

# Livestock

## MATTERS

[www.xlvets.ie](http://www.xlvets.ie)

Inside this issue:

### **Selective Dry Cow Therapy**

*How best to prepare your cows for the next lactation*

### **Skin diseases of cattle**

*The most common skin diseases found on cattle farms in Ireland*





EXCELLENCE IN PRACTICE

# XLVets - We Excel

The members of XLVets have worked hard to create what they see as a model of how practices can work together, by sharing experiences, knowledge and skills. We strive to deliver excellence in veterinary practice to our clients and their animals.

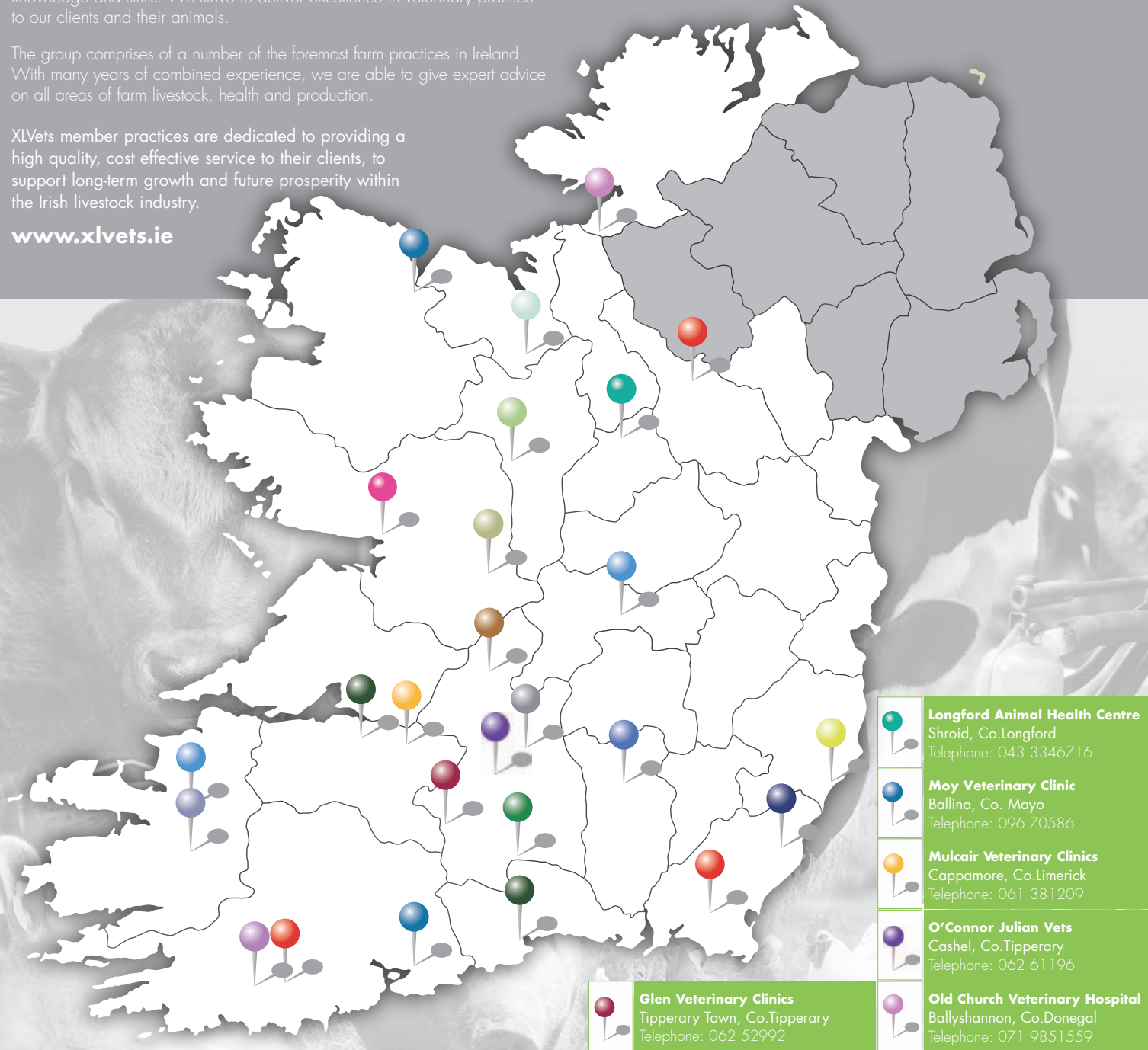
The group comprises of a number of the foremost farm practices in Ireland. With many years of combined experience, we are able to give expert advice on all areas of farm livestock, health and production.

XLVets member practices are dedicated to providing a high quality, cost effective service to their clients, to support long-term growth and future prosperity within the Irish livestock industry.

[www.xlvets.ie](http://www.xlvets.ie)



Invest in Health Don't Pay For Disease



<b>Adare Veterinary Surgery</b> Adare, Co.Limerick Telephone: 061 396390	<b>Clerkin Vets</b> Cootehill, Co.Cavan Telephone: 049 5552777	<b>Glenbower Veterinary Group</b> Killeagh, Co.Cork Telephone: 024 95189	<b>Ormonde Veterinary</b> Middleknock Rd, Dublin Rd, Kilkenny Telephone: 056 7763630
<b>All Creatures Veterinary Clinic</b> Roscommon Town, Co.Roscommon Telephone: 0906 626898	<b>Comeragh Veterinary</b> Kilmacthomas, Co.Waterford Telephone: 051 294143	<b>Glenina Veterinary Clinic</b> Dublin Road, Co.Galway Telephone: 091 752 014	<b>Riverview Veterinary Group</b> Bandon, Co.Cork Telephone: 023 8841503
<b>Animal Health Centre</b> Main Street, Taghmon, Co. Wexford Telephone: 053 9134140	<b>Donal Lynch Veterinary</b> Tullamore, Co.Offaly Telephone: 057 9354505	<b>Gortlandroe Veterinary Clinic</b> Nenagh, Co.Tipperary Telephone: 067 31016	<b>Sliabh Luachra Veterinary Centre</b> Rathmore, Co.Kerry Telephone: 064 7758009
<b>Avondale Veterinary Clinics</b> Arklow, Co.Wicklow Telephone: 0402 33744	<b>Geraghty &amp; Neary Veterinary</b> Mountbellew, Co Galway Telephone: 096 79277	<b>Kilcoyne &amp; Barnes Veterinary</b> Tubbercurry, Co.Sligo Telephone: 071 9185016	<b>Southview Veterinary Hospital</b> Clonmel, Co.Tipperary Telephone: 052 6121429
<b>Castle Veterinary Clinic</b> Church St, Castleisland, Co. Kerry Telephone: 066 714 1230	<b>Glasslyn Veterinary Clinic</b> Bandon, Co Cork Telephone: 021 4772277	<b>Killenaule Vets</b> Thurles, Co.Tipperary Telephone: 052 9156065	<b>The Veterinary Hospital</b> Gorey, Co.Wexford Telephone: 053 9421151

