



MISALLIANCE

One case I've seen several times in the last month is "misalliance", or unintended pregnancies. Whether it be caused by an escapee such as a neighbouring bull or a determined heifer (I've treated one that swam most of the Levels!), a bull left in with his daughters, or a known (or unknown) rig, misalliance is unfortunately a relatively common occurrence.

There are many reasons why preventative measures are worthwhile. If the pregnancies are not detected before full term, there is the cost of difficult calvings or caesareans and associated complications. There are also comebacks from markets or buyers. Even if pregnancies are detected in time, treatment costs, hassle and the loss of calves can be significant.

Treatment

If misalliance is discovered, there are two options:

1. Allow the pregnancy to continue, taking into account the risk of calving difficulties in smaller heifers and infectious disease spreading from the calves, such as BVD or
2. Abort the pregnancy

Providing the animals are in the first third of pregnancy, prostaglandin

injections are administered by the vet. **Three very important considerations with this are:**

1. It won't work in pregnancies under 7 days old
2. It is not reliable in pregnancies over 3 months old, without additional steroid treatment
3. The injection only works 90% of the time

Therefore, the recommended protocol in this situation is to wait 5 weeks after the bull/rig has been removed, then scan the animals to be certain who is or isn't pregnant and get a good guide of the age of any pregnancies, so the appropriate treatment can be administered. We must also re-check any pregnant animals given aborting injections to check that the pregnancy has been terminated.



Prevention

Maintaining farm boundaries is the most important method of preventing misalliance caused by escapees - it is also important for controlling infectious disease spread through the contact, even if nothing gets in calf.

If you have a three month calving period, there is a chance that early heifer calves have been running with the bull for some or all of the next service window. Making sure the bull comes out on time can reduce the risk of any calves being fertile and can ensure any pregnancies are at least early and therefore more easily treated.

As for rigs, Synergy Farm Health's policy is not to castrate them. Because there is no guarantee the retained testicle is infertile, it is better to leave the descended one as an obvious marker of an entire animal, rather than remove it and forget. Regularly check young rigs as testicles may drop later on; however after 10 months this is unlikely. It can be easy to incorrectly apply a castration ring, especially if in a rush with a calf-proud cow bearing down on you and a lively calf leaping around, but taking a bit of time and using any available restraint facilities will pay dividends later on.

Tom Warboys
Veterinary Surgeon



WHY SHOULD I HAVE A TBAS VISIT?

TBAS advisors can help you reduce the risk or spread of TB using practical solutions, make your farm more biosecure and help eliminate TB from your herd. This service is free and was initially set up back in 2018 by the EU and DEFRA, to run alongside the badger cull. The first funded period finished in 2021. TBAS visits consist of two visits delivered on farm, with a vet who has been trained as a TBAS advisor. Luckily Synergy have several TBAS trained vets!

These visits were so successful that DEFRA has authorised another round of fully funded visits for farmers to access, starting now. This time it's not just to cattle owners but to all livestock owners affected by TB. The only difference is there are two visits 6 months



apart, so that the recommendations discussed at the first visit can be followed up and any progress can be seen. It isn't every day that you get a Veterinary Advisor for free and you get them twice in 6 months! Don't worry, though, if you haven't got around to acting on the recommendations - you are not going to be told off! The recommendations are not compulsory, and they will be discussed in detail and agreed on at the time of the first visit.

The only commitment is that you allow your advisor to come back in 6 months for the follow up visit, so that DEFRA will release the funding. If you have already received a TBAS visit in the past you can still have these visits.

Please call the office to arrange a TBAS visit. Dealing with TB has always felt like you are at the mercy of a TB test, but let's change that and put the power into your hands and get this disease under control.

Jenny Clayton
Veterinary Surgeon

