



Vet Steve Borsberry, from the Solihull-based 608 Vet Group in the West Midlands, shares some tips on disease prevention and tackling health problems in dairy herds, drawing from his many years of on-farm experience. Here he takes a closer look at a problem that can occur after calving.

Steve Borsberry: "I prefer to operate – not roll or 'toggle'"

Left displaced abomasum

Whenever left displaced abomasums (LDAs) occur, a herd incidence rate of up to 2% is fairly typical. When I see herds with the number of cases above that level, alarm bells start to ring. I have seen some herds with LDA rates as high as 10%.

Costing between £150 and £250 per case, there are three methods that vets can choose from to treat a cow with a LDA. These are rolling, toggling and opening up the animal to stitch the abomasum back into place. I prefer, and tend to opt for, the latter.

Rolling, as the name suggests, involves literally rolling the cow from side to side to 'roll' the abomasums back into place. But it's a technique that's fraught with problems, not least that it's not something I can get on and do on my own. You need three or four people and it's not always successful. And there's health and safety to worry about!

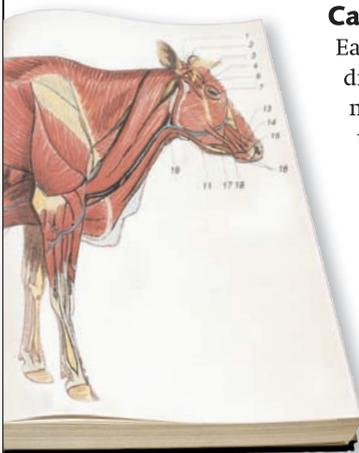
Toggling is, again, something that's pretty labour intensive. The cow has to be on her back for the procedure and a toggle is used, threaded through the cow's side, to fix the abomasum back in its correct place. I don't like this technique as I'm working blind, so to speak. I prefer to open her up and see what I'm doing. I sedate the cow and it's quick and clean and effective.

Prevention is, of course, better than cure and the role of good dry cow management has a key role to play here.

It's vital to achieve good rumen fill and high DMIs after calving in order to prevent the abomasum from displacing.



The encyclopedia **Left displaced abomasum**



Causes

Earlier cases tend to occur after diseases such as milk fever, mastitis and metritis and it also tends to occur during the winter housing period and also when the forage ration contains a high proportion of maize compared to grass silage.

Fat cows, with a body condition score of more than 4, and thin cows, with a body condition score of less than 1, are more prone.

Symptoms

These include a poor appetite and poor milk yield and the cow will have a 'slightly tucked up' appearance. If left undisturbed, she may show signs of abdominal discomfort – looking to her left flank and/or kicking her abdomen.

Diagnosis

Listening to the left-hand side of the body should reveal a tinkling sound – the abomasum is pulled taught like a drum. If you put a stethoscope to the ribs and tap the ribs the sound will resonate.

Treatment

Rolling, 'toggling' or surgery to stitch abomasum back into correct place.