<b>Longford Animal Health Centre</b> Shroid, Co.Longford Telephone: 043 3346716	<b>Moy Veterinary Clinic</b> Ballina, Co. Mayo Telephone: 096 70586	<b>Mulcair Veterinary Clinics</b> Cappamore, Co.Limerick Telephone: 061 381209	<b>O'Connor Julian Vets</b> Cashel, Co.Tipperary Telephone: 062 61196
<b>Glen Veterinary Clinics</b> Tipperary Town, Co.Tipperary Telephone: 062 52992	<b>Old Church Veterinary Hospital</b> Ballyshannon, Co.Donegal Telephone: 071 9851559		

## VOLUME 5 EDITION 10

XLVets are all independently owned, progressive veterinary practices located throughout Ireland committed to working together for the benefit of our clients.

### XLVets Ireland

#### Member Practices

- Adare Veterinary Surgery**  
Curraghbeg, Adare, Co.Limerick
- All Creatures Veterinary Clinic**  
Lanesboro Street, Roscommon Town, Co.Roscommon
- Animal Health Centre**  
Main Street, Taghmon, Co. Wexford
- Avondale Veterinary Clinics**  
Ferrybank, Arklow, Co.Wicklow
- Castle Veterinary Clinic**  
Church Street, Castleisland, Co. Kerry
- Clerkin Vets**  
90 Bridge Street, Cootehill, Co.Cavan
- Comeragh Veterinary**  
Main Street, Kilmacthomas, Co.Waterford
- Donal Lynch Veterinary**  
Killurin Cross, Tullamore Co.Offaly
- Geraghty & Neary Veterinary**  
College Road, Mountbellew, Co Galway
- Glasslyn Veterinary Clinic**  
Glasslyn Road, Bandon, Co Cork
- Glen Veterinary Clinics**  
Blind Street, Tipperary Town, Co.Tipperary
- Glenbower Veterinary Group**  
Clashdermot East, Killeagh, Co.Cork
- Glenina Veterinary Clinic**  
1 Glenina Heights, Dublin Road, Co.Galway
- Gortlandroe Veterinary Clinic**  
St Conlon's Road, Nenagh, Co.Tipperary
- Kilcoyne & Barnes Veterinary**  
Mountain Road, Tubbercurry, Co Sligo
- Killenaule Vets**  
Killenaule, Thurles, Co.Tipperary
- Longford Animal Health Centre**  
Cooleeny, Shroid, Co Longford
- Moy Veterinary Clinic**  
Barrett Street, Ballina, Co. Mayo
- Mulcair Veterinary Clinics**  
Dromsally, Cappamore, Co.Limerick
- O'Connor Julian Vets**  
Cahir Road, Cashel, Co.Tipperary
- Old Church Veterinary Hospital**  
The Mall, Ballyshannon, Co.Donegal
- Ormonde Veterinary**  
Middleknock Road, Dublin Road, Kilkenny
- Riverview Veterinary Group**  
Distillery Road, Bandon, Co.Cork
- Sliabh Luachra Veterinary Centre**  
West End, Rathmore, Co.Kerry
- Southview Veterinary Hospital**  
Irishtown, Clonmel, Co.Tipperary
- The Veterinary Hospital**  
Arklow Road, Gorey, Co.Wexford

XLVet Ireland Ltd Registered Office at:  
Dromsally, Cappamore  
County Limerick  
Tel: 061 381505

© XLVet Ireland  
No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior permission of the publisher.

Disclaimer:  
XLVets does not necessarily share the views of contributors. No responsibility can be accepted for opinions expressed by contributors.

## CONTENTS

- 04 Skin diseases of cattle**  
Andrew Hogg outlines the most common skin diseases found on cattle farms in Ireland
- 06 Selective Dry Cow Therapy**  
Patrick Clerkin advises on how best to prepare your cows for the next lactation
- 08 Equine Dentistry**  
Karl D'Arcy provides an in depth description of equine dentistry
- 10 Managing the ageing dog**  
Gillian Leech discusses the tell tale signs of ageing and gives advice on caring for your ageing dog
- 12 Beef Knowledge Transfer Programme**  
Paul Barnes explains what is involved and details some of the programme outcomes
- 14 Poisonous plants in cattle**  
Shane Mc Guckin looks at some of the most common poisonous plants that affect cattle

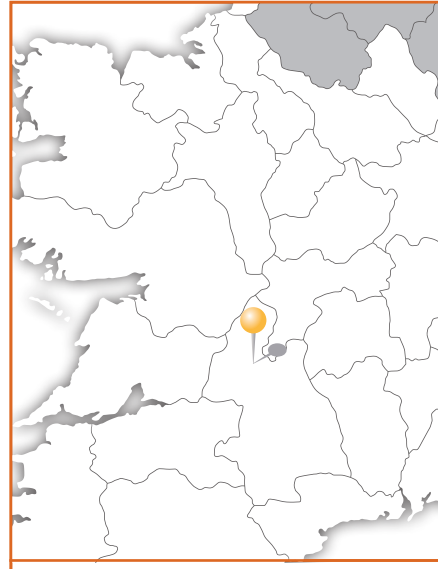


Launched in 2011, XLVets Skillnet is a learning network supporting the training needs of the veterinary and farming sectors in Ireland. Our objective is to promote growth and sustainability by offering flexible, practical training programmes that are relevant and tailored to the needs of both sectors.

In June 2019, we launched our new website, where our new members area gives members exclusive 24/7 access to our FREE online training Agri Academy, we have 4 modules already available with more to follow in 2019. These online modules were created to address the animal health training needs of livestock farmers are delivered by veterinary experts.

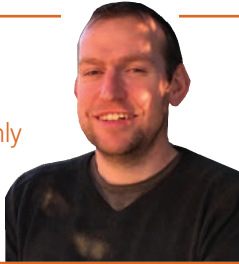
Visit us on [www.xlvetskillnet.ie](http://www.xlvetskillnet.ie)





Veterinary Surgeon Andrew Hogg  
 XLVets Practice Gortlandroe Veterinary Clinic, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary

**ANDREW HOGG, BVMS**



Diseases of the skin in both dairy and beef cattle are not only unsightly but can have a significant impact on productivity and animal welfare. In this article I will outline the skin diseases that are most commonly found in cattle practice

# Skin Diseases of Cattle



Figure 1: Significant hair loss in a suckler calf with lice

Skin diseases of cattle can be broken down broadly into parasitic and non-parasitic causes. This article will explain some of the methods used to identify and treat such conditions.

