Prevention and control - the DHHPS concept

The basic concept of the DHHPS is not to wait for trouble but to identify potential problems before they can be noticed on the farm.

Prevention is better than cure.

- DHHPS Metabolic Profiles can be used to 'Ask the Cows' what they think of their diets.

The benefits of teamwork

The DHHPS works on the principle that three heads are better than one. It provides the Beef Farmer with a unique framework for co-operation between their local veterinary surgeon, specialist nutritionalist and staff at the University of Edinburgh Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies.

This combination of specialist knowledge and expertise can offer enormous benefits with improved cow and calf health, optimum calf growth rate and improved cow fertility. Teamwork is the key to greater productivity and profitability.

The advantages of DHHPS

- **Impartial, unbiased approach to each farm**
- **Solutions tailored to individual farms**
- **Professional support for farmers and advisors**
- **Results processed within a week, enabling rapid identification and correction of problems**
- **Workshops and farmer meetings**
- **DHHPS vets have further specialist veterinary qualifications in cattle health and reproduction.**
- **Detailed fertility and mastitis analysis**
- **Workshops and farmer meetings**

Improving the nutritional and disease status of your herd will lead to increased profitability due to improved efficiency and production.

If you wish to learn more about our services contact our office or visit our website.

DAIRY HERD HEALTH & PRODUCTIVITY SERVICE

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BEEF SUCKLER METABOLIC PROFILES

"ASK THE COWS"

DHHPS

Suckler Cow testing

Nutrition:

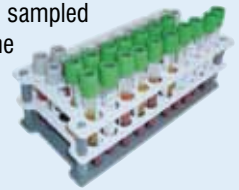
Regardless of your feeding system, blood testing remains a rapid and cost effective method of "Asking the Cows" what they think of their rations before it is too late.

- Good nutrition and management in late pregnancy and the first few weeks after calving are key to ensuring profitability in beef suckler herds.
- Failure to get cows in calf again is the greatest cause of economic loss. There can be issues relating to the bull, but nutritional constraints are a common cause of problems.
- Rations based on straw or mature big bale silage can often be short in protein, and this can result in reduced rumen function, poor colostrum production and milk production after calving.
- Likewise diets that are short in magnesium can result in staggers in cows with calves at foot. Blood testing can help identify such risks before it is too late.
- Body condition score your cows, to see which cows are at the target body condition score (2.5 for a spring-calving suckler cow at calving).
- Overfat cows (over BCS 3.5) can be slimmed down on low energy rations, but this approach should be stopped in the last month of pregnancy, otherwise calf health and colostrum may be affected.
- Thin cows (less than BCS 2) need to be fed good quality forage and some concentrates to gain condition. Do this gradually to avoid getting over-sized calves.
- Speak to your vet about investigating for underlying disease problems such as liver fluke.

As with all blood testing for nutritional status, the results need to be interpreted as one part of the jigsaw of assessing nutritional management, rather than looked at in isolation.

Blood sampling - asking the cows what they think

Pre-planned blood sampling of groups of cows at strategic times is the key. Groups of no less than five cows – which are representative of the herd - should be sampled as this test is for the assessment of the herd's nutrition and management.



Samples will be analysed for:

Energy Status: B-OHB, NEFA
Protein: Albumin, Globulin, UreaN
Minerals: Phosphate, Magnesium
Trace Elements: Copper, GSHPx (selenium)
Other tests are available – contact the office to enquire.

When is the best time to sample?

A metabolic profile test should be carried out once the cows have been on full winter rations for at least 2-3 weeks, as this will check the adequacy of the base ration.

There are two main periods for blood testing in block calving suckler herds:

1) Sampling a group of the first cows due to calve in the last fortnight of pregnancy before calving starts.
2) Followed by a repeat blood test 2-3 weeks after calving.

This will check on nutritional status during the critical periods around calving.

Information required

At the same time as the blood samples are taken the following information should be collected: details of expected or recent calving date, body condition score and current ration. Body weight by heart girth measurement should also be provided if practical. Use the Sheet 3 form, ignoring sections solely relevant to the dairy cow blood test.

Bloods to submit:

Two lithium heparin (green) vacutainers are required from each cow. Please label all tubes clearly.

What happens next?

The completed Sheet 3 form and blood samples should be sent to the DHHPS at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in Edinburgh for analysis. The samples will be analysed and combined with the other information provided and the results with a report returned to the Farmer, Vet and where relevant Nutritional Advisor.

Results and report should be back on farm within a week of receipt of the samples in Edinburgh.