

July 2025 Newsletter

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Penbode Farm Vets

Since 1840

All About Flies

By Jemma Young

BVM BVS MRCVS



As the weather warms up, fly season is upon us again.

As well as being pests and causing irritation to your animals, they can also be transmitters of disease, affect productivity and have a significant impact on animal welfare.

How many flies are there?

There are over 20 common types of fly species that affect cattle, sheep and other farm animal species, which can be split simply into three different categories:



- Nuisance Flies: Bluebottle, Head and House Flies
- Biting Flies: Horse and Stable Flies, Midges and Mosquitoes
- Myiasis flies: Blow and Bot Flies

Flies are attracted to various parts of the animal dependant on their preferences. Some of these areas include, secretions from the nose, mouth, ears and eyes, wounds, and animal faeces, including hair matted with faeces, areas of faecal staining and faecal contaminated environments.

Fly numbers are determined by many environmental factors such as temperature, humidity and moisture content of their breeding environment. Flies begin to hatch from around 5°C and numbers rise significantly in the summer months due to warmer and more humid weather conditions.

One female fly can lay over 2000 eggs in her lifetime. So, for every 1 fly seen there are thousands more in the environment, even if you cannot see them. This makes control of flies, once they are there, very difficult.

What problems can flies cause?

Myiasis – Fly Strike

Blowfly strike is a condition mostly affecting sheep, but can less commonly be seen affecting cattle, goats and alpacas. Strike is a serious welfare concern, with 1.5% of ewes and 3% of lambs in the UK each year being affected, despite preventative measures being taken. Strike leads to significant suffering in affected individuals, as well as having a knock-on effect on productivity and farm profits.



Flies are attracted to soiled fleece or open wounds, especially in warmer areas, such as around the back end, feet and skin folds. Particular care should be taken in those breeds with thick/long wool, where wool matting by faeces is a higher risk.

Signs to look out for include:

- Isolation away from the rest of the flock
- Wool discolouration
- Agitation
- Kicking or nibbling at the affected area
- Disturbed grazing and subsequent weight loss or lack of weight gain
- Tissue decay
- Death

Lesions can be varied – From small areas of irritation to extensive lesions of decaying skin, with visible maggots, resulting in death.

Reminder: it is a legal requirement to inspect all sheep daily during high-risk periods for strike.

Summer Mastitis

Summer Mastitis is usually seen in non-lactating dairy cows, heifers and beef animals out at grass in the summer months.



Nuisance flies are attracted to teat ends and act as a transmission vector of bacterial infection. Trauma caused by irritation and kicking at the udder by the affected animal and subsequent disruption of the keratin seal present in non-lactating teats, caused by licking, can also be involved in disease development. Individuals with a tendency to suck teats of other animals has also been linked to outbreaks of Summer Mastitis.

Signs to look out for include:

- Enlarged/swollen teat/s or quarter/s
- Irritation/kicking at the udder
- Obvious swelling or discolouration, along side a hot/hard udder with foul smelling clotted secretions containing yellow/green pus.
- Non-specific signs of illness including isolation from the group, stiff back legs, trouble walking, disrupted grazing and associated weight loss, joint swelling and loss of body condition
- If not treated affected animals can abort and die.

How can I control fly populations on my farm?

For more information on any of the below interventions, or to discuss what would be the best option/s for implementing on your farm please discuss with your vet.

Reducing Exposure

As with most things, prevention is always better than cure and preventing large fly populations around animals is the best way to avoid the problems flies can cause.

Ways to reduce animal exposure to flies include:

- Avoid grazing animals near stagnant water where possible. Flies will choose to breed in areas of stagnant water, so reducing animal contact to these areas, will decrease fly exposure to livestock.
- Keep manure concentrations down around animals. Regular scraping up of yards, walkways and high traffic will reduce faeces burden in the environment, alongside regular bedding changes and mucking out of sheds. Additionally, storing slurry away from animal stocked areas, will decrease fly populations near animals.
- Keep faecal burden on animals to a minimum. Keep fleeces short during the summer, by shearing and dagging out soiled areas as required to prevent excessive build up of faeces. For cattle, keep tails trimmed, to prevent build up of faeces, as well as remove any developed faecal matts when noticed.
- Clean living conditions will reduce the chance of excessive build-up of faecal matter on animals, as they are less likely to lie in heavily soiled areas.

