

A must-see for progressive producers, with a wealth of free help, information and advice

It's show time!

There are plenty of reasons why you should make the time to visit Livestock 2012 in September. Not only will there be the regular free business and cow management seminars, but there will also be vets and technical experts on hand to offer timely advice about any management problems or business opportunities that you'd like to discuss.

text Rachael Porter

After one of the most challenging summers since records began, a day's respite – away from the daily grind – could be just the tonic for both you and your business. And where better to spend it than at this year's Livestock 2012, on Tuesday 4 and Wednesday 5 September at the NEC in Birmingham. Space is booked up with more than 500 exhibitors, including 120 new exhibitors. A total of 103 new products and services will

be launched at the event and there will also be 60 seminar sessions each day. "There's a fantastic range and choice of help, advice and information during the two-day event – and it's all free," says RABDF chief executive Nick Everington. He stresses that the cost of an entry ticket to the exhibition – £20 on the gate or £17 in advance – is extremely small when you consider the wealth of free information available in the seminar sessions alone.

You can pre-book your Livestock 2012 tickets on line and take advantage of discounted rates. Visit www.livestockevent.co.uk.

The Farm Health Planning seminars are returning, due to popular demand. And this year they repeat 2011's joint producer-vet approach.

Health issues

A producer will introduce each seminar with their vet explaining how they are working together to solve a particular health challenge. Key issues coming under the microscope for producers will be the mastitis, fertility and lameness, together with some new ones such as liver fluke and IBR.

If nutrition is your thing, there are the Feed Science forums. These will offer practical science-based advice and the latest ideas on feeding and will feature 20-minute presentations delivered throughout the two days by some of the UK's leading nutritionists and technical specialists. Subjects include alternatives to soya, developing best practice for heifer rearing, and links between metabolic disease and poor fertility.

Business debates on both days will cover how to add additional livestock enterprises, diversify or make a 'fresh start' and will also include the benefits of farm assurance, the new professional register for dairy producers,

Big returns for better hygiene

A more well-rounded approach to hygiene management will help improve milk price and drive a better return on investment, according to hygiene management specialists Deosan.

According to the company's Rob Kelly there is still scope for producers to increase the income received from hygiene payment schemes.

"A proportion of herds still fail to maximise Bactoscan and cell count payments and, as hygiene income has increased as a proportion of total milk price, the importance of doing so is even greater. Improving this situation will not necessarily be easy and the supply trade needs to work closer with producers to

help them realise this additional income. He says that one of the problems is that hygiene battles with other areas to be a priority on farm and the general response to a rise in cell counts is to change chemicals, rather than getting to the real root cause of the problem.

"The reality is that a huge range of factors will contribute to hygiene results on farm, such as housing, staff training, and milking machine management. They all need to be considered before finalising a programme designed to improve the situation and this is what we are committed to helping farmers achieve." Enter Farm Intelligence – a holistic approach to hygiene management. The

company is launching this at Livestock 2012. It is based on a comprehensive review of hygiene management practices and the development of a thorough programme to deliver a measured return on the total investment on hygiene.

"The whole focus is on treating hygiene management as an investment, rather than a cost and our aim is to deliver a higher return while reducing risk. Our experience is that producers who take a more rigorous approach to hygiene management benefit from a higher milk price, as well as reducing other problems associated with poor hygiene including producing more saleable milk and saving time," says Mr Kelly.

opportunities and innovation in the sector and what differentiates the most successful dairy producers.

Performance 'gap'

The latter is something that's of particular interest to head of Barclays Agriculture's Martin Redfearn and he's expecting there to be plenty of positivity

at this year's two-day show. Figures show that the gap between the top 25% of dairy producers and the bottom is widening, but he says that it's within producers' means to reverse that trend and improve.

"Benchmarking is the key and it has to be at a level that goes further than simply comparing gross margin. It has

to include every aspect of the dairy business. And it has to be warts and all to be of any real value."

He's urging producers to get together and set up benchmarking groups and says that Livestock 2012 presents the perfect opportunity to discuss this idea. "You need a facilitator and group members have to be prepared to share

Control system puts producers in the picture

Innovative parlour software, featuring the first milking-point-mounted LED colour display available in the UK, will give producers new information to help them streamline cow performance.

The M37LED and iFeed LED systems from milking parlour specialists Vaccar, in partnership with Panazoo, have been designed to make full use of the data that can be collected during milking by making it available in a 'real time' and highly visual form. And the good news is that they can be retro-fitted to any make or configuration of milking parlour.

The M37 LED system is based on an ICAR-approved milk meter with both options allowing individual cow feeding at each point, along with optional automatic identification and segregation.

"Analysing the information produced



as a cow is being milked can give a real insight into how she is performing, her health and how well the milking routine is operating," explains the company's Simon Lerner.

"Changes in the physical characteristics of the milk and assessment of milking speed can indicate potential problems.

"By having a display screen on every milking point it is possible to get a quick and visual assessment of performance, allowing prompt and effective corrective action to be taken. The system provides a

graph of milk flow as each cow is being milked."

Mr Lerner explains that the 30-second flow rate is an excellent way to assess the effectiveness of pre-milking routines and milk let down.

Observing flow rates at the end of milking will indicate the extent of any over and under-milking. This data can help to reduce the physical damage to the teat as a result of incorrect milking.

The screen also automatically highlights potential problems by changing colour if triggered by certain events. The normally blue screen turns red if milk temperature deviates from the norm. High milk temperature is an indicator that the cow's temperature is elevated which indicates she is fighting an infection.

The systems include an automatic conductivity reader giving an indication of high cell counts and the screen turns yellow if the cell count has increased.



There's an app for that...

Producers can now quickly assess the rumen acid load coming from their forages and so more easily mitigate the risk of acidosis in their stock, thanks to the launch of an innovative smartphone and web-based application from FiveF.

The company will unveil its Alkalator App at Livestock 2012.

"Acidosis affects most herds in the UK and is a major cause of sub-optimal cow performance," says the company's Malcolm Graham.

"Until now producers have not had a quick and easy way of assessing the base acid load coming from their forages."

The Alkalator allows producers to key in their latest forage analyses

and establish the fermented crop's base acid loading effect – be it very high, high, medium or low.

"Once you have a better appreciation of the base acid load from your forages, you can then take the necessary steps to neutralise the damaging effect in the rumen before it happens; by formulating in levels of an alkaline dietary component, such as AlkabupHa, or feeding more alkaline forages such as alkalage or alkagrain."

The app is free and runs on Android mobile phones, as well as being available as a download file from the company's website. It is also planning to develop iPhone and web-based emulator versions of the new app.



Martin Redfearn: "Benchmarking is vital"

everything. It's the 'show and tell' aspect of this approach that makes it work. The value of comparing how you do something with how someone else does it, with greater success, can never be underestimated.

"It's not just about seeing that others are performing better, it's about asking them how they do it and understanding what you need to do to get the same level. "Benchmarking is, in essence, producers helping each other to improve their businesses," says Mr Redfearn, stressing that it's not anti-competitive.

"Some people think it is. But producers are not competing with each other – there's a market for everyone's milk. The battle here is contained on farm and it's to produce milk as efficiently and profitably as possible."

Here are just a handful of the products and services that will be launched at the event, designed with your herd and business in mind. |

Trimming tips: on lookers pick up a few hoof-care pointers at the 2011 event

