



DAMORY LODGE EDWARD STREET BLANDFORD FORUM DORSET DT11 7QT
TEL : 01258 452 626 FAX : 01258 453 548 www.damoryvets.co.uk

THE HEALTHY RUMEN

“Bulling expression” is the best indication of happiness a cow can show..... according to one nutritional advisor.

A healthy rumen means a healthy cow which will be much more productive, better fertility figures and a much higher immuno-activity level to help ward off disease.

SIGNS OF A HEALTHY RUMEN

1. Good rumen fill as seen by distension of the left flank under the transverse processes.
2. Cud chewing- at least 60% of all cows lying down should be chewing the cud. Cudding should be at least 60/minute.
3. Faeces content should have very little undigested matter. If there are signs of undigested maize kernels or an excess of long fibre (greater than 2-3 cms in length).
4. The faeces should be of a consistent nature across the herd. If there is a variation in consistency then this would indicate a rumen that is not functioning properly. This may not be due to diet formulation but may be due to mycotoxins.
5. Cleanliness of back legs.

Other useful guides are

1. Milk figures with respect to butter fats and milk proteins
2. Ovarian activity or dysfunction (number of cysts or inactive ovaries)
3. Level of lameness especially with respect to solar ulcers
4. Faecal sieving to determine level on non digestion
5. Change in body condition score in first 6 weeks post calving
6. On farm blood tests with respect to beta hydroxyl-butyrate. We now have kits that will allow for a rapid analysis of energy formation from breakdown of fat reserves.
7. Rumen pH analysis. This is also a rapid test that can be performed on farm and is best to do this 2-3 hours after the animals have received their in parlour feed. A drop in rumen pH will alter the population of bacteria available to digest the food material in the rumen and we lose the fibre digesters and see an increase in those bacteria which are able to digest the fermentable energy products hence resulting in a further depression of rumen pH. Those cows that suffer from acidosis (rumen pH falls below the level of 6) will suffer a depression in performance.