

Summer Mastitis

September 2019

With the British summer weather being predictably unpredictable, one thing is certain; careful inspection and management of stock while out at grass is vital. This is particularly relevant for groups that are not necessarily being routinely handled, gathered or milked on a daily basis. In other words, your DRY COWS and HEIFERS. One significant disease which rears its ugly head at this time of year is **Summer Mastitis**.



Spread by flies, it is an acute severe mastitis affecting the non-lactating mammary gland. The causative agent is the bacterium *Trueperella pyogenes*. Very few quarters will recover, and the aim of treatment is to save the cow.

Signs to look for:

- Animal standing apart from the others.
- Looking dull and lethargic, not eating.
- Often appears lame (from the udder pain).
- Enlarged swollen teat(s) and udder.
- Pyrexia (high temperature).

Once the infection takes hold, the udder becomes hard and swollen and a foul smelling, thick yellow, sometimes blood tinged discharge can be seen oozing from the teat.

Immediate treatment requires systemic antibiotics and anti-inflammatories to prevent toxæmia and potential death. However, getting the right concentration of antibiotic into the affected tissues to control the local infection can be a challenge due to the level of inflammation and amount of dead, necrotic tissue and pus present.

Much like an abscess, the importance of drainage must not be underestimated. The discharge needs to be milked out as much and as often as possible. In extreme cases the teat may need to be surgically split or even amputated in order to get sufficient pus removal.

Remember however, this discharge is itself a source of infection for others so wash it away promptly rather than leave it on the floor to provide a feast for those pesky flies.



Prevention:

- Clean aseptic drying off with correct use of teat sealants. Careful **selective** use of antibiotic dry cow therapy can help certain individuals by providing prolonged antibiotic cover in the udder.



- Monitor udder and teat health and condition. Often the initiating factor is a damaged teat end or lesion, allowing contamination then entry of infection into the teat canal. **Regular teat scoring** can help identify cows at risk, as well as highlight other issues with the milking machine or routine that may have gone unnoticed.
- Fly control using fly-tags or pour on products may be necessary. The main fly vector is the sheep head fly, *Hydrotoea irritans*, which overwinter eggs in sandy, light soils, and emerge as adults in July and August. Adults love wooded areas and watercourses, so avoid grazing susceptible stock in these areas at these times if possible. High winds, heavy rain and cold temperatures will lower the fly population and thus transmission.
- Repeated re-infusion of antibiotic tubes to susceptible dry cows and maiden heifers can be done, but itself can lead to problems with introduction of pathogens and disturbance of the normal udder biome - Not to be considered unless this disease has become rampant and uncontrollable on the farm and only to be done after discussion and careful planning with your vet.
- Identify and isolate potential cases. Prompt treatment and rapid intervention is absolute. Seek veterinary advice.

This specific condition can occur occasionally at other times of the year and also in milking animals. It is thought that in some cases, heifers coming in with a blind quarter may have suffered and recovered from a 'milder' infection, gone unnoticed, survived, but lost that quarter in the process.

Remember, along with the problems of summer mastitis, the increased likelihood of a 'nuisance of flies' will predispose your livestock to other conditions, such as eye infections, lactational mastitis, wound infections and general irritation (of man and beast!)

Ensure you have adequate fly and parasite control and don't forget to check, then double check those animals that are away at pasture.

Hope the summer is going well.

Call Bridget at the **George Livestock Health Supplies** on **01666 823035** option 2 for all your parasite product needs (at prices competitive with trade.) You can also order medicines on our text line **07860026331** or email: **farm@georgevetgroup.co.uk**

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Opportunity to learn to feed your cows more efficiently through observation: Bruno Giboudeau, the founder of the Obsalim concept, is visiting some of our clients on 7th and 8th October. Please call the office for further information if you are interested.

Best wishes

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