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NEWSLETTER – ISSUE 30 – AUGUST 2008

WELCOME

Summer has flown past and we are rapidly approaching busy autumn sales with nervous anticipation! We hope you find this newsletter informative but please remember we are on the end of the phone if you need further support.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OLA & HI HEALTH?

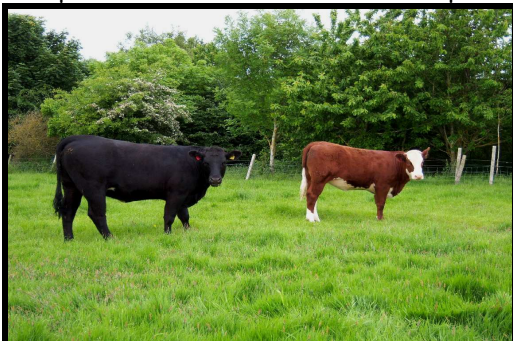
OLA and HI Health members are exactly the same in that they pay the same membership and have the same access to our support, but membership of OLA is for Orkney farmers only whereas HI Health covers the rest of the UK.

SALE PREVIEWS

If you are a HI Health member and are selling cattle at auction or privately you can preview them on the HI Health website free of charge. Simply send their details and up to four photographs via e-mail and we will do the rest.

Members of other health schemes can also advertise/preview on our website for £25 per advert. Consider taking photographs of potential sale animals along with their sire/dam. Cattle tend to look better wading about in grass in the sunshine rather than in a darkened pen.

This service has worked very well for pedigree breeders prior to Perth bull sales for example.



Above is a sample from our website. These bulling heifers are available to purchase from Scott, Fearn Farm, Tain.

TESTING REQUIREMENTS FOR HEALTH DECLARATION CERTIFICATES

If you are selling Pedigree stock we recommend that they are accompanied by Health Declaration Certificates. These are the most accurate and reliable documentation and are only available from your health scheme provider after having been signed by a vet who knows the information contained is correct. Hand written certificates that have not been signed by a vet should be treated with caution. If you have a pedigree bull for sale (for example) and have not already had him tested get this done as soon as possible. One sample is sufficient to test for all the diseases covered within the scheme.

Accreditation for every disease is of course what we would all like to see, but if you do not have elite status the following explains the minimum level of testing required for each disease to qualify for certification:

BVD - An antibody and antigen test should be performed. (If the bull is antibody positive he may not be tested for antigen). We recommend that he is vaccinated following an antibody negative result to protect him from the virus during transportation and/or at market.

He may be sold for breeding if he is antibody positive but buyers should be aware that his semen may be infectious for up to 20 weeks so he should not be used during this time.

If the bull is antigen positive he must not be sold for breeding. Buyers have the right to a full refund and may also claim compensation.

Leptospirosis - The Leptospirosis test will give a negative or positive result. Vaccination prior to testing may give a positive result as the test can not differentiate between vaccine and natural infection. Bulls with a positive result may be sold but buyers should be aware that he is a risk to any herd that is free of the disease and/or has not been vaccinated. Lepto positive bulls can be treated so it is worth discussing the best course of action with your vet.

IBR - Like the Lepto test, the IBR test can't differentiate between vaccine and natural infection unless an IBR marker vaccine has been used. Your vet should be informed if the marker vaccine has been used as it requires a different (and more expensive!) test.

Johne's - Only herd status qualifies for entry on the health declaration certificate. Individual results, especially on cattle under two years old may not be a true reflection of that animal.

TB - The date of your last farm test and the date of your pre-movement test (if applicable) are required.

BVD TEST REQUIREMENTS FOR HI HEALTH AND OLA SALES

If you are BVD accredited and planning to sell breeding stock or suckled calves at a HI Health or OLA sale you must screen your 2008-born calves so that we can be sure of your status. This is necessary because we have detected breakdowns prior to sales. If you are not accredited animals must be individually sampled.

Breeding cattle MUST BE VACCINATED prior to sale to prevent infection during transit or at market. Cattle that are antibody positive may be sold providing you can prove their result prior to bulling. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries.

HI HEALTH AND OLA SALE DATES

DINGWALL

- ❖ Monday 27 October 2008 -
Sale of Breeding Cattle
- ❖ Wednesday 20 May 2009 -
Sale of all classes of Breeding Cattle in conjunction with the Luig Society.
(Please note change of date from new Dingwall mart leaflet)

ORKNEY

- ❖ Monday 01 September 2008 at 1.30pm -
Final part of dispersal from Weyland
- ❖ Wednesday 29 October 2008 -
Show and Sale of Suckled Calves
- ❖ Thursday 06 November 2008 -
Sale of all classes of Breeding Cattle

PERTH

- ❖ Thursday 25 September 2008 -
A consignment of BVD and Johne's accredited cattle will be forward for sale at United Auctions Perth.

Further details and full catalogues will appear on the website near to the above sale dates.

