

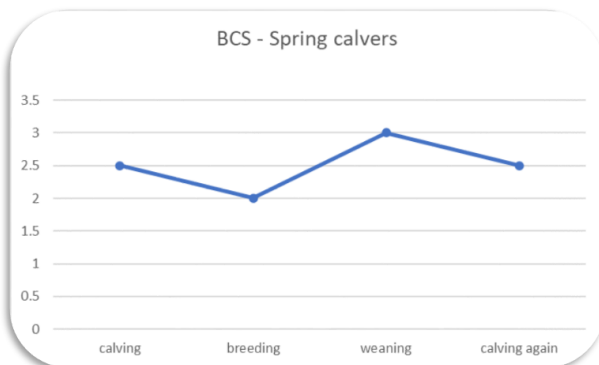
## October 2023 Newsletter

### Body Condition Score (BCS) Management in Suckler Cows

Eoghan McAlonan

Now is an ideal time to **pro-actively manage Body Condition Score (BCS)** in our spring calving suckler cows. Target BCS at weaning is 3, which allows a reduction of ½ a BCS point over winter meaning we get our cows to calve at BCS 2.5. This is the ideal score for sucklers to calve, ensure low levels of dystocia (hard calvings), good quality colostrum and early resumption of cyclicity for next breeding. It has been shown that suckler cows in poor BCS (less than 2.5) take longer to return to cyclicity. Often our “heifers” (1<sup>st</sup> lactation cows) have had a tough 6 months and are below ideal BCS. These heifers should be weaned 1 month early which should ensure a gain of ½ to 1 point before housing. The aim of every farm’s heifer management should be to calve down a second calver at the start of the breeding season. For this to happen she must be managed effectively in the preceding years and the outcome should be a cow calving in the ideal calving window, year on year.

Conversely some older cows may be higher than ideal BCS. If they are higher than BCS 3, they should not be weaned until at least a month after the main herd. Even if they are only producing small amounts of milk, the energy required to do this will help stop her gaining excessive weight which then leads to a big dystocia risk next spring.

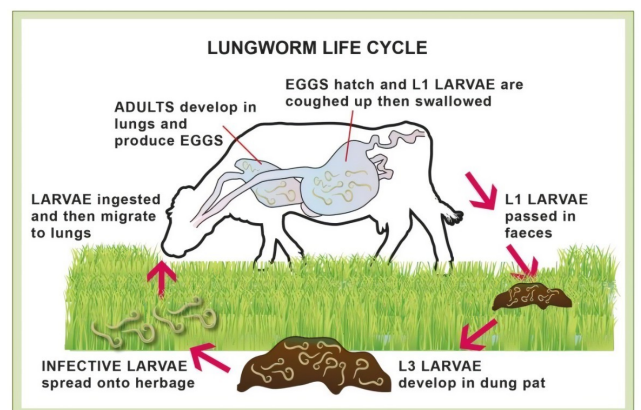


### Lungworm

Kieran Woodland

With the recent change in weather to wetter conditions, lungworm infections will start to be seen. Lungworm most commonly affects growing cattle in their first year of grazing in late summer when the weather is wet and warm. Adults usually develop immunity, however lack of exposure can also mean that some groups of adults may be susceptible to developing lungworm infections. The signs to look out for include widespread coughing, loss of condition, heavy/laboured breathing and a reduced milk yield in adult cows. In severe infections some animals will die.

If lungworm is suspected treatment should be given as early as possible as severely affected animals may not respond and symptoms may be worsened by the presence of dead larvae in the airway. Treatment is with anthelmintics usually macrocyclic lactones (ivermectin), however severely infected animals may require antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and hydration if not drinking. If unsure about treatment, ask a vet.



# The Effect of Speed of Drinking on Calf Performance

David Taylor

Time is a precious resource on farm and everybody would like to get jobs done efficiently as possible. Calves, in particular, can take a lot of time up pre-weaning.

It is tempting to either use fast flow teats for calves on milk or to stick a pen knife in the end of the teat to speed up calf feeding times. However, a New Zealand study of calves fed on slow or fast flow teats showed a difference in weight gain as well as other benefits (see below). Although it takes more time, this study suggests that to give your calves the best start and, ultimately, in the herd and performing to their best, use slower flow teats and keep pen knives for cutting string!

Benefits to Slower Flow Teats:

- Increased weight gain
- Increased cake intake before weaning
- Less navel sucking
- More contented calves
- Less nutritional scours



## **FARMVETS SOUTHWEST ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION COURSE**

We will be running an AI course from **Tuesday the 24th to Thursday the 26th of October** this year. The course will be kindly hosted by our farmers in Buckland St Mary and Chedzoy on alternating days. If you are interested in signing up or sending one of your farm team on this course, please call the Bridgwater office to book on.



### **Please Note**

Our Ilminster office is always shut from 12.30pm - 1.30pm for lunch.

Thank you to those that have returned our cool boxes. If you still have one on farm please drop it back to any office at your earliest convenience.