Pour on Products

There are many commercially available pour-on preparations, containing an insecticide, either cypermethrin or deltamethrin. These products control flies, as well as other ectoparasite, such as lice and mites.

Multiple treatments at three-to-four-week intervals are required during the high-risk period, with the first dose ideally being given early in the fly season. Due to the placement of the product along the back, the udder has little protection, and so flies may still be seen in this area.

Ear Tags



Ear tags containing cypermethrin, provide protection against all fly species. One or two tags, depending on fly burden, can be applied to the ear/s before fly season begins and provide protection for up to 5 months. Tags should be removed at the end of fly season or before the animal goes to slaughter. New tags need to be reapplied each year and can be applied through the same hole as the year before.

Chemical Sprays

Sprays containing an insecticide are available for topical application. The spray can be targeted in high-risk areas, such as the udder and near wounds. Treatment effectiveness is short, reapplications are required after two weeks and wet weather or water contamination of the treated area, can easily wash the product away.

Biological Intervention

Parasitic wasps are a non-chemical, sustainable control method for flies, particularly useful for housed cattle and calf sheds. The wasps target fly pupae and prevent them from developing to adults, so need placing before the fly season begins, and require continual application every two weeks throughout the high-risk period. Parasitic wasps are not a quick solution to current fly problems, and require continual application for a few years, to see the benefits, so should be used in conjunction with other methods for the first few years, until reductions in fly populations are seen.

References

Blowfly Strike: <https://www.nadis.org.uk/disease-a-z/sheep/blowfly-strike-cutaneous-myiiasis-maggots/>

Summer Mastitis: <https://www.nadis.org.uk/disease-a-z/cattle/mastitis/mastitis-part-11-summer-mastitis-in-cattle/>

Fly Tags: <https://www2.zoetis.co.uk/rama-connect/livestock/products/cattle/flectron>

Selective dry cow therapy

By Thomas Lush

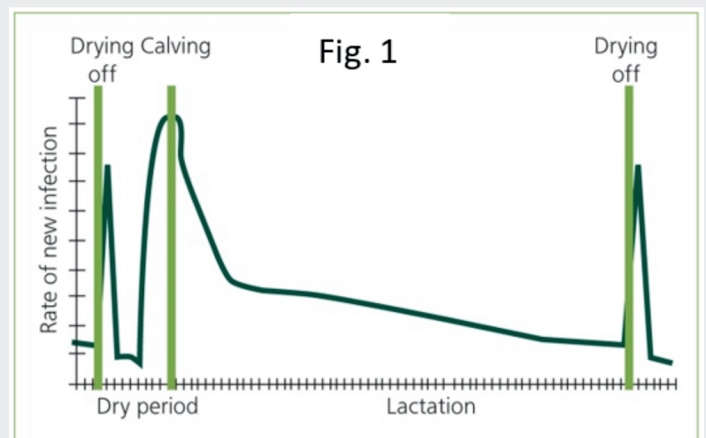
BVSc MRCVS



Selective dry cow therapy has had a big uptake in use over the past 25 years, in 2002 95% of UK dairies were using blanket antibiotic dry cow therapy which dropped to 50% over the next 20 years. This has further dropped to an estimate of 30% in 2023. This drop in blanket dry cow therapy and the increased uptake of selective dry cow therapy (SDCT) is due to multiple factors, such as the proven benefits of using SDCT, which will be discussed in this article, as well as pressure to reduce antibiotic levels in the dairy industry.