AMALGAMATION OF MARTS

We received a letter from David Leggat, Executive Chairman of United Auctions announcing the amalgamation of Perth and Stirling auction markets. The amalgamation will take effect in approximately 12 months when construction at the new site at Hill of Drip, Stirling is complete.

This means that both Perth and Kildean marts will close. This spells the end of an era but we wish them all the best in their new premises and look forward to visiting the new market.

SALE CATALOGUES VIA E-MAIL

Whenever we have a HI Health or OLA sale we e-mail the catalogue out to our members. If you have not been receiving these it may be that we don't have your e-mail address or the one we have on file is no longer in use or is incorrect. The best way to be added to our e-mail list is to send us an e-mail to

hihealth.admin@btconnect.com

and then we can be sure your details are correct!

Some members have been wondering why they should be interested in the catalogues for sales being held in Orkney. Buying cattle in Orkney can be as easy as purchasing from any other market. If you can't be in attendance to do the bidding we can arrange for someone to do this on your behalf and transportation of purchased animals is no problem as the mart arranges all this for you.

With the increasing risk of bluetongue and TB affecting southern Britain it is surely wiser to buy replacements from the north?

We hope to secure dates for health status sales in Aberdeen and Huntly in the near future in conjunction with the other CHECS accredited health schemes. As stated in our list of sales a consignment of BVD and Johne's accredited cattle will be included in a breeding sale at Perth. Health risks when buying at auction are minimal providing cattle are tested and vaccinated prior to sale.

PREVENTING DISEASE

We are concerned that some farms that are clear or have eradicated diseases such as BVD are becoming too complacent that it will stay that way.

Our advice is that if infection can enter your herd it will, so here is a quick reminder of the most important methods of prevention:

Boundary fence of at least 3 meters from neighbouring stock

OR

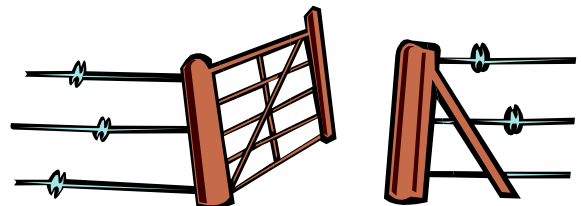
Vaccinate all breeding stock (*BVD & Lepto*)

OR

Demonstrate all neighbours are accredited

ALWAYS

Isolate and test bought-in animals of unknown status and do not mix them with your herd until results are known and it is safe to do so.



JOHNE'S STATISTICS

To date we have found that an average of almost 5% of breeding cows on each holding that is testing annually have tested positive for Johne's disease.

ORKNEY JOHNE'S SCHEME

Over 80% of Orkney's cattle over 24 months have signed up to their proposed Johne's eradication scheme.

Orkney Islands Council pledged support to pay laboratory fees for a three-year period providing a minimum of 80% support was identified. All veterinary fees are payable by the farmer to their own vet. All being well the scheme will be launched on 01 November 2008.

Shetland Islands Council are also going to fund a Johne's eradication scheme for Shetland starting around the same time. Shetland farmers are more fortunate in that their council will pay their vet fees and lab fees but they have significantly less cattle compared to Orkney.

QUESTIONS ABOUT JOHNE'S DISEASE

A health scheme member contacted us recently as he was looking for Johne's accredited breeding heifers that would be suitable for embryo transfer. He asked some very valid questions and we thought it would be beneficial to share them with you along with the answers.

Q1. I have a Johne's accredited herd. Will I lose my accreditation if I buy in non-accredited cattle?

He would not lose his Johne's accreditation as only homebred animals on accredited holdings carry such status unless they were purchased from another accredited herd. As with all bought in cattle he should isolate and test before mixing them with his own cattle and proceeding with embryo transfer work. If animals are bought in batches (for example if you were to purchase six cows from another farm) and one or more out of the group tests positive, none should be added to the herd.

Following the above isolation testing bought in cattle should be tested for Johne's with the rest of the herd on an annual basis although we recommend testing bought in bulls every six months.

Q2. I have a Johne's accredited herd. I have bought a bull that was individually tested negative. Is he an accredited bull?

Johne's accredited status means that the whole herd has been tested and has had at least two clear herd screens. The longer the herd has been tested clear the more assurance you have.

Individual results are considered invalid especially if the animal is under two years old.

Q3. I have a Johne's accredited herd. If I went to Perth and bought a pedigree cow in calf to a pedigree bull would I be able to sell that calf as Johne's accredited as it was born on my holding?

Yes as the dam should have been tested on arrival at your farm. If the calf is not sold until it is over a year old she will have had at least one more test. Potential buyers may be able to see from the sale catalogue that the dam was not homebred.

Q4. What advice would you give to buyers to reduce the risk of purchasing animals that may develop Johne's disease?

It is better to buy from herds that are of known status therefore it is wiser to buy from another farmer that is testing for Johne's than one that is not - even if they say they have never had a case as we have seen many examples of positive animals being identified on farms that were thought to be clear.

It is also helpful to know if the dam or sire has developed the disease. Offspring from infected animals are higher risk.