**Parasitic Causes**

- Lice
- Mange

**Lice**

Heavy lice infestations can affect production due to reduced feeding and damaged hides. Poor conditioned cattle housed during winter are most at risk. They will rub against feed barriers and gates resulting in hair loss, see Figure 1.

Careful inspection of the skin can identify louse populations. All cattle in direct contact should be treated and there are a number of pour-ons that your vet can advise upon. It is worth noting if milking or finishing cattle, that the withdrawal times vary on these products.

**Mange**

Chorioptic mange is commonly seen in Ireland with signs including oozing and thickening of the skin at the base of the tail initially. It is a problem seen especially at the end of housing. These cases usually resolve at turnout. Sarcoptic and Psoroptic mange are rare in Ireland but can occur. Signs include weeping and thickening of the skin over the neck and back. Psoroptic mange is more commonly seen in sheep, due to the parasite *Psoroptic ovis*, but can also occur in cattle, see Figure 2.

Your vet can examine the animal(s) and take samples if necessary, to identify the parasite(s) involved. Treatments are readily available and you can help prevent problems by avoiding overcrowding and ensuring adequate feed and feed space. Ask your vet for advice on treatment options, as many of the pour on products will treat lung and stomach worms too.

**Non-Parasitic Causes**

- Warts
- Photosensitisation
- Ringworm
- Rain Scald
- Wounds



Figure 2: Severe hair loss and weeping of skin due to psoroptic mange

**Warts**

These are generally small tumours caused by Bovine Papillomavirus (BPV) and most commonly affect the head and teats, see Figure 3.

In practice we regularly see these on the teats of milking heifers, or anywhere on show cattle. These often resolve on their own but vaccines can be developed for individual animals, if necessary for milking or showing, using samples of their warts.



Figure 3: BPV warts on the teat of a dairy animal

**Photosensitisation**

This usually occurs on white areas of skin exposed to sunlight, where it often oozes before drying and peeling off, see Figure 4. It can happen when the animal eats certain plants or suffers liver damage, for example, due to fluke infestation. Housing out of the sun, fly treatment and antibiotics will help alleviate symptoms, while fluke treatment may help if liver damage is suspected.



Figure 4: Dairy cow suffering from photosensitisation

**Ringworm**

Very commonly seen especially in young stock, poorer cattle are generally most affected. Old sheds and fence posts can help the fungus survive to re-infect on the same farms year on year. Lesions are often seen around the head, see Figure 5, but can be anywhere. It can be slow to do so, but it usually resolves over time. Treatments are available if necessary.



Figure 5: High stocking densities can worsen the incidence of ringworm

**Rain Scald**

Occurs during long periods of warm, wet weather. It usually resolves without intervention, but antibiotics will treat the infection if needed.

**Wounds**

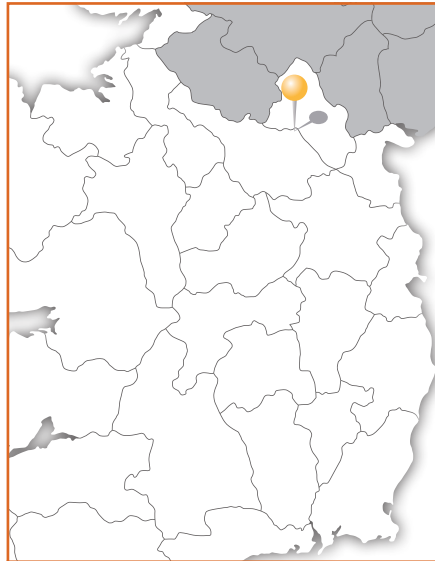
Penetrating wounds of the skin can introduce infection, often leading to an abscess. Using dirty needles for injections is one obvious cause. Your vet can check, lance, drain and flush these abscesses to prevent worsening infection, see Figure 6.

As you can see, most skin diseases of cattle can either be prevented, or diagnosed and treated without too much trouble, provided they are caught early. Others can be allowed to resolve over time, provided they are not causing a reduction in productivity. Avoiding overcrowding and ensuring cattle are otherwise in good general health is not only good farming practice, it will help reduce skin problems too.



Figure 6: An abscess draining after being lanced





Veterinary Surgeon Patrick Clerkin

XLVets Practice Clerkin Veterinary Co. Cavan

A significant aspect of this process is the use of antibiotics and/or teat sealer. Using DCT is one of the parts of an effective mastitis control program.

If a client is considering selective dry cow therapy, I like to have a full overview of their mastitis status. Knowing the farms daily operation, prevalence and reviewing mastitis data gives vital information and an easier approach bringing the farmer into the frame of mind that he is doing a good comprehensive job.

Firstly, we need to understand the history of the farm in terms of antibiotic usage, record keeping and sampling in a move towards selective dry cow therapy and away from blanket treatment.

The advantage here is it makes the process less of a risk and more of a success, clearly the target is to kill any bacteria in the udder at the end of lactation and this should not be done on cost but rather on culture and sensitivity.

The next advantage is the antibiotic chosen based on this information, it can work more effectively as it is given in a large dose with slow release. This helps reduce the development of resistance, correctly eliminating the bacteria, and makes the farmer aware that there is an advantage in what he is doing (Curing the infected animals and reducing subclinical mastitis). This is the only time when this cow is not

**PATRICK CLERKIN, MVB MRCVS MBA**

Over the coming weeks, dairy farmers across the country will be focusing their attention to the dry cow period. This is the only opportunity you have to prepare your cow for the next lactation



# Selective Dry Cow Therapy (DCT)/ Heifer Sealing



producing milk for long enough to allow you to correct the problem.

The next step is to ensure you have used the correct therapy to treat and cure any bacteria in the udder. It does not work in preventing new infections entering, hence the reason for combining a teat seal. Dirt and bacteria can only enter the udder through one route, the teat duct and correct use of a teat seal is a must in all cows at drying off (if she has been selected for dry cow treatment or not). Continuously monitoring is necessary. These treatments are no excuse for poor hygiene in the udder region from there to calving down.

## Selective/Blanket Dry Cow Therapy

- **Blanket treatment** = treating ALL quarters of ALL cows with DCT

### • Selective treatment

- Infected cows= antibiotic + teat seal
- Uninfected cows = teat seal only

### SDCT Pros

- Responsible antimicrobial use
- Reduce cost
- Less stress over withdrawals post calving?

