

A couple of warnings to begin the month.

There have been an increasing number of cattle imported from Holland and Germany which have been found to have Johnes disease. If you do decide to buy imported cattle I would strongly suggest that you get a **written** statement from the exporter to state that there have been no cases of Johnes disease on the original farm. Johnes is a terrible insidious disease which is spread during the first two weeks of life but only shows up after the first calving or later but once into a herd it is difficult to remove where farmers breed their own replacements. We will be having a meeting later on to discuss this disease as it seems to be gaining greater importance among some milk buyers especially as there has been a suggestion that Krohn's disease in humans is related to milk produced by Johnes infected cattle.

The next warning relates to a product called "Calf's First Choice". This is a very good calf colostrum replacer which is made in Canada. Enzootic Bovine Leucosis (EBL) is endemic in Canada but the UK is free of this disease. However calves that have had Calf First Choice will have antibody levels to EBL so could not be exported nor go into stud for AI collection. If you are unfortunate enough to be picked for routine screening and the antibodies are found, the herd will be put under restriction immediately which may have severe financial consequences for you.

Bluetongue. We have decided to use the Merial vaccine (BTV PUR8) this year as this has a full licence while the Intervet one still only has the initial licence to get it onto the market quickly two years ago. Besides this Intervet is having a problem manufacturing the vaccine so we cannot get theirs!!

The question everyone is asking is "Should I bother with bluetongue vaccine this year?" I would suggest the answer should be "Yes". If you have already vaccinated the herd/flock then the single shot this year is a very cheap insurance against a devastating disease. If the UK can get through this year without a case, we will be shown to be free of BT8 under EU rules. If however there is an outbreak and a sudden demand for vaccine, the manufacturers will rapidly run out of stock leaving your animal susceptible to the disease (the vaccine takes 6 months to manufacture).

Merial have stated that they are happy for you to vaccinate your stock with Leptospirosis and BVD vaccine at the same time as their Bluetongue vaccine.

Do not vaccinate calves under 2 months if their dams have been vaccinated as there will be some maternal immunity passed via the colostrum. In a similar vein, lambs born to ewes that have had two annual vaccines will have immunity for 14 weeks assuming the last vaccine was given prior to lambing.

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