

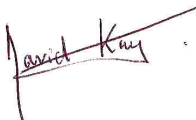
# biobest herdcare newsletter

Quarter 2 2007

## Introduction

Welcome to the second Herdcare newsletter in 2007. It has been another couple of busy months at Biobest for the cattle team but I have managed to get to a number of the sales at Carlisle and Perth and it has been interesting to have met so many of you at them. I find it very useful to discuss your thoughts on Herdcare and cattle health. May has proved to be busy also with weekly pedigree sales at Carlisle, NBA Beef Expo at Skipton and Beef Tech at Fraserburgh.

In this edition we look at how a South Devon breeding group are improving their herd health status and a Highland herd on their approach to accreditation. BULLET points keeps you up-to-date on what is happening at Biobest and some reminders on biosecurity.



David Kay  
Cattle Health Scheme Manager

## Introducing Our Cattle Team

As our vets are usually the first point of contact for questions regarding testing, vaccination or biosecurity, we thought we would let you see who you are talking to!

Dr Susan Duthie has been with Biobest since 2003 and also represents us with regards to CHECS standards.



Susan has general practice and virology research experience.



Kate Haig joined Biobest in 2005 to help support continued growth. Kate has experience in general practice, research and with the State Veterinary Service.

## Established Breeding Group Adds Health To Its Aims!

Members of the SAS Breeding Group are some of the first South Devon Breeders to take advantage of the South Devon society's new health initiative. As members of Herdcare they will receive a £5 credit for each animal registered in the initial year from 27<sup>th</sup> March.

SAS Group was set up 9 years ago by 8 South Devon breeders with small herds. The aim is to make greater genetic improvement by working together than was possible in isolation.



(A line up of yearlings from the SAS Group sired by linkage bulls)

As part of the philosophy it was decided to have "linkage" bulls which, whilst owned by an individual member, would be available to other members of the group. This provided a link between the herds to provide greater accuracy in recording.

*"We feel we have made good progress genetically and now have many of the highest index bulls in the breed"* states group co-ordinator Richard Hartshorn.

Initially it was felt that the linkage could be provided by using common AI bulls but this provided management problems with cattle running out at grass. Therefore, the members have been willing to transfer cows between units to access each other's bulls, although it is accepted that this created a risk from the disease point of view. Honesty between members regarding herd disease status has been important. And this led to the group considering their internal biosecurity but also how they could assure prospective customers of their health status.

*"We wanted to be able to adhere to standards of biosecurity and also understand and guarantee the health status of our cattle. If we can prove good performance genetics and a high health status for our stock then we will be in a stronger position in the UK market and the expanding export sector"*

To achieve this the group decided to join a Herd Health scheme. SAS member and vet Bob Bostelmann had already joined Biobest Herdcare in early 2006 after consultation with Biobest.

*"We all joined Herdcare as Biobest were a dedicated company with laboratory facilities and an experienced veterinary team. We felt they could give us direct attention, treating us individually with sound professional advice"*

Initially the group decided to focus on accreditation for Johne's disease and BVD, but at the same time has used the blood samples taken to look at the other diseases. The members have now all completed their initial tests and are progressing well towards their target of herd accreditation.

[www.southdevons-sas.co.uk](http://www.southdevons-sas.co.uk)

## Horns + Health Tests = Hassle??

Not according to Highland cattle breeder, Hilary Barker, who has found the whole process of testing her 'fairly mannerly' pedigree herd a relatively hassle-free experience. Gaining their first accredited free disease status in 1993 for IBR, the herd kept at Mid-Torrie is building up its disease free accreditations with Herdcare.

*'We have also been very careful about bought in stock, either selecting animals from fully accredited herds, or ensuring that cattle are privately tested prior to purchase. It has cost us some money, but the benefits of not having IBR sneaking in and creeping through the herd to cause problems have been numerous'.*

Although showing is not high on their agenda consideration has been given to vaccinating show animals with IBR marker vaccines — not acceptable in cattle destined for export to IBR free countries.

*'Knowing that IBR is extremely contagious and easily transmitted by air, it is rather worrying to think of the risks at major shows and sales where cattle from all over the country can be confined together under the same roof for a number of days'*

Hilary has seen obvious economic advantages to eradicating other diseases from the herd. Mid-Torrie has recently achieved Johne's accreditation and is now focussed on accreditation for BVD (having passed their first qualifying test.

The support and service provided by Biobest has been important to Hilary.

*"I have built up a good rapport with Herdcare over the years and have found their information and advice an extremely helpful back-up to that provided by our own*

*vets. It is also very important to be as well informed as possible about these diseases, so that one can understand the bio-security issues, the implications of test results and be capable of discussions with the experts! "*

At blood testing time Hilary checks that she knows exactly what has to be done to which animals and why, and that the correct paperwork and cattle identifications have been supplied. Hilary has also been known to have driven through to Biobest Laboratories with urgent blood samples and maintains that the staff could not have been more helpful.

[www.barkershighlandbeef.co.uk](http://www.barkershighlandbeef.co.uk)



## BULLET Points

**Events** — David Kay and Ian MacDougall were on the Biobest stand at the NBA Beef Expo at Skipton on the 17th May. David was also at Beef Tech in Aberdeenshire on May 31st to support Hi Health and their members.

**BVD Diagnostics** — Recently, we have been trialling the testing of calf ear tissue samples for BVD virus, in collaboration with HI-Health and Biobest customers. The benefit of ear samples is that they are less likely to be affected by the presence of maternal antibody so that screening for persistently infected (PI) calves can be done at an earlier age than using the conventional blood test. Initial investigations look promising; we recently screened some known PI calves and all came up positive. A

very small (2mm) section of ear is required and the sample is tested on the same test in the laboratory used to analyse blood samples, which allows us to keep it cost-effective. Samples are obtained through the use of an "ear tag" applied in the normal manner. This testing procedure should be of interest to farmers doing a herd screen for PI's or selling rearing calves for the commercial market.

**Biobest Performance** — Building on a successful move to new premises we recorded an increase in annual turnover through successfully meeting budgets across all species. Cattle turnover saw a large increase of over 45%. This was based on continued growth in Herdcare membership (40%) and testing. Overall cattle business grew in all areas of Hi Health, veterinary diagnostics and marketing diagnostics with animal health companies.

**Show Animals and Biosecurity** — As the show season is beginning it is useful to outline some biosecurity steps in order to ensure that herd health status is not compromised. On returning from shows, the show team should be regarded as 'added animals'. This means that they should be kept in isolation for a period of 28 days and tested at the end the quarantine period. For more information regarding vaccination or showing pregnant animals, please contact one of our vets.

**Farm Health Planning** — DEFRA are about to announce a series of projects aimed at encouraging and improving health planning for Cattle units. So English based Herdcare members should watch out for local projects which may help with their annual health planning.

**Request for Articles** — We would be interested in receiving articles from Herdcare members. Please also let us know if there is anything that you feel is important and should be put in the newsletter.