### SDCT Cons

- Risk of mastitis breakdown if:
  - Cows not properly selected
  - If teat seal not administered

## Milk Recording

- After year-round teat disinfection - Next most important tool
- Cheap: <€20 per cow per year
- Identification of problem cows

Allows identification of cows suitable for SDCT

## California Mastitis Test (CMT)

- Milk recording identifies the cow
- CMT to identify which 1/4 is affected

SDCT: CMT all cows not getting antibiotics at drying-off



## SDCT Selection Criteria

### 1. Herd Selection

- **A.** Bulk Tank SCC consistently <200,000 cells/ml
- **B.** Milk recording: ideally monthly
- **C.** Records of clinical cases and outcomes
- **D.** <2% clinical case rate in the last 3 months of lactation

### 2. Cow Selection

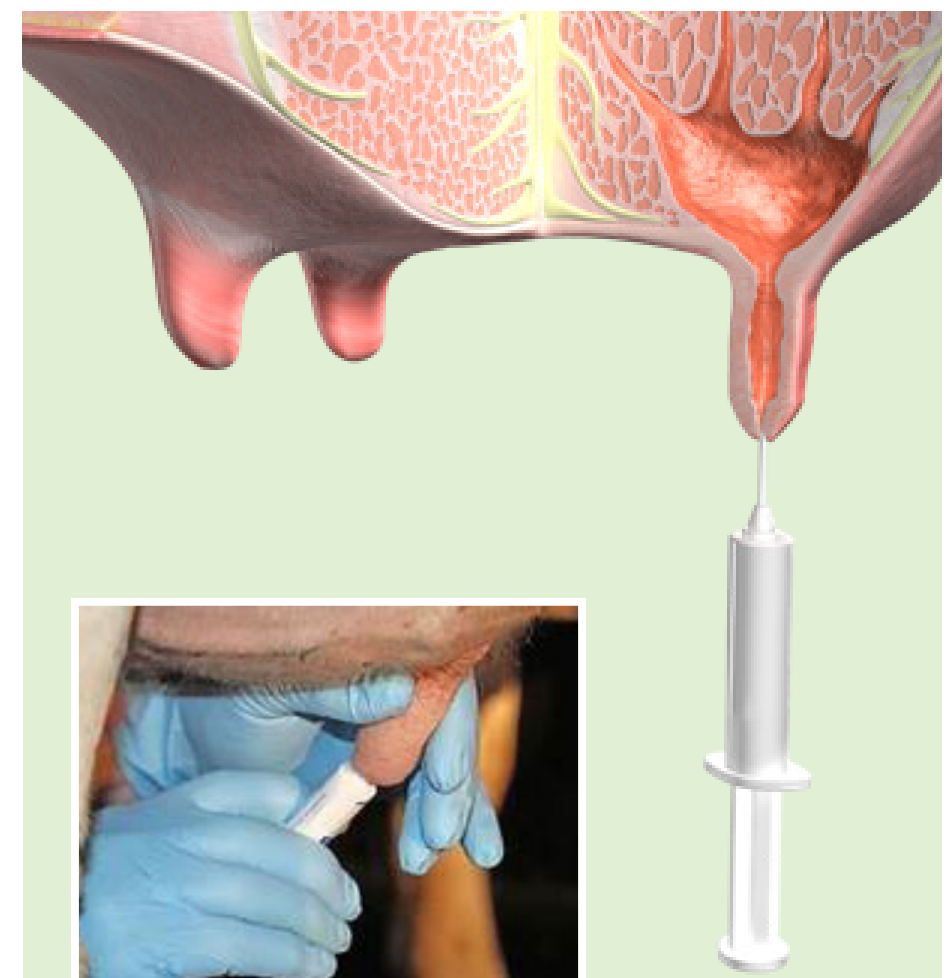
- **A.** SCC consistently <200,000
- **B.** No clinical case throughout the lactation
- For added 'security': CMT
- Ensure that there's no high SCC quarter
- Accurate herd & animal selection critical!!!! Work in consultation with your vet

## Dry Off Procedure

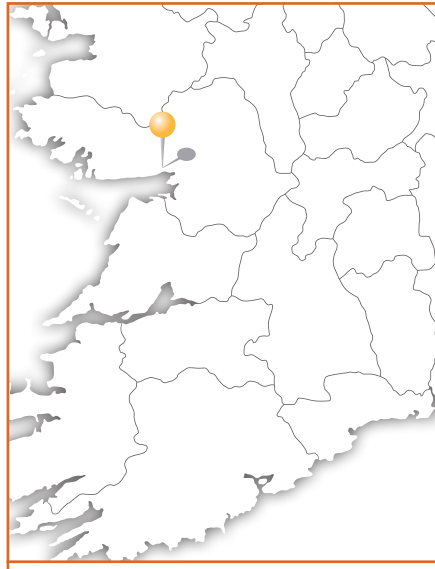
- Not during milking! Mark cows for treatments - prevents mistakes
- One person approx. 20 cows per hour
- Wash out parlor between batches
- Wear gloves
- Disinfect all teats thoroughly
- Cotton wool soaked in meth/wipes
- Concentrate on teat end - Disinfect FAR to NEAR Administer teat seal- NEAR to FAR
- Teat seal administered last
- Squeeze base as you administer & do NOT massage
- Teat dip or spray immediately after treatment
- Avoid letting cows lie down post treatment
- Away from parlour so noises etc. don't stimulate milk production
- Monitor for mastitis

## Teat Sealing Heifers

- Heifers are the most vulnerable members of the herd representing a fifth of the national herd due to the rate of expansion.
  - Considered on farms where heifer mastitis is an issue or potential issue due to management issues and when discussed with your vet
  - Administer in batches 4-6 weeks pre calving
  - Good facilities, aseptically as possible as no antibiotic being administered and good help
  - Train heifers into parlor/crush prior to deciding to teat seal
  - If difficult - leave untreated and teat spray
  - One tube per quarter
- Only consider if you have a problem and after discussing with you vet







Veterinary Surgeon Karl D'Arcy

XLVets Practice Glenina Vet Clinic Co. Galway

**KARL D'ARCY, MVB**

Along with hoofcare, equine dentistry is an essential and unavoidable part of providing for your horses health



# Looking that gift horse in the mouth



Equine dentistry can seem like some dark and unfathomable art. The usually quite normal and affable equine vet turns up and starts hauling medieval-looking metal mouth gags, pliers, metal files and other suspect objects from the deepest recesses of their car. He or she mutters darkly about hooks and sharp points and before you know it your poor horse had its mouth kept open by the fearsome gag while your vet grimly shoves a metal pole with a file at the tip of it around the vicinity of its tonsils. (Figure 1)

Fear not, however, equine dentistry has a long and distinguished history, mentioned in Chinese records back as far as 600 BC and subject to a treatise by none other than Aristotle in Ancient Greece c. 350 BC.

