

Blueprint set to help reach 2020 targets

Producers have been working hard to implement guidelines to help reduce the use of certain antimicrobials on their units. In order to review progress and learn from each other, Boehringer Ingelheim organised a roundtable meeting, which was attended by producers, policy-makers, vets and advisers.

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In late 2017, the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA) identified calf rearing as a particular 'hot spot' of antimicrobial therapy for respiratory disease. "In order to help the dairy and beef sectors meet the agreed 2020 targets of 20% and 10% reductions in antibiotic use, respectively, all parties must continue to work together, developing clear and practical advice and protocols that are easy and straightforward to implement," explains Boehringer Ingelheim's Matt Yarnall.

The major outcome from a roundtable meeting, organised by Boehringer Ingelheim, was the Calf Health and Welfare Blueprint, an at-a-glance guide to factors associated with successful calf rearing. The blueprint will be launched at Dairy-Tech 2019.

Survey results

The blueprint focuses on many important aspects associated with successful and healthy calf management. These include: nutrition, calf housing, optimising calf immunity, reducing challenges and stress, accurate record keeping, veterinary input, and setting objectives and measuring performance.

"The roundtable meeting used the findings from 2018's Calfmatters survey to drive the discussion," explains Mr Yarnall. "Around 400 producers took part in the survey, with 67% being dairy producers, 30% beef, and the rest either mixed units or calf rearers.

"It was great to see that more than half of producers (56%) said that less than 5% of calves had been treated for pneumonia during the past year. That said, 39% were still struggling and estimated that they treated more than 10% of calves for the disease.

"A wide range of measures were being implemented to prevent calf pneumonia but, overall, it was disappointing to see that 66% of producers still do not vaccinate calves," he adds.

There is little doubt that an outbreak of pneumonia leads to extra work and stress, as well as some longer-term health issues. The treatment of calf pneumonia is also under scrutiny, as advisers and vets seek to reduce incidence levels and so, antimicrobial use, particularly highest priority critically important antibiotics (HP-CIAs).

"The advice to producers who are looking to reduce pneumonia and vet and med spend is to speak to your vet. Spend some time looking at treatment records for

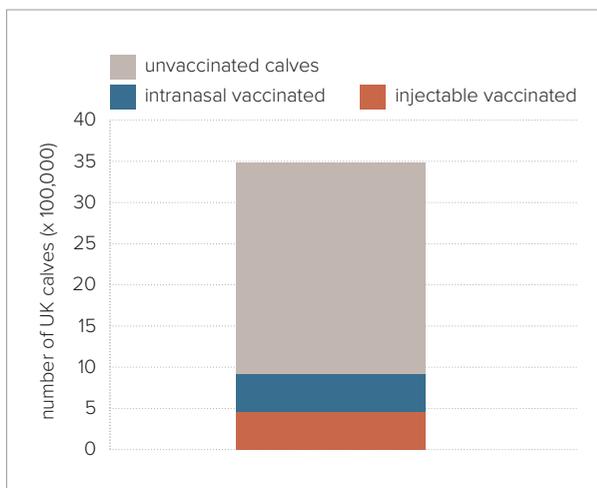


Figure 1: Number of UK calves vaccinated with intranasal or injectable BRD vaccine or un-vaccinated

the previous season, plus heifer growth rates if you have them, and then crunch some numbers. This is particularly important if the upfront cost looks like an obstacle. Adding vaccination into the plan could significantly improve calf health, wellbeing, and resistance to disease," stresses Mr Yarnall.

Vaccination benefits

Those stating that they vaccinate for bovine respiratory disease (BRD) were asked what differences were observed, compared to when calves were unvaccinated and, again, some valuable information was revealed. Responses showed, as well as a reduced incidence of pneumonia, a reduction in antibiotic use, improved calf health and welfare, fewer vet visits, faster weight gain to 12 months old, and faster weight gain to two years old. Technical trials and studies, including the Calfmatters survey, underline that vaccination can help to reduce the incidence of disease, reduce antimicrobial use and improve calf health and welfare.

"Knowing this, I expect that vaccination, which could include one of the Bovalto range of vaccines, will really see an increase during the next few years," says Mr Yarnall. |

The Calf Health and Welfare Blueprint will be launched at Dairy-Tech 2019, on February 6, and will be available online at www.calfmatters.com. Posters and handouts will also be available via vet practices.

Antimicrobial 'hot spots' highlighted during meeting

The Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA) task force first met in December 2016 with the specific aim of looking at how to best respond to the warnings in the O'Neill report on antibiotic use and resistance.

At the roundtable meeting, BCVA board member and dairy and beef sector representative on the RUMA targets task force Elizabeth Berry said that agreement was quickly reached on a 'One Health' approach,

much like the World Health Organisation's, to deliver results.

One Health is an approach that designs and implements programmes, policies, legislation and research in which multiple sectors communicate and work together to achieve better outcomes.

She added that the dairy sector was often seen as the third most high-profile user and that the beef sector fell 'under the radar' due to data gathering limitations. Dr Berry

also touched on the issues concerning a significant amount of routine preventative use, including the use of blanket dry cow therapy as well as foot bathing, and flagged these up as areas to review.

Other obvious 'hot spots' for use, particularly in calves, include: respiratory disease and calf scour, navel ill, and mycoplasma. In older cattle lameness, calving problems and caesareans are all linked to increased antimicrobial use.