases by cleaning the lesion thoroughly. Dry with paper towel and apply a topical antibiotic such as antibiotic spray or a mastitis tube followed by a bandage.
- Footbathing is the only practical way to control digital dermatitis in the herd.

### Footbathing to control digital dermatitis:

If you have a lot of clinical cases first treat these individually and also footbath in an appropriate antibiotic such as Lincocin or Tylan, on at least two occasions. Formalin is very painful when there are active lesions of digital dermatitis.

Once active lesions are under control footbath five days a week with 5% Formalin or 10% copper sulphate - the more often you footbath the better the results! Don't stop but the frequency can be reduced once it's under control.

Make sure you know the capacity of your footbath and use chemicals at the correct strength.

**When footbathing allow 1 litre per cow of footbath - in other words a 200 litre footbath needs changing after every 200 cow passages.**

### Design of the footbath:

**The footbath below has recently been built by one of our farmers after discussion with ourselves and incorporates the essentials of good footbath design!**

- Cow flow is good as it is in the normal exit race from the milking parlour.
- Good hose nearby for easy filling and cleaning. The baths have built in drains for the same reason.
- Two baths of 2.4m with a central island. The first bath contains water both to clean the feet and in which the cows will usually dung keeping second bath active for longer.
- The baths are finished with a relatively smooth but non slip surface. Cows don't like walking through ridged baths and will dung more in such baths.
- The baths are filled to at least 10cm in depth
- After footbathing cows walk onto a clean yard



### Spring Vaccination reminder:

Now is the time to plan your vaccination programmes for BVD, Leptospirosis, Bluetongue and Lungworm.

It is essential to maintain the annual boosters to prevent BVD and Leptospirosis reappearing, while Lungworm vaccination gives lifelong protection.

With Bluetongue the temptation may be not to vaccinate this year, as there were no cases last year. However, this was due to the widespread uptake of vaccination coupled with poor climatic conditions during the at risk months.

If you decide to let vaccination lapse this year and then need to in the face of an outbreak, with cattle, you will need to start the course again with two doses 3 weeks apart. More importantly there will be the time lag from vaccination to protection which will be around 4 weeks - a long time in the face of an outbreak!

### Forthcoming meeting for Dairy Farmers

We are holding a meeting on lameness in the dairy herd on Thursday March 11<sup>th</sup> at the Bank House Hotel, Utttoxeter starting at 8pm.

Please let the Farm office know if you are able to attend to assist with the catering arrangements.