Along with hoof care it is an essential, unavoidable part of providing for horse health. It's a very different science to human dentistry; our equine patients have very different teeth and a very different diet. Equines have the same basic dental plan as ourselves, with biting incisors at the front of the mouth, canines, and grinding cheek teeth further back; the premolars and the molars.



Figure 1

## The Teeth

### Incisors

Absent at birth, the deciduous (milk or baby teeth) erupt within the first days, notably whiter and broader than their adult version. Numbering 12 in both the juvenile and adult horse, the sequential eruption of these teeth at predictable time frames in the growth of horses allows fairly accurate ageing for the first 5 years of life. Features of these teeth related to wear and tear e.g. infundibular cups, Galvayne's groove, incisor hook, are far less reliable in determining age as individual factors such as breed, diet, environment, behaviours such as windsucking and cribbing etc. all affect wear more than simply growing older does.

### Canines

These sit in the gaps between incisors and cheek teeth, much nearer the incisors. The baby version rarely erupts and the adult version appears between 4 and 7 years of age. So-called "blind canines" don't erupt and can cause swollen and sore gums in that location. Frequently all or some are absent in females. They possibly evolved as fighting teeth and can be ferociously sharp and dagger-like in older males. They play no part in feeding and do not meet. Prone to tartar build up, cutting people's hands fitting the bridle or conducting dental exams, getting snagged and damaged and just generally being a nuisance they can be reduced and filed smooth. Actual removal is a major procedure involving x-rays and surgery as they have very long, deep roots.

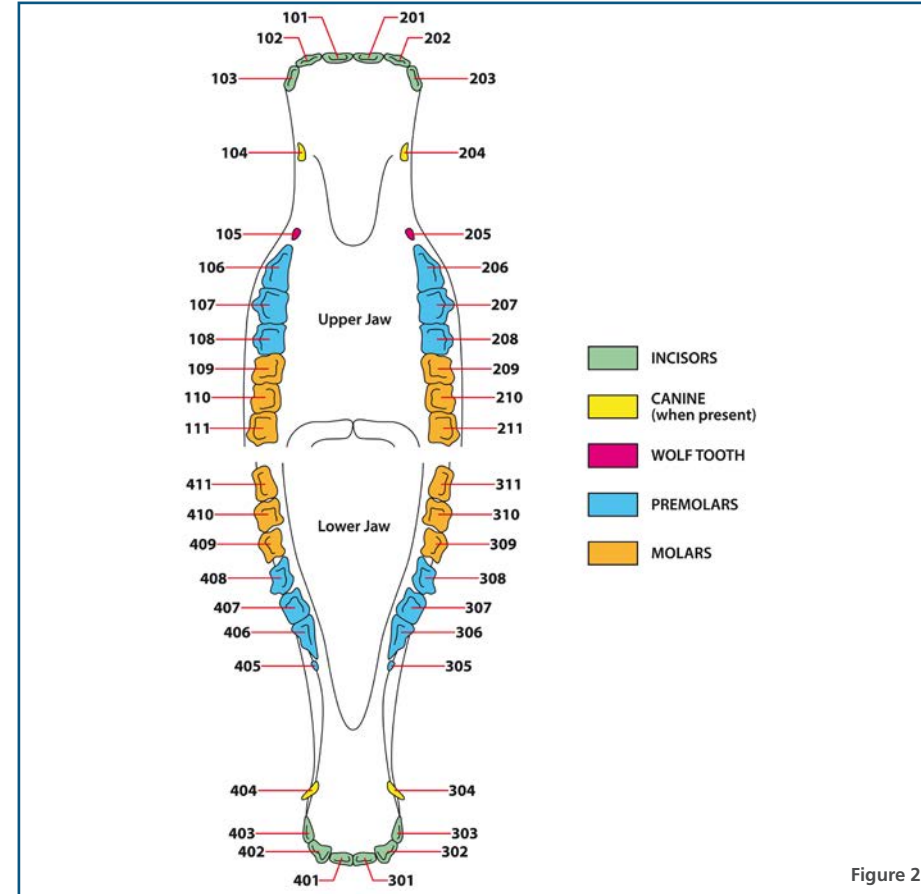


Figure 2

### Premolars

Present at birth or within a few days. The adult teeth erupt between 2.5 to 4 years. The infamous wolf tooth is the first premolar but unlike the rest doesn't have a milk version, erupting when present as an adult tooth at any age from 6 months to several years. Absent from possibly a slight majority of horses they are usually present only in the upper jaw.

Small and peg-like they are often shed spontaneously with the deciduous 2nd premolar at 18 months old. They range from only 3mm in diameter to having substantial 2cm roots. The depth of root bears no relation to the size of the crown, but a loose and wobbly crown is unlikely to have a deep root. "Blind" unerupted wolf teeth are more likely to cause pain and irritation.

These blind wolf teeth are generally further forward and often lie more flatly against the gum line. Healthy wolf teeth left alone rarely cause trouble. However, they're not left alone if the horse is wearing a bit. Removal is usually a minor procedure so by and large these teeth are best removed early before training begins particularly if;

- Large or only present one side
- Damaged or fragmented or loose
- Blind
- In the lower jaw right in the bit seat

- In a high performance horse

Horses have 12 to 16 premolars varying by which wolf teeth, if any, are present.

### Molars

These 12 teeth erupt between 1 and 4 years and don't have deciduous precursors. Cheek teeth in horses have constantly erupting reserve (not infinite!) crown of up to 100mm, and wear 3-4mm per year on average. They do the heavy work of grinding feed down but issues with alignment in incisors can prevent the sideways movement of the jaw required. Uneven, excessive or reduced wear due to diet, accidents, personal quirks in chewing and a whole host of reasons can cause abnormalities in the shape of the enamel such as;

- Sharp enamel points on the outer upper teeth and inner lower, as early as 2 years. A common problem (Fig. 43)
- Retained caps of milk teeth
- Hooks or ramps on the first and last cheek teeth
- Wave mouth- adjacent teeth with different heights
- Step mouth- a missing tooth leading to an over long opposing tooth
- Shear mouth- loss of normal circular chewing leading to severe overgrowth of teeth edges. Life threatening.

## The Times

Like ourselves dental care of the horse is ideally prophylactic rather than a response to obvious dental problems. Ideally the horse should be examined at fairly set intervals, in a slightly dark environment, sedated if necessary and with a capable handler and handling facilities. Simply backing a horse into a corner and jamming a float into its mouth in the vague hope of improving matters is as pointless as it sounds.

