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Trace Element Profiles

Deficiencies in copper, selenium, cobalt and iodine can be costly to a herd; causing poor growth rates, poor conception rates, weak un-thrifty newborn calves and retained cleansings / dirty cows post-calving. Suckler cows, sheep and dairy heifers fed solely on forages are most at risk of deficiencies because the trace element content of soils, grass & forages varies widely between farms.

There are a number of trace element boluses for cattle & sheep available, each containing different amounts and combinations of trace elements. They vary considerably in price and the reps selling them will always try to convince you their bolus is best and that your animals need them!



We have performed a number of recent trace element profiles on sucklers, sheep & dairy heifers with surprising results: Some have been fine with no need to supplement at all, others have been marginal and have saved money because only 1 rather than 2 boluses have been necessary to correct the deficiency, others have been dangerously low in certain trace elements but not in others and we have been able to select the most appropriate bolus based on the results.



A trace element profile involves blood & urine sampling at least 6 representative cows or sheep. Multiple parameters are measured to give an accurate picture of selenium, cobalt, iodine, zinc and copper status; including whether copper deficiency is primary or secondary to thiomolybdate toxicity. Lab fees total £259 ex. VAT for a 6 animal profile. Although not cheap the testing has quickly paid for itself on several farms where deficiencies have been found and appropriately corrected, or where unnecessary supplementation has been avoided.

We can supply any make of trace element bolus to suit your herd's status, example prices ex. VAT are as follows:

Agrimin 24.7 Smartrace £36.85 for 10
Animax Tracesure-I £42.70 for 10
Cosecure Cattle £66 for 20

Agrimin 24.7 Smartrace Plus £43.20 for 10
Animax Tracesure Cu/I £89.25 for 20
Agrimin All-trace High Iodine £54.35 for 20

Blood sampling to confirm milk screen Johnes-positive animals...

We have seen a number of examples of cows testing Red (positive) for Johnes disease on NMR quarterly milk screening which continue to perform well and test negative for Johnes disease on a blood sample.

We have put our findings to experts at the Scottish Agricultural College who now concede that although the milk screen is a cost-effective screening test for Johnes disease on a herd level, it can throw-up false positive results on some cows. They believe this may be due to natural factors found in the milk of some cows which interfere with the Johnes milk test, and/or due to contamination of samples collected in the parlour (i.e. when a negative cow is milked after a positive cow).

based on cows sampled on: (Only valid up to 4 months from specified sample date)

ELISA 1 07/2014	ELISA 2 08/2014	ELISA 3 09/2014	ELISA 4 10/2014	ELISA 5 11/2014	ELISA 6 12/2014	Infection Group on 07/2014
35.62	33.89	43.63	42.92	56.81	43.84	J5
07.77	64.37	55.43	54.01	70.92	61.64	J5
16.19	7.17	45.06	--	17.37	33.49	J5
53.53	47.77	66.46	61.67	83.36	--	J5
19.71	14.01	34.27	41.68	11.69	14.42	J5
79.77	32.98	46.76	53.58	--	25.99	J5
31.72	18.74	9.71	6.37	--	42.75	J4
--	--	--	--	--	39.42	J4
--	--	17.39	14.43	31.12	--	J4
--	6.15	7.93	22.91	--	31.99	J4
12.79	6.94	45.51	--	5.49	4.03	J3
14.58	24.64	55.16	--	19.38	18.34	J3
--	7.82	15.48	31.40	6.81	7.23	J3
16.74	--	11.87	35.63	10.06	--	J3
44.08	--	27.97	31.31	20.42	--	J3
9.33	7.15	28.43	30.46	--	12.70	J3
--	--	--	--	--	8.36	J1
--	--	--	--	--	4.15	J1
7.11	--	--	--	--	3.87	J1
--	--	--	--	--	1.74	J1



Blood testing, although not cost-effective to perform at herd level on a quarterly basis, is considered the definitive test to see if a cow has become positive for Johnes disease. We are therefore advising that the milk screen is used to identify a list of potential Johnes-positive cows (yellow & red cows) which should then be blood sampled to confirm whether they have genuinely become Johnes positive or not.

