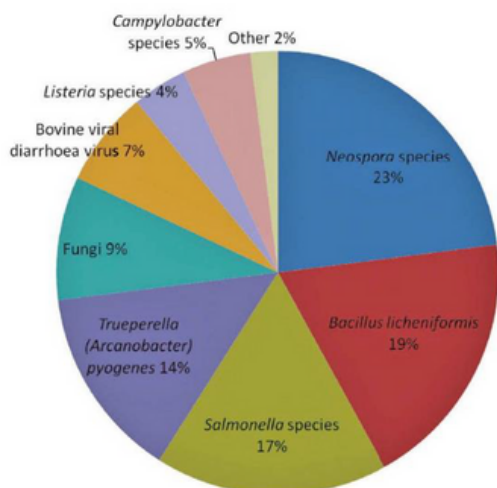


This winter has seen, among constant rainfall and above average temperatures, the well publicised return of Schmallenberg related issues after another 4-5 year hiatus. Undoubtedly some of you will experience this first hand in the way of abortions, deformed calves or positive test results following sick cow enquiries. As such this seemed an apt moment to revisit abortion in general to cover the main culprits and the key things to bear in mind when faced with such a challenge.

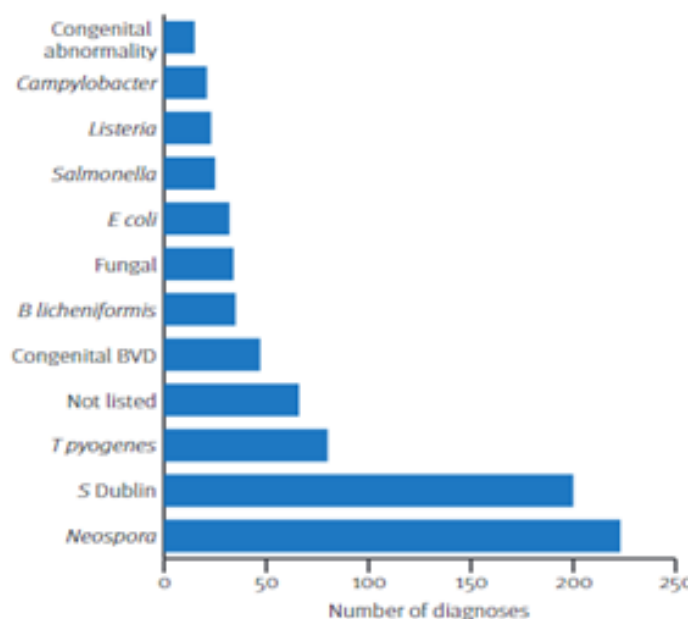
### Causes of abortion 2010



A single abortion in dairy cattle is estimated to cost ~ £630 through extended calving intervals, lost potential production and lost calf value. As seen above, an array of infectious offenders can contribute to single cases or outbreaks of abortions. Neospora has consistently been the most common cause of abortion in dairy cattle over the last 20 years. Many of you may be familiar with a typical presentation of a late-term abortion seen with neospora infections, however the presentations of the less common causes are outlined below.

<b>Neospora</b>	Loss throughout pregnancy ranging from losses in the embryonic stage to stillbirths but normally around 4-6 months.
<b>Salmonella</b>	Abortion at 5-8 months. Dam may also be clinically unwell depending on strain of salmonella, typically presenting off-feed, with a high temperature and characteristic scour.
<b>T pyogenes</b>	A bacterial infection that is nearly always secondary to infection at a separate site, such as mastitis, chronic pneumonia or liver abscesses.
<b>Bacillus</b>	Bacterial infection that commonly originates from feed sources and causes late terms abortions from 5 months onwards.
<b>BVD</b>	An array of losses ranging from early embryo loss to later abortion at 3-4 months (as well as PI calves).

### Causes of abortion 2020



### Abortion vs. stillbirth

It is key to define a loss as an abortion or a stillbirth as the set of possible causes can be very different for either.