There has been a recent change to GB veterinary medicines regulations (VMD), which affects the use of blanket dry cow therapy. Blanket dry cow therapy is classed as routine antibiotic use - 'routine' Ab use is now not allowed under the VMD. Therefore a vet cannot prescribe antibiotics for blanket dry cow therapy without it being "Exceptional use", this is specific non-routine situations where there is an evidence/ risk based assessment showing that the risk of an infection or infectious disease is very high and the consequences are likely to be severe

The dry period, specifically, just after drying off and before calving has the highest risk for mastitis as seen in Fig 1. This shows the importance of a correct drying off protocol to reduce the risks of mastitis at this time. Intra-mammary antibiotics have their role for mastitic and high cell count cows to help cure these animals over the dry period but when you are thinking of antibiotic use for protection from new infections, it is not as effective.



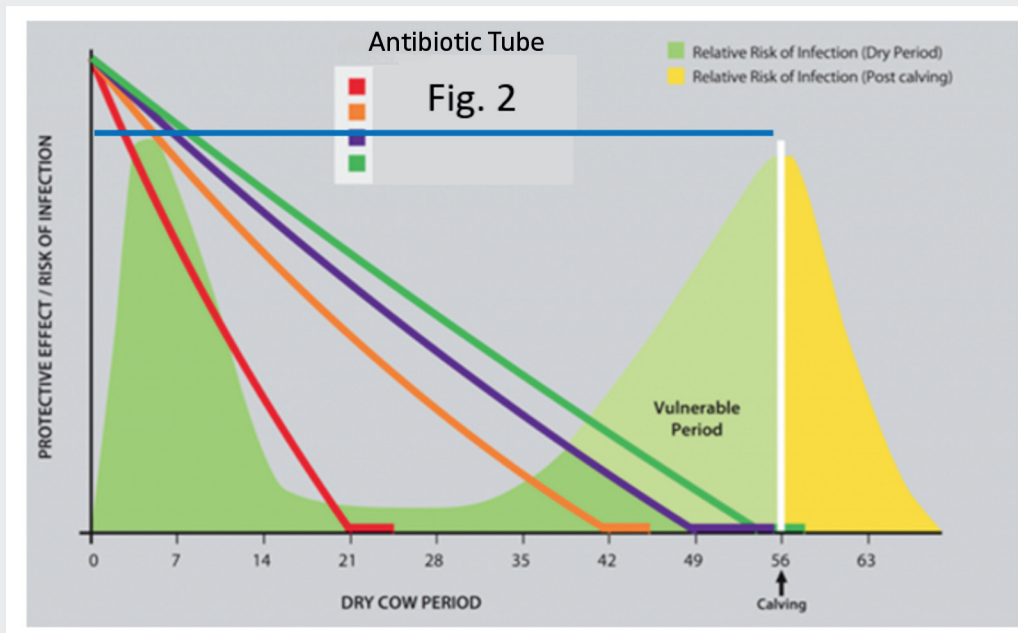


Fig 2 shows different antibiotics and their respective level of 'protection'. As you can see with all the antibiotics assessed, their effectiveness reduces over the dry period, leaving no protection in the udder when the cow comes up to calving. This creates a vulnerable period, which coincides with the highest mastitis risk of the whole lactation.

The one line (blue) that does protect a cow from dry off to calving is teat sealant. When applied correctly this will remain in the teat end, creating a physical block from when the cow is dried off to when she is stripped out on her first milking. This barrier stops any bacteria from entering the udder through the dry period.



Teat sealant plug within a cow's teat.

Teat sealant has not only been proven to help reduce new mastitis cases over the dry period but also reduce cases in the following lactation when used without antibiotics. In a 500 cow controlled study in Somerset 'low risk cows' (cows with no cases of mastitis or high SCC's in the previous lactation) were dried off with antibiotics and sealant or just sealant alone.

The result: 44% LESS new mastitis cases in the sealant alone group than the antibiotic group.

