

Know Your Status series – Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection commonly found in dairy and beef herds causing infertility, abortion and poor milk yield.

How is Leptospirosis Transferred?

Leptospirosis is spread in the urine of infected cattle or by contact with the products of abortion.

Risk factors include newly purchased cattle, hired or shared bulls, contaminated water sources and shared grazing with infected sheep.

What are the effects of Leptospirosis?

A sudden drop in milk yield occurs shortly after infection. Many cows do not show other symptoms but the occasional one may get a raised temperature.

Abortion may occur 3-12 weeks after infection with the majority occurring in the last 3 months of pregnancy. Premature and weak calves can also occur.

Leptospirosis can cause infertility and early embryonic death.

People can be affected by Leptospirosis showing influenza-type symptoms with fever and severe headache. Dairy farmers are particularly at risk due to urine splashes in the parlour. Lepto is treatable with appropriate antibiotics.

How can you test for Leptospirosis?

A bulk milk sample or a blood sample will find antibodies to Leptospirosis. It is not possible to determine between vaccine antibodies and infection antibodies so if the test is positive you have to assume there is infection present if you don't currently vaccinate.

If no antibodies are found then you are free from disease, you then need to decide if to try and maintain your disease free status either by stopping animals coming in or by vaccinating if the risks of the herd becoming infected is large eg if you buy cattle in frequently.

What next?

Please contact one of the farm animal team for further information on control of Leptospirosis.

Lanes Farm Vets Location & Contact Information.

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