DAIRY HERD HEALTH & PRODUCTIVITY SERVICE

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Agriscot

The DHHPS will be part of the RDSVS stand at Agriscot on Wednesday 18th November at the Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston. Please come and see us if you are around on the day.

Which teat disinfectant is best?

A recent paper caught our eye….. Titled "Invited review: Evaluation of teat disinfectant efficacy studies from 2014 to 2026—A systematic review" by Vasquez et al (JDS 2026: 109: pp10124 – 10140), it reviewed the published literature on the efficacy on teat disinfectants in the last 12 years. Of the 41 studies included, they found only 7 studies that demonstrated "high scientific merit" (ie. where the teat disinfectant was properly evaluated), of which 6 studies assessed clinical or subclinical mastitis rates, and one looked at the bacterial levels on the teat skin. In short, there is not a lot of recent scientific evidence out there on the efficacy of teat disinfectant products, despite them being a cornerstone of mastitis control on dairy farms.

Studies from Ireland have also raised concerns over potential risks of disinfectant residue contamination of the milk, especially those products containing iodine and chlorine dioxide. This is a particular concern in Ireland due to the production of skimmed milk powder for baby formula, as any residues may be concentrated in the powder. Over-supplementing with iodine in the cows' diet as well as the use of iodine in the teat disinfectant resulted in levels of iodine in the milk that were over the target levels, and so some milk purchasers in Ireland have placed limits on the use of certain teat disinfectants to reduce the risk of residues.

Regardless of the type of pre- and post-milking teat disinfectant used, the key aim for all teat disinfectants is that teat coverage must be excellent. No disinfectant can work effectively if it is not being applied properly to the cows' teats, and missed areas of teat skin will potentially harbor mastitis-causing bacteria.

Advice on choosing the most appropriate teat disinfectant for your herd

- Check that the product is licensed for use as a teat disinfectant. It should have a VM number on the container. Check on the VMD website: https://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/productInformationdatabase
- Use products as recommended by the manufacturer. If using as a pre-milking teat disinfectant, it must state so on the container.
- Ensure that the product is correctly used – for example diluted as per recommendations, and diluted using mains water (rather than borehole water which may reduce efficacy).
- Store disinfectants in a cool dry area, and do not allow them to freeze which may alter efficacy.
- Check on product usage:
  - Dips should use 10 ml per cow per milking
  - Sprays should use 15ml per cow per milking
- Ensure that the cows' teats are properly covered in disinfectant, from the end of the teat to the base of the udder. Sprays should be used in a figure of 8 configuration to achieve good coverage, and dips should be applied up to the base of the teat. Use a paper towel on the teats after milking to check on coverage.
- Clean dip cups after every milking.
- Pre-milking teat disinfectants must be applied onto the cows' teats, and left for a minimum of 30 seconds for the disinfectant to work. They must then be wiped off with a single use paper towel (one per cow) to remove any disinfectant prior to cluster attachment. Pre-milking teat disinfectant is mainly aimed at reducing levels of environmental mastitis.
- Post-milking teat disinfection should be undertaken on all cows within 30 seconds of cluster removal. The aim is to kill any contagious bacteria that have been left on the teat skin after milking. Emollients such as glycerine or lanolin are commonly added to help teat skin condition, although levels over 10% may compromise disinfectant activity.



Rob Kelly – new vet in DHHPS

Rob has been with the vet school on and off since 2012, mainly working as one of our vets in the RDSVS Farm Animal Practice. Graduating from the University of Liverpool in 2009, he undertook electives in the UK and Canada gaining a good grounding in dairy practice. Having then mainly practiced in the UK, he has focused on extensive cattle and sheep systems, gaining the RCVS Advanced Practitioner status in Production Animal Practice. He has a passion for using data to assess the impact of and pragmatic interventions against endemic diseases. Enjoying working with farming communities to make changes relevant to their farms, Rob is looking forward to working with you all via DHHPS.

Rob's clinical research interests in infectious disease control and health planning have led him to work with DHHPS previously. He collaborated with the team to investigate the interaction between maternal nutrition and infectious disease status on neonatal survival in UK beef and sheep systems. Published work has highlighted the impact of lowland ewe nutrition on failure of passive transfer and subsequent production in lambs (https://edin.ac/3UARJYG and https://edin.ac/3U6eGTu).

Online course to support sustainable worm control in sheep flocks

As a result of his previous research, Rob has a keen interest in veterinary parasitology. He has recently worked with a wide range of experts from across the UK (SCOPS, APHA, Moredun Research Institute and Sheep Veterinary Society) and international organisations (University of Pretoria) to develop of an online course on "Sustainable Control of Haemonchosis in UK Livestock Grazing Systems" (https://www.shortcourses.ed.ac.uk/course/famacha).

Gastrointestinal nematode worms (GINs), including the blood-feeding *Haemonchus contortus*, significantly affect the health of UK sheep flocks. Unlike other GINs, where *H. contortus* predominates, it causes anaemia and weakness rather than diarrhoea, and historically affects warmer UK regions. With changing climates, its prevalence is increasing across the UK. Current laboratory diagnostics can distinguish *H. contortus* infections, but lack field applicability for timely treatment decisions.

The online course aims to support farmers, vets and other stakeholders improve awareness disease management options and how to integrate the FAMACHA system into existing health strategies. The FAMACHA (FAffa MAlan CHArt) card system is a simple way of targeted selected treatment against *H. contortus* using eye membrane colour to assess anaemia. It can be useful when combined with other diagnostics for control. The course is only £60, takes 1-2 hours to complete, provides a detailed handbook and 2 x FAMACHA cards sent to the participant's local vet practice.

