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## Newsletter August 2017

### Neospora—A frustrating problem for UK cattle herds

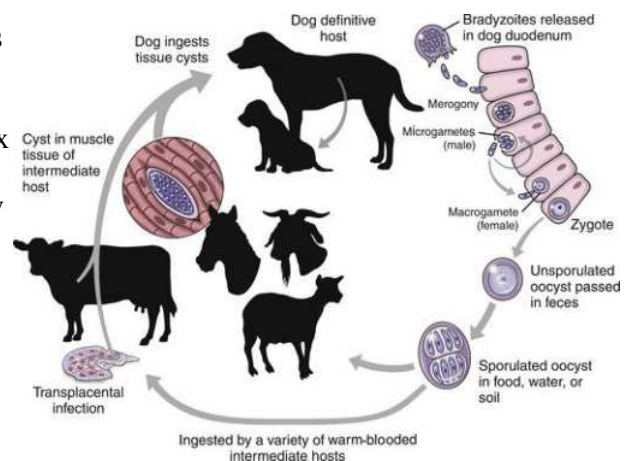
**Neospora is the most frequently diagnosed cause of sporadic abortion in the UK.** *Neospora caninum* is a parasite that causes abortion and reduced milk yield in cattle, as well as occasional heart or brain damage in calves that are born alive to infected dams.

There are two significant causes of spread of this parasite: calves can become infected in the uterus, or cattle of all ages can become infected with *Neospora* via infected material or dog or fox faeces contaminating feed, pastures or environment. **Once infected, animals will carry *Neospora* for life.**

By far the largest concern with a *Neospora* infected herd is abortions. The impact of new infection can be catastrophic, resulting in abortion storms, leading to inevitable financial losses.

Abortions are likely in newly infected cows, or in previously infected cows which undergo stress while in calf and trigger the release of *Neospora* across the placenta, infecting the foetus. Stress can be due to a number of causes, ranging from nutrition to lameness. Abortions normally occur between 90 days and 8 months, but the only way to reach a certain diagnosis is to submit the foetus with placenta to the lab. Cows can be blood tested to determine if they carry the parasite, but this won't confirm if it caused the abortion – a *Neospora* carrying cow may not abort every time, especially if she isn't stressed.

Unfortunately there is no treatment and no vaccination available for *Neospora*. **The only option for infected herds is a long term control plan**, involving breeding positive animals to beef, and eventual culling. Prevention can be difficult but is nonetheless important. Dogs play an important part in the spread of *Neospora*, and so their access to cattle feed and key areas should be restricted. Do not let dogs toilet in areas frequented by cattle and ensure prompt removal of placental/aborted material in order to disrupt the spread cycle.



### Honiton Show: Kids' Competition

Thank you to those of you that have submitted your entries to the FVSW kids' art competition! For those of you that haven't, there's still just enough time to show off your art skills!

Draw, paint or colour your favourite farmyard scene and drop it off before the show on Thursday.

**Remember to come and visit us at the show Stand 133 Avenue B on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> August**  
**Please note that the Yarcombe office will not be open until 11:00 on the day of the show.**

## South Africa vs England

**After six months of working at FarmVets Southwest, some reflection from Niall Watkins about his experiences here in Somerset, compared with his time spent practising back in South Africa.**

I arrived in January, thinking I had escaped the English winter. I'd left Durban with a warm, humid 35°C, only to step off the plane at Heathrow into a blustery 1°C drizzle - an icy reception indeed! A real shock to the system. Down in Somerset though, the weather has been fairly good (exceptionally warm and pleasant by British standards I've been told). I was told when I left South Africa that the sun never shines in England and it's very bleak, so imagine my surprise with your weather this summer. We've had some gloriously hot days, which certainly remind me of home!

I come from a small town in South Africa, near the Lesotho border in the Southern Drakensberg, called Underberg. The daily summer temperatures there range from about 15°C at night and 34°C during the day (other parts of the country get much hotter). Winter gets down to around -8° at night and mid-20's during the day (a big variation). Summers are our rainy season, with fairly regular afternoon thunderstorms providing about 850mm rain per annum in Underberg. Most parts of South Africa are much drier than that. The winters are very dry with virtually no precipitation for months, sometimes with a light snowfall or two, to settle the dust.

Most of you won't think it, but England is very small compared to what I am used to. To put things in perspective, our largest national wildlife (safari) reserve, The Kruger National Park, is approximately the size of the whole of Wales which measures close to 5 million acres. The nearest city to my hometown (where incidentally I went to boarding school because we didn't have a high school in Underberg) was 80 miles away (and that was close). I recall some days at work, I would quite easily clock up close on 310 miles on farm calls. Over here in England, most of our travelling isn't much more than a 30 mile round trip. Farms back home are large too, almost nothing commercial smaller than 750 acres, with most certainly quite a bit larger than that. Another thing I've noticed, in general, your tractors are bigger here, oh and it is much greener in England!



**All this makes our farming quite different to yours.** The climate, with very seasonal rainfall, great extremes in temperature, the natural vegetation and so on, means that our farming style is generally much more extensive than here in the UK. We don't keep cows in barns, we generally don't feed them as much silage and concentrates as you do, we have larger herds, but then, we don't often get 13000L in a lactation like you do!

Here's one for you, **I hadn't used a calving jack until I got to your shores!** In South Africa we just use man-power (two blokes and the vet pulling on the ropes) which works just fine (I did loads of calvings like this) but it certainly did have me huffing, puffing and drenched in sweat more. It's a brilliant piece of equipment and I think every farmer should have one!

In terms of cattle diseases, English cows get off lightly compared to their South African counterparts. The climate there means that there are many more parasites (ticks especially) which carry more diseases. In summer, diseases such as Redwater and Gallsickness (uncommon in the UK) are common-place (almost daily occurrences on some farms). We also have far more toxic plants and poisonous snakes around. In terms of happier, safer cows, I reckon they'd take the mild and tame UK over the hot and dangerous South Africa most days.

So, the weather, the local accent, the people and the farms are different, but let me tell you, the cows are still the same, mind I have heard one or two with a strong southern Moo! The cider is pretty good here too! **Thanks to all the local farmers who have given me a warm welcome,** I have had an enjoyable six months here.

## FarmVets Hoist

Do you have our hoist? It has **RED** tape on it and we would really appreciate its return, as would our farmers who we lend it out to.