LAND MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS - HEALTH PLANS

There has been some confusion regarding requirements when claiming for the Animal Health and Welfare Option.

If you wish to receive payment you must, as a minimum requirement of this option, have an annual herd health plan drawn up by your own vet every year for the duration of your contract. You will receive £220 for this.

You may receive a further £320 if you are participating in the benchmarking section. Benchmarking involves completing information regarding your herd/flock performance. This data should then be given to your vet to enter on to the SEERAD database.

HI Health gave all veterinary practices within Scotland the opportunity to use our specially devised health plan free of charge. The health plan was upgraded in 2005 to meet LMC requirements thanks to sponsorship from Intervet.

Vets using our programme can usually produce a health plan at a cheaper rate than those using alternatives that take longer to complete. Our plan usually takes about an hour for an average sized farm.

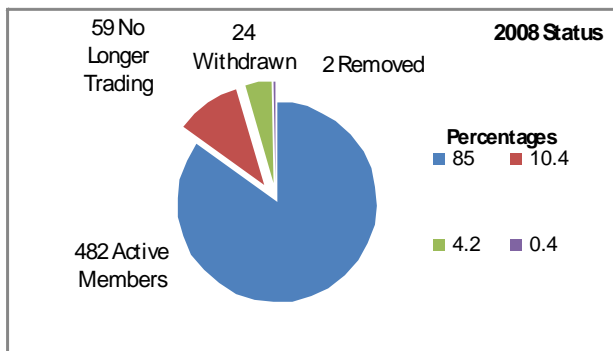
Our health plan also meets QMS farm inspection requirements.

Responsibility for arranging the completion of a health plan is between the farmer and their own vet.

DISTURBING STATISTICS

Since OLA was launched in 2001 it has had 567 cattle farmer members. Over the last 7 years 59 of these members are not keeping cattle any more. Most of these holdings are smaller than the average unit of 55 cows but it is worrying that Orkney has lost over 10 per cent of cattle farmers in such a short period of time. More farms are keeping more cattle and more land is available to rent but it is a sad reflection on agriculture that farmers can no longer make a living from a small to average sized unit without additional income.

The pie chart below shows OLA's current membership in detail. As you can see there are 482 active members of which over 80% are BVD accredited. Unfortunately 24 members have withdrawn from the scheme over the last few years for various reasons and 2 were removed.



From the information we have gathered on HI Health members since 2005 it would be fair to say that the above is a true reflection of the reduction of cattle farmers throughout Scotland.

WHAT ARE HI HEALTH'S OPERATING COSTS?

In answer to queries we have received regarding our operational costs, HI Health is farmer led, has non-profit making status and is operated entirely from the memberships received - we get no financial assistance from anyone to cover any of our costs other than occasional sponsorship for specific developments. (To date "Intervet" have sponsored most of the development of our revised health plan in 2005 and "Pfizer" has sponsored a meeting and provided other promotional support).

The farming press and breed societies often give us generous discounts in advertising - but advertising is still very expensive!

Travel and accommodation costs soon mount up and therefore we always choose the most cost effective option. Accommodation costs are minimal due to the number of hospitable offers we get from members and friends and we are very grateful for this.

Our biggest expense is wages - a total of £15,478 last year. Karen and Joyce are paid for their hours in the office and their hours on duty at events. The Board of Directors do not receive any form of payment other than refunds of personal expenses but none were claimed in the last financial year. The Board usually meets every quarter on average.

BIOBEST NEWS

By Ian MacDougall - Business Development Manager

Biobest are pleased to have supported the HI Health membership over the last three years. This period has coincided with our growth in all aspects of specialist diagnostic testing within the cattle sectors. In addition to the tests provided within the scheme we offer a range of tests for other diseases such as Ostertagia (stomach worm), Liver Fluke, Rotavirus and Coronavirus. We are also able to offer screening services for Blue Tongue.

The company has continued to grow its services in support of other species too and we have recently been providing the diagnostic services for a major project looking in the UK pig sector with over 10,000 tests completed to date.

NEW VET

Katie Mellanby has recently joined our veterinary team. Katie will be available along with the other vets in the office to handle queries, provide advice and report on submitted samples.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

As the relationship between the contractors operating HI Health (OLA and Biobest) has developed we have made changes to some procedures to ensure we provide the best and most practical service. Most of these changes have involved invoicing and laboratory result notification. Membership invoices are issued by HI Health while all laboratory testing is invoiced direct from Biobest. We are delighted to report that invoices are on the whole being paid promptly but we have had some problems with farmers sending a cheque in the post with no details of who it is from or the invoice reference number and would ask you to make sure this is included with your payment.

Biobest recognise that your costs have risen greatly and we endeavour to provide the highest standards of testing to you at the most cost effective levels.

Please contact HI Health or Biobest with any queries you may have.

NUFFIELD SCHOLARSHIP

I was delighted to be awarded a 2008 Nuffield Scholarship and I have been focusing my studies on Johne's disease control and eradication from a farmer perspective during my travels to America, Australia, Denmark and Holland.