This is believed to be due to the cow's immune system being utilised to clean up the small volumes of bacteria in their udder rather than the antibiotic. This, in turn, leads to an increased immune response, similar to that of a vaccine, leading to a stronger immune system and faster response from the cow to any bacterial pressure in the subsequent lactation. This means the cow with sealant alone is less likely to suffer from a clinical mastitis case in comparison to the cow with antibiotics.

Every farm will have a different cut off when using SDCT for which cows need antibiotics and sealant or sealant alone. It is important to have this conversation with your routine vet to choose a system that is right for you.

The most important thing to remember when sealing a cow is **HYGIENE**, if you push up any bacteria into the udder when drying her off you will be sealing those bacteria inside! This is why it is important to have a clean and effective protocol that works for you and your system. Penbode offer drying off training, that can be done on farm to help you find a system and technique that is right for you, and best for your cows.

We also have a training session at Penbode on Thursday 3rd July. Contact your branch to book your space or email jay.waylen@penbodevets.co.uk



Woolsery Show

28 July 2025

We're looking forward to catching up with you at the Woolsery show on the 28th July 2025. Come and join us for a cream tea and a chat at the Cattle Marquee.

FARMING EQUIPMENT & TECHNOLOGY FUND

ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE ITEMS:

- Crushes
- Handling systems
- Hutches
- Ventilation systems
- Badger proof equipment
- Disinfection units

Many more items...

APPLICATION WINDOW

29th May - 10th July

A new round for the Farming Equipment & Technology Fund has just been announced and will be open for applications on the 29th May. Similar set up to the previous rounds:

- Grants range from **£1,000 to £25,000** (% of cost varies by item)
- Three themes available: Productivity, Slurry Management and Animal Health and Welfare
- Applications will be scored and each theme has rules for scoring
- Application window **29th May - 10th July**

You can find out more information here:

<https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2025/05/07/farming-equipment-and-technology-fund-2025-guidance-now-available/>



Penbode Beef Club

Annual Membership Benefits



Four pre-planned visits per year

Named vet for routine work

Annual Red Tractor compliant herd health plan

Annual performance and health review

Annual antibiotic report

Annual infectious disease control plan

Free respiratory vaccine administration

Four faecal worm egg counts

Discounted bull fertility testing

Seasonal beef specific newsletter

Personal invitation to group meetings throughout the year

Reduced hourly rate for prearranged work



For just £25

Ex Vat p/m

-Four pre-planned visits per year

To be used for fertility, health planning work or pre-movement tests (all time is billable as normal)

-Reduced hourly rate for prearranged work

Fertility work and premovement testing

-Named vet for routine work

To ensure you get the best continuity of care for your beef herd

-Annual Red Tractor compliant herd health plan

Your named vet will review your biosecurity and health procedures in line with current Red Tractor requirements.

-Annual performance and health review:

To review the herd's performance throughout the year and make recommendations to help you improve health and productivity.

-Annual antibiotic report

You will receive a report with analysis from your vet.

-Annual infectious disease control plan

Advice and recommendations on control of relevant infectious diseases as appropriate to your farm (BVD, Johnes, TB, Respiratory diseases). We can support you to achieve and maintain high herd health status.

-Free respiratory vaccine administration

We will provide a vet tech to administer respiratory vaccines (providing you do the whole group at the same time)

-Four faecal worm egg counts

In house testing for routine gut worms on group samples

-Discounted bull fertility testing

-Seasonal beef specific newsletter

-Personal invitation to group meetings throughout the year



Penbode Farm Vets

Upcoming Courses

Dry Cow Therapy Training

3rd July 2025

Starts 10 am at the Penbode kiosk, Holsworthy Market
£40pp ex VAT

Mastering Meds Course

11th August 2025

Starts 10 am at the Penbode kiosk, Holsworthy Market
£30pp ex VAT

Three Day DEFRA Approved DIY AI Course

30th Sept, 1st Oct & 3rd Oct 2025

Cost is £495 +VAT

**Contact your branch to book your space or
email jay.waylen@penbodevets.co.uk**