### A rough guide to routine dental checks needed;

- Up to 5 years - brief check twice annually, to spot potential problems
- Before heavy training starts
- 5-15 years - once annually
- 15 upwards - twice annually

### Signs that a horse has need of a dental exam include:

- Congenital abnormalities e.g. parrot mouth, sow mouth
- Oral injuries e.g. kicks
- Any horse with stereotypical behaviours like cribbing, wind sucking
- Pain, discomfort while feeding
- Quidding, i.e. dropping or spitting out feed

Remember that a horse has only a limited reserve of cheek teeth; it's better your vet takes no action at a dental exam if none is needed, rather than expect enthusiastic filing away of healthy teeth every time they look in your horses mouth!



Figure 3





Veterinary Nurse Gillian Leech

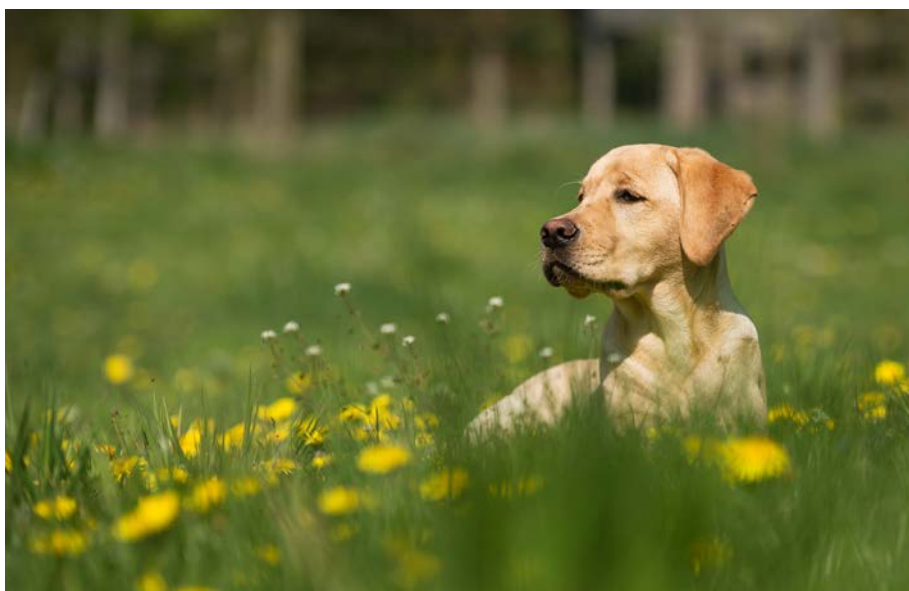
XLVets Practice Ormonde Veterinary Hospital, Co. Kilkenny

GILLIAN LEECH, RVN

Our canine companions go through many stages of life from their early puppy years right through to their geriatric years. Each phase of their lives are as important as the other and needs to be managed accordingly



# Managing the ageing dog



Like people dogs age differently and it is important to know when your pet enters their senior years (Table 1).

In theory the age of a dog depends on breed and size. Managing your ageing dog can be challenging but equally rewarding. Picking up on the tell-tale signs of ageing and knowing how to look after your elderly pet, are the key factors in giving your dog a longer and better quality of life.

AGE	WEIGHT IN KG			
	0-9kg	9-22	22-40	>40
1	7	7	8	9
2	13	14	16	18
3	20	21	24	26
4	26	27	31	34
5	33	34	38	41
6	40	42	45	49
7	44	47	50	56
8	48	51	55	64
9	52	56	61	71
10	56	60	66	78
11	60	65	72	86
12	64	69	77	93
13	68	74	82	101
14	72	78	88	108
15	76	83	93	115
16	80	87	99	123
17	84	92	104	131
18	88	96	109	139
19	92	101	115	
20	96	105	120	

Adult Senior Geriatric

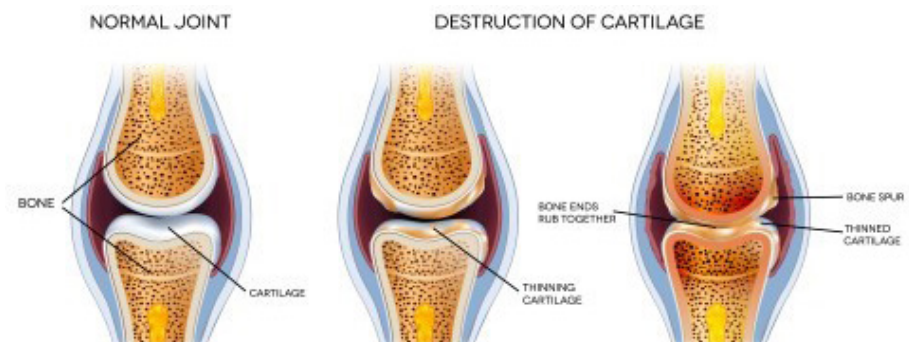
Table 1

## What to expect in the ageing dog

There are many medical conditions your pet may develop as they enter their senior years such as arthritis, cardiac disease, dental disease, deterioration of the sight and hearing, cancer and they can even become senile. The two most common medical conditions we would encounter are arthritis and cardiac related disease.

## Managing arthritis in the ageing dog

The most common form of arthritis in dogs is osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis is chronic and a painful disease. The cartilage, which acts as a shock absorber or cushion in the joint, deteriorates and the lining around the joint becomes thickened. In some cases, spurs/irregular bone begin to develop.



## Signs and symptoms of arthritis in dogs

- Reluctant to exercise
- Lameness
- Inability to go up and down stairs
- Slow to get up after lying down
- Urinating indoors

If you notice your dog experiencing any of the signs above contact your vet. If your vet suspects arthritis they will carry out a physical exam and take x-rays of the affected joint(s).

## Treatment and management

- **Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories:** These are the most common form of pain medication used to control and manage osteoarthritis.
- **Weight control:** Ask your vet or veterinary nurse to give your pet a body condition score (BCS). Ideally on a scale of 1-5 the optimum BCS would be 3. If your dog has a BCS of 4 or 5 their diet and life style will need to be adjusted or changed to reduce the extra pressure and extra weight on their joints.
- **Nutrition:** Your pet should be fed a highly nutritional and good quality food that contains glucosamine & chondroitin sulphate and omega 3 fatty acids. This helps support joint enrichment.
- **Environment and activity:** Always provide your ageing pet with a deep bedding to rest on. If possible avoid having slippery surfaces such as tiles. Avoid activities such as running or jumping and only bring your dog on lead walks. Raise your dog's food bowl off the ground if they have arthritis in the neck. A ramp for getting into the car will also be helpful for your dog.