Having performed a number of “confirmatory” blood samples on farms so far we have found that only 50% of milk-screen red cows have tested positive for Johnes antibodies on a blood sample.

Our current advice for monitoring Johnes disease is therefore as follows:

1. Perform quarterly milk screening to identify potential Johnes positive cows (reds & yellows).
2. Blood sample newly identified red & yellow cows at the next vet visit to confirm whether they have genuinely become positive for Johnes disease.
3. Cows testing positive on a blood sample have Johnes disease and are highly likely to be shedding the disease in their faeces. They should be bred to beef, forbidden access to any calving areas, never use their colostrum/milk to feed calves, and should be culled from the herd as soon as possible.
4. Cows testing negative on a blood sample are unlikely to have Johnes disease, are highly unlikely to be shedding the disease in their faeces, and therefore do not pose a risk at this point in time. **It is not to say however that they won't become Johnes positive in the future.** For the time being they can be managed as a Johnes-free cow, however if they remain yellow or red on milk screening they should be re-blood sampled before dry-off so that if they do become Johnes-positive they can be identified and managed as a Johnes-positive cow across the dry & calving period (the high-risk time for infecting replacement calves).

Please call us at the surgery for further clarification and for advice on managing Johnes disease in your herd.

Watery Mouth & Lamb Colostrum Feeding

We have already seen a number of cases of “Watery Mouth” disease in newborn lambs this year. Affected lambs are lethargic, off-feed, have profuse salivation around the mouth, pot-bellied & constipated. There are two factors which increase the risk of watery mouth occurring:

1. **Dirty, wet or overused lambing pens** – this exposes newborn lambs to high levels of E.coli bacteria which cause watery mouth disease.
2. **Insufficient or poor quality colostrum consumed by the newborn lamb** – this leaves the lamb with little or no immune protection against the E.coli bacteria, making disease and often death inevitable. Colostrum feeding is the key to preventing watery mouth and for improving lamb health & survival:

How much colostrum should be fed and when – Consider the 3 Qs....

QUICKLY = Feed as soon as possible, within 6hrs of birth at the very latest. Any triplets, weak lambs, or lambs born to ewes with poor udders should **always** be fed supplementary colostrum.

QUANTITY = 50 mls/kg bodyweight for the first feed, a total of 200 mls/kg bodyweight should be consumed in the first 24hrs of life.

QUALITY = Ewe body condition, parity & health will determine the quality of colostrum. Good nutritional management and the use of vaccinations pre-lambing will boost antibodies.

Sources of colostrum for lambs requiring supplementary feeding:

- The lamb’s own mother - Best option for weak lambs unable to feed or latch on to the teat; strip the necessary amount of colostrum from the mother and bottle/tube feed the lamb.
- Fresh/frozen colostrum from another ewe - if the lamb’s mother has limited colostrum. Fresh must be fed immediately, frozen must be thawed gently at 35-40°C.
- Packet colostrum – High quality natural alternative e.g. **Immucol** (complete lamb colostrum; EBL, IBR & Johnes free) available at Damory Veterinary Clinic. Mix at 40°C.



Prevention of watery mouth: Clean dry bedding in lambing pens, colostrum management (as above), during watery mouth outbreaks administer “**Watery Lamb**” oral drench to every lamb as soon as possible after birth.

Meetings - Dates for the diary

Please ring/email the surgery to book your places.

Wednesday 3rd February – Midday for 12.30pm start. Langton Arms, Tarrant Monkton.
COWS – Lameness and Mobility scoring with guest speaker Dr Nick Bell. Lunch provided.

Tuesday 16th February – 7pm Longthorns Farm (next to monkey world). Dinner provided.
SHEEP – Ewe Nutrition with guest speaker Kate Phillips & Ewe Health with Alice Wilkinson.

Wednesday 2nd March – 7pm Longthorns Farm (next to monkey world). Dinner provided.
COWS – Selective dry cow therapy - Matt & Andrew Burge