**An abortion occurs before 271 days for a natural or AI bred animal or before 265 after ET implantation.**

**A stillbirth is a calf born dead over 271 days of gestation.**

### When to be concerned

Aim to discuss all suspect abortions with your vet. A level of foetal loss is normal on every farm, various % figures are quoted but generally **a rise above 2% of animals** that have been confirmed in calf aborting is cause for concern. It is far easier to action measures to prevent further losses by investigating suspect abortions before this point however as numbers can quickly accumulate; for example bulk tank screens for BVD or IBR can guide prevention before losses and costs start to climb.

For the majority of abortion investigations **bloods from the dam, the foetus and placental material** are the 3 main components needed by your vet to explore all possible options. As seen above, testing for the common problems first (such as Neospora) can provide a cost-effective way to reach a diagnosis and if not, **excluding a disease is as important as finding one.**

## Schmallenberg (SBV)

Over the last few months, Schmallenberg virus has been isolated from post-mortem samples (deformed calves or aborted samples) and on antibody testing from suspect dams or bulk milk samples across the practice.

SBV is a midge-borne virus that targets the nervous system in utero causing an array of clinical features. The most notable features are:

- Hydrancephaly or swellings/excessive fluid around the head
- Persistent flexion/fusion of joints and limbs
- Bent limbs or contracted tendons.
- A 'dummy' presentation with signs of wobbliness, recumbent non-alert calves, blindness and sometimes seizures.

Duplicate body partys (e.g. excessive limbs) are NOT related to SBV.



The very first diagnosis of SBV originated in Germany and was initially investigated due to presentations of milk drop, diarrhoea and high temperatures which lasted for between 2-7 days, followed by a full recovery. In these herds the overall average milk production stayed largely consistent. Drops in conception rate were seen due to an increase in embryonic losses and 3-4 month gestation abortions were identified well before abnormal calves were identified 9 months later. Therefore SBV should be kept on the radar when observing mild clinical signs such as milk drop or fertility issues.

SBV can be diagnosed by isolating the virus from abnormal calves on post-mortem or by blood and milk sampling suspect animals to track antibody levels. In addition bulk milk antibody levels can be monitored to identify the trend of infection.

Antibody levels persist for approximately 2 years and therefore immunity is generally reasonably long lived, promoting a cyclical outbreak of infection every few years. Unfortunately due to the midge-borne nature of transmission, the warm winter this year has likely contributed to increased over-wintered midge populations (especially in housed herds) with heavy rainfall particularly promoting graduation of midge population to indoor areas.

APHA are still offering free sampling for suspect cases either from adult cows or abnormal suspect calves, if you feel you are seeing signs then please get in touch to capitalize on this. Being able to rule out, or in SBV guides ensure no alternative causes of abortion as discussed above are missed.

### Also on the increase in our area? Q Fever

- 50% of the dairies in the South West are positive to Q fever
- Bacterial condition that can cause abortion in cattle and in humans
- Also causes of infertility, stillbirths and fresh cow issues
- Can be detected on through bulk milk test and blood samples
- Vaccination available: Coxevac



### Attention beef clients!

Struggling to see what cow has just calved?



We offer Freezebranding to our beef clients.

Please call the office on 01666 823035 or Rosie on 07500311382 for more details.

Best wishes

Will Balhatchet  
BVSc MRCVS



## MEETINGS COMING UP...

We have 2 LANTRA ACCREDITED BCVA CHCSB FOOT TRIMMING COURSES NEXT MONTH..

In conjunction with Tom Morris of Morris Moo Shoes:

- **First Aid for Feet:**  
Thursday 6th June at Old Sodbury
- **Intermediate Foot Trimming:**  
Wednesday 12th-Friday 15th June,  
Old Sodbury and Pewsey

*Feedback from previous Intermediate course attendee:*

*"The course was very informative in a relaxed environment, the days were well structured. I have been trimming for 10 years and it made me completely re-evaluate how I am doing it, I had definitely been over trimming previously!"*

### APHA ACCREDITED AI COURSE

- Wednesday 17th - Friday 19th July,  
at Malmesbury

### BEEF AND SHEEP MEDICINE HANDLING COURSE:

11AM - 12PM - @ The Practice,  
Thursday 20th June - £75 + VAT



*If you are interested in any of the above  
please contact the office on 01666 823035*