







Your 2018 suckler herd's health plan

Ciarán Lenehan outlines a herd health plan based on what the 27 BETTER beef farmers' vets have planned for them in 2018

Sample herd health plan on BETTER beef programme farms 2018

	Spring-calving herd		Autumn-calving herd	
	Cows & heifers	Calves	Cows & heifers	Calves
Jan	Dose fluke (as needed/after eight weeks in) ¹ Vaccinate early-calvers against scour Vaccinate salmonella ²			
Feb	Vaccinate late-calvers against scour ³ Clip tails at calving	Calving Navel treatment	Pregnancy scan	
Mar	Clip tails at calving Vaccinate BVD ⁴	Calving Navel treatment	Vaccinate leptospirosis ⁴	
Apr	Pre-breeding scan ⁵ Clip tails at calving Vaccinate BVD (late-calvers) ⁴	Calving Navel treatment Vaccinate clostridial disease (Black-leg etc.) ⁹		Weaning ¹² Monitor worms (cough/thrive/faecal count) dose as needed (earlier where calves have been creeping outdoors) ¹⁰
May	Pre-breeding scan (late-calvers) ⁵	Vaccinate clostridial disease (Black-leg etc.) ⁹		
Jun	Scan and treat fertility problems ⁶	Monitor worms (cough/thrive/faecal count) dose as needed ¹⁰	Begin pre-calver mineral sup. (buckets/bolus) Vaccinate salmonella ² Vaccinate scour ³	
Jul		Vaccinate calves pneumonia (inc. IBR) ¹¹		
Aug	Pregnancy scan	Monitor worms (cough/thrive/faecal count) dose as needed ¹⁰ Vaccinate calves pneumonia (inc. IBR) ¹¹		Calving
Sep				Calving
Oct	Housing clip tails	Monitor worms (cough/thrive/faecal count) dose as needed ¹⁰ Weaning ¹²	Vaccinate BVD ⁴	Calving Vaccinate calves pneumonia (inc. IBR) intranasal ¹¹
Nov		Weaning ¹² Housing clip backs and tails	Vaccinate BVD (late-calvers) ⁴ Pre-breeding scan Housing clip tails	Vaccinate calves pneumonia (inc. IBR) intranasal ¹¹ Housing clip backs and tails
Dec	Vaