

biobest herdcare newsletter

Quarter 2, 2009

Focus on Angus Stovold - Biosecurity Champion of the SE

Angus Stovold is an Aberdeen Angus breeder (Rosemead) with 140 cows; he sells 50 plus bulls for breeding annually. His cattle exhibit at several national and county shows each year. The herd has Elite heath status with Biobest's Herdcare. Angus was appointed biosecurity champion of the South East in 2008, by the Farming and Rural issues group. He has been benchmarking and educating farmers on the importance of biosecurity.

"It has always been extremely important for me to sell cattle with the full confidence that the animal will perform beyond expectation. Herdcare helps me achieve some of this, it is also commercially focused, competitively priced and fast with results - the leading company in this field. Herd health is now so important, that breed societies, like the Aberdeen Angus Society are leading the advancement by insisting that farm health statuses are published at official sales. Hopefully gone are the days when buyers are naïve to the dangers of purchasing potentially diseased stock, or could even be hoodwinked by sellers into buying such animals.



At Beef Expo 09, as biosecurity champion of the South East, I will be launching a buyer's guide to disease. This will alert buyers to the potential risks and take the mystery out of buying. It will add to the resource of Breedplan and give a full picture of the animal. The advantages to breeders with Herdcare (CHeCs accredited) will be considerable.

During my year of benchmarking the industry on herd health, and shaping the South East's policy on livestock health, I have found that biosecurity is often misunderstood. If you read this article and take one thing from it, it is the importance of good biosecurity. Biosecurity is the barrier you put up to protect your breeding stock. No-one else will do it for you or worry if you fail to protect your animals from a disease breakdown, they will not be paying for the consequences. I have met so many people who took that risk and it has cost them dearly. They regret not isolating and blood testing introduced animals (including show animals), not asking the right questions of sellers, not testing cattle after mixing with neighbouring livestock, one risk overlooked and your health status could be compromised. I am biosecurity aware, it's not difficult, it does not cost me huge amounts of money, but it does give me peace of mind".

Top 5 Biosecurity Tips

Biosecurity is a set of management practices that reduce the potential of introducing or spreading disease onto and between farms. Below are Biobest's top tips to help your herd stay healthy.

- ◆ **Isolate for 28 days and blood test new and returning animals before they enter the herd**
- ◆ **Make certain your farm boundaries prevent nose-to-nose contact with neighbouring stock**
- ◆ **Find out the sellers' health status**
- ◆ **Vaccinate to control diseases that cannot be eradicated or managed**
- ◆ **Only let home farm vehicles enter livestock areas**



Cowboy's Column

Welcome to the second newsletter of 2009. We are busy getting ready for attending the Beef Expo, at which we hope to see many of you and providing you with further information on cattle health schemes.

In this newsletter we are looking at Biosecurity within your herd through our interview with "Biosecurity Champion", Angus Stovold and a look at the best biosecurity tips.

In this issue we are discussing Liver Fluke written by Katie Mellanby, one of our veterinary team. I'm sure the short articles will generate some questions which the team are very happy to help you with.

As you will see in our **BULLet points** the team is often in attendance at events, sales and farmer meetings. We look forward to meeting many of you at these during 2009.



David Kay
Cattle Health
Scheme Manager

BULLet Points

West Mercia AA AGM

Paul Burr CEO of Biobest and one of our vets is giving a presentation on how to get the best out of your cattle health scheme at the above event on Sunday 17th May.

Beef Expo 2009 Malvern

The cattle team will be attending the above event on Thursday 21st May. We hope to see you there to discuss all your Herdcare needs.

Biobest CPD Evening

We held a CPD evening sponsored by Pfizer on 22nd April. The event was very informative for those that attended with presentations on BVD and Johnes from two of our cattle team vets, Kate Haig and Susan Duthie.



Herdcare Members

Congratulations to Peter and Ian Pitcher (pictured), who won the award from EBLEX as Most Improved Herd of Limousin Cattle for 07/08. The Pitchers herd consists of 30 pedigree Limousin cows. The herd has a very high health status achieved through Biobest's Herdcare and are accredited free of BVD, Lepto and Johnes's.



Edinburgh Marathon

The big day is getting closer and our two teams at Biobest have been training hard. Come along and watch on Sunday 31st May or log on to www.justgiving.com/biobestlaboratories for updates.



Liver Fluke

Knowledge of Fasciola hepatica (Liver Fluke)

The common liver fluke (*Fasciola hepatica*) is a flat leaf-like parasite found in the tissue and bile ducts of the liver that causes problems in stock. The life cycle of the parasite and how it interacts with domestic stock is important in order to understand the disease. The life cycle of liver fluke differs slightly from the more familiar patterns seen with the common gut worms. Firstly, it takes longer to complete the cycle from egg to adult fluke, generally around 6 months, and one reason for this is that another host is involved. This is the mud snail (*Lymnaea truncatula*) and it is an essential element in the development and multiplication of the fluke. As its name would suggest, it inhabits ditches, ponds, ruts and other, often temporary, wet areas.

The liver fluke life cycle

The liver fluke life cycle is complicated. Flukes live in the bile ducts and produce eggs which are passed out in faeces. These develop into tiny larvae which are picked up by mud snails (intermediate hosts). The flukes multiply in the snail and then pass out of the snail, settling onto nearby vegetation and forming cysts. These cysts, which are full of parasites, can persist for up to a year in the right conditions. When the cysts are ingested by sheep and cattle the young flukes move to liver where they cause considerable damage. Mild winters, plus warm and wet spring, summer and autumn seasons favour snail activity and fluke development.



What is the cost of liver fluke infection?

The main losses caused by fluke often go unrecognised and include reduced live weight gain, lower feed conversion efficiency, reduced fertility, lower milk production and occasional deaths due to acute or untreated chronic infections.

Reducing the risk of the disease

In order to reduce the risk of disease certain measures should be adopted.

- A quarantine and testing strategy for bought-in animals. Bought-in animals should be treated with a flukicide that kills immature fluke and kept in isolation for 28 days
- Drainage management. Cattle should avoid grazing close to muddy ponds or ditches. If possible, boggy areas should be fenced off and drainage improved. Young and vulnerable stock should be kept off any suspect pastures.
- Treatment. Use flukicides that are active against fluke during the autumn and early winter. Treatment will depend upon when your cattle are likely to be housed and the effectiveness of particular flukicide against the fluke present on your farm. Remember that some flukicides are effective against immature flukes and others are only effective against adult flukes. Do not use the same flukicide year on year – a strategic rotation programme alternating closantel and triclabendazole is a good option
- Resistance to fluke treatments is an emerging problem. Regularly monitor the effectiveness of the flukicides used and adopt a rotation of drugs to prevent using one chemical family of flukicide for several years.

Serum testing initially allows herd health status to be determined and then future testing may be used to monitor the effectiveness of treatment and control.