## Managing heart disease in the ageing dog

Heart disease unfortunately is another disease that a lot of our ageing dogs encounter. If your dog is diagnosed with a form of heart disease, it does not necessarily mean a death sentence. During your dog's bi-annual vet check they will listen and examine the heart as part of their clinical exam. Early diagnosis of heart disease will improve the quality and longevity of your dog's life. Signs can often be accepted as the ageing process.

## Signs and symptoms of heart disease in dogs

- Laboured breathing
- Coughing
- Distended abdomen
- Reluctant to exercise
- Fatigue
- Anorexia



If your dog displays any of these signs or symptoms contact your vet and arrange a consultation to investigate further.

## Treatment and management

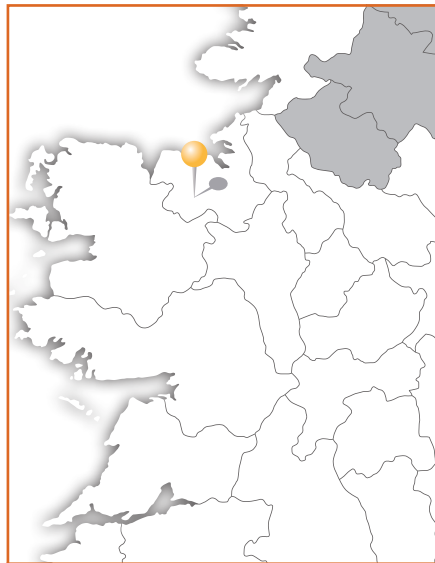
- **Medication:** Medications such as pimobendans and diuretics are frequently used. These drugs will increase the hearts ability to pump blood around the body, reduce blood pressure and remove excess fluid in the body.
- **Weight control:** Reducing or maintaining the ideal body weight will help with your dog's breathing capability.
- **Nutrition:** Ideally your dog should be fed a nutritional food which is low in sodium.
- **Environment:** Keep the area which they spend most of their time in, cool and free from dust. This will help reduce coughing.

Just like humans, getting older is unfortunately inevitable for dogs. As a pet owner it is our responsibility to provide our ageing pets with a satisfactory quality of life.

### You can simply do this by:

- Having bi-annual veterinary visits
- Feeding them an appropriate nutritional diet
- Adjust their feeding mechanism as required
- Maintaining good oral hygiene
- Providing them with appropriate bedding
- Preventing obesity
- Providing them with regular stimulation through the form of play





Veterinary Surgeon Paul Barnes

XLVets Practice Kilcoyne and Barnes Veterinary, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo

**PAUL BARNES, MVB**

Paul explains what is involved in the Beef Knowledge Transfer Programme and discusses some of his experiences with clients.



# Beef Knowledge Transfer Programme



The Beef Knowledge Transfer (KT) Programme was one of several 3-year KT Programmes financed under the Rural Development Programme (RDP). Beef was one of 6 sectors in the programme along with Dairy, Equine, Poultry, Sheep and Tillage. Participants could join groups in 2 different sectors.

Risk assessment were carried out under three main areas:

- **Calf Health and Biosecurity** – mandatory element which had to be completed along with one of the following options
- **Parasite control** – option
- **Fertility** – option

## Calf health and biosecurity

In this section farmers and vets discussed Key Performance Indicators on the farm and compared them to targets:

- Scours < 6 weeks
- Scours 6 weeks-1 year
- Pneumonia < 6 weeks
- Pneumonia 6 weeks – 1 year
- Mortality

Where performance was not on target, possible reasons for this could be discussed and diagnostics put in place to identify the cause, and put in place preventative measures to help avoid recurrence.

**Some of the main calf health areas discussed focused on;**

- The importance of hygiene around calving and the necessity to ensure calves receive adequate quality colostrum within 2 hours of birth
- The implementation of accurate vaccination protocols to aid with hygiene and husbandry in the prevention and control of disease outbreaks at individual farm level based on previous problem areas, e.g. ensuring animals receive a complete course (two shots of clostridial vaccines etc. 4 weeks apart
- Creation of isolation areas for sick animals to prevent the spread of infection
- Increase of ventilation where it was

inadequate to reduce the risk of disease transmission, without introducing draughts

- The requirements for anaesthetic and pain relief to reduce stress of disbudding and castration and the need to castrate animals before 6 months of age

Handling facilities, housing and calving areas were also examined and where necessary recommendations made to improve safety for the farmer and animal welfare.

Body condition and mineral status of cows was also discussed on a lot of farms; the need to have cows in optimal BCS at calving and ensure any mineral deficiencies are addressed before calving, so as to reduce issues around calving and to maximise cow fertility for the next breeding season.

**Biosecurity focused on the purchase of animals and potential risk of disease spread by people or equipment entering the farm.**

- Animals purchased should be quarantined on arrival for 4 weeks or more
- Batch purchase of animals and from as few sources as possible is advisable
- Where possible disease status of origin herds should be checked before purchase
- Ensure any equipment entering the farm is cleaned and disinfected beforehand
- Provide adequate wash and disinfectant facilities for all personnel entering the farmyard

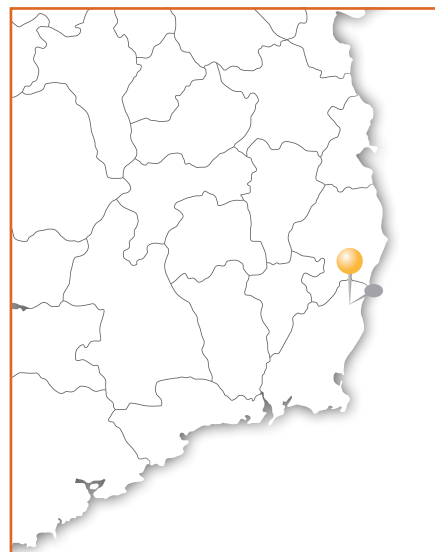
## Parasitology

- How to take a faecal sample for a faecal egg count (FEC)
- Best time to take samples
- Use of daily live weight gain (DLWG) and clinical indications such as coughing, scouring or weight loss in conjunction with FEC to decide when to dose and what with
- Good pasture management to minimise burden animals are exposed to.
- Use of correct anthelmintic at the correct time and correct dosage to minimise resistant parasites developing
- Remembering that the parasite develops resistance not the animal.
- Use of post treatment samples or faecal egg count reduction test (FECRT) to determine if treatments used were successful and monitor for resistance.

