

# PEAK VETERINARY NEWS

May 2020

## Staggers

Grass staggers, or hypomagnesaemia (low magnesium) typically occurs at turnout onto lush, quick growing grass meaning potassium and nitrogen intakes are high and sodium and phosphorus intakes are low. Due to this, there is a lack of absorption from the rumen (cows cannot store magnesium), resulting in the body's demand for magnesium exceeding the intake.

There is also a link between calcium and magnesium absorption, meaning there is a higher risk in cows that are predisposed to hypocalcaemia (otherwise known as milk fever).

Clinical signs happen very quickly and if not treated promptly, it will be fatal. Typically it will present:

- Agitated, twitchy cows (hyperexcitability)
- Mild reduction in milk yield
- Stiffness and muscle tremors
- Fitting, coma and death

Treatment needs to be administered rapidly, especially if clinical signs are starting to show. If convulsions haven't started, prognosis is favourable. Following treatment, animals shouldn't be moved, transported or stimulated in any way as this can trigger further convulsions.

As with any metabolic issue, prevention is better than cure. The following measures are advisable to prevent staggers:

- Daily magnesium supplements. This can be in many forms but the easiest tends to be salt licks
- Housing cattle at night, especially during frosty/wet/windy weather
- Reduce silage intake prior to turnout
- Delay the use of potassium-rich fertilisers until later in the year
- Keep an eye on the weather forecast - bad weather increases staggers risk



If you are in an area of high risk, you are more than welcome to keep some magnesium in stock for use under the skin if required.

## TB Testing

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been contacted and managed to get their TB test booked in at short notice.

We really appreciate your cooperation, and we are trying our best to make the most out of the difficult national circumstances.

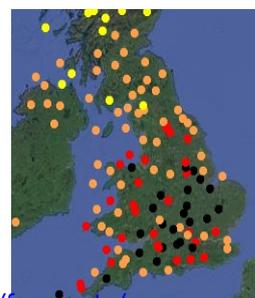
## COVID-19 Update

- If you or anyone within your household is showing symptoms, please notify us immediately if we are booked in to come onto farm. We can make decisions from there as to how to proceed. The last thing we want is to put either you or the vets at risk, but we understand that the work still needs to be done.
- If you are self-isolating but still require a visit, ring us beforehand and we can make arrangements to examine animals without you present etc.
- If you are showing symptoms and require medications, please send someone else down to the practice to limit exposure.
- Please can you ring us with any medication orders before coming down to the practice; all medication orders are to be collected from the white box in the car park.
- When we are on farm, we aim to stay 2m away wherever possible. We understand that this not always achievable, but we are trying as best we can to adhere to the governments social distancing procedure.
- TB testing is continuing as usual, we are even trying to fit a few more tests in at the moment whilst we are on small animal restrictions. If you require any pre-movement testing, please let us know and we will try and accommodate where we can.

## Watch Out

Now that turn out is approaching there are a few things to keep in the back of your mind when turning stock out:

- **Husk**
  - Caused by *Dictyocaulus viviparus*, this worm resides in the bronchi causing the characteristic coughing. However, it's the larvae that have wintered on the pasture that will be putting youngstock at risk. Prophylactic ivermectin can be given to prevent infection. However, animals will develop their own immunity with a small burden.
- **Fluke**
  - Otherwise known as *Fasciola hepatica*, this is something to bear in mind, particularly on wet ground. Avoid turning out near water or on boggy ground (if possible). This is something that would take time to be come into play, so monitoring pastures is vital.
- **Nematodirus in lambs**
  - Watch out for this in lambs >6w old and grazing. This worm can have high mortality rates if left untreated. Try to turn lambs out onto pasture ungrazed last year. We have been moved to a high risk area (red and black spots), so definitely keep an eye out for this one!!



<https://www.scops.org.uk/forecasts/nematodirus-forecast/>

As always, any issues you would like to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact us,

Warm Regards:  
Andrew, Hollie and Emily

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