Having completed the on farm risk assessments on many farms, we found that most farmers were interested in learning what areas of their farming enterprise they could improve. They implemented the recommendations where practical to the best of their ability and we have seen a great improvement in awareness around key animal health areas. Farmers have become more astute to the need to have prevention measures in place before issues arise as this gives a more rewarding end result both from a welfare and economic view point. This coupled with better measures to stay ahead of parasite issues on farms will help decrease future reliance on antibiotics and anthelmintics which will also help improve efficiency long term.







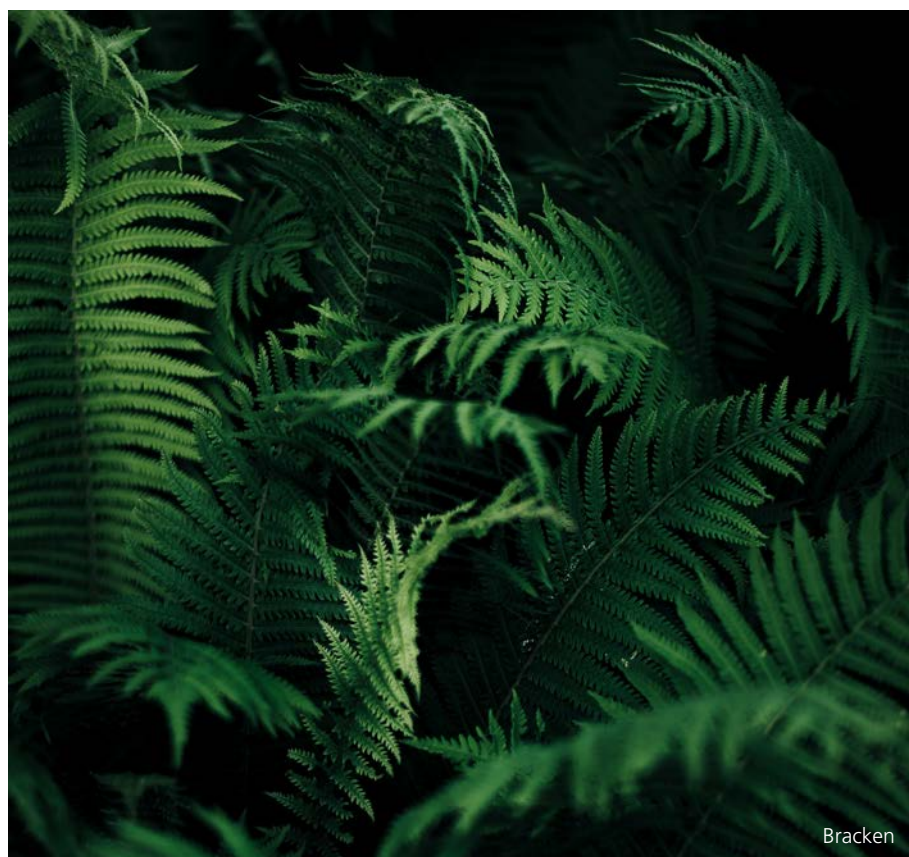
Veterinary Surgeon Shane McGuckin  
XLVets Practice The Veterinary Hospital  
Gorey, Co. Wexford

SHANE MCGUCKIN, MVB

There are many plants that contain substances that are poisonous to cattle and other species commonly found on Irish farms. Thankfully most of these plants are rare. In this article I will look at some of the more common ones.



# Poisonous Plants in Cattle



Bracken

## RAGWORT (Senecio jacobaea)

Cattle won't eat ragwort when it is growing in the field the problem arises when it is cut and included in hay or silage. When the forage is bought in there is always a risk that it could contain some ragwort. With the extended winter last year there was an increased incidence of ragwort poisoning as any available silage or hay was used up. The signs associated with ragwort poisoning are chronic diarrhoea with a lot of straining leading to prolapse of the rectum. There is also weight loss, depression and as the toxin causes liver damage animals can develop a "bottle jaw" due to fluid gathering in this area. This is similar to what happens in bad cases of liver fluke. The effects of ragwort are cumulative so liver damage from previous years will add up until the animal can't cope anymore and clinical signs develop.

Horses are more susceptible to ragwort than cattle and sheep are less so. There is no effective treatment, so the disease is just going to run its course.

## YEW (Taxus spp)

Yew trees are ornamental and are commonly found in churchyards. Problems can arise where cattle graze close to churchyards or where these trees are clipped and the leaves are thrown into the field where the cattle are grazing.

Ingestion leads to rapid death and again there is no treatment. Other causes of sudden death need to be considered such

as blackleg or lightning strike but if there are yew trees or cuttings close by this is a likely cause.

## BRACKEN

Livestock will eat young bracken fronds which are more palatable than the older plants. Ingestion of bracken over several weeks causes bone marrow suppression with loss of blood cells and clotting factors. Bracken can lead to bladder tumours in older cows and less commonly tumours in the oesophagus and rumen.

Signs associated with bracken poisoning include bleeding from the nose or

vagina. Animals stop eating and can get secondary bacterial infections which lead to high temperatures. Cattle get weaker and eventually go down and die. Other diseases with similar signs would be kidney infection and redwater which could be prevalent in the same areas.

Treatment is generally unsuccessful. Prevention by supplying adequate feeding is the most practical. Trying to fence off, spray or burn off the bracken usually is impossible in the areas in question.

Other less common causes of poisoning that are worth a mention are acorns and water dropwort.



Agri Academy, FREE online animal health training for the farming sector, delivered by veterinary experts.

Created by XLVets, the goal of Agri Academy is to pool the knowledge and experience of the XLVets network and to translate that into practical, relevant and easy to watch training for farmers.

Modules are delivered by veterinary experts. Each module is broken down into easy to watch bite-sized videos which can be accessed from your PC or on the go through your mobile.

- Module 1**  
The essentials of good medicine management on farm  
Delivered by Conor Geraghty
- Module 2**  
Pneumonia: Reduce the financial impact in your herd this winter  
Delivered by Donal Lynch
- Module 3**  
Best Practice in drying off cows  
Delivered by Conor Geraghty
- Module 4**  
Lameness - Reduce the incidents in your herd  
Delivered by Ger Cusack

To access this FREE online training, register by visiting the XLVets Skillnet website

[www.xlvetskillnet.ie](http://www.xlvetskillnet.ie)

From here you also have access to our library of online resources which includes press articles, videos and newsletters





# Agri Academy

Practical, relevant,  
easy to watch  
online training  
for farmers



Join Agri Academy for FREE and get instant access,  
visit [www.xlvetskillnet.ie](http://www.xlvetskillnet.ie)

XL Vets Skillnet is co-funded by Skillnet Ireland and member companies. Skillnet Ireland is funded from the National Training Fund through the Department of Education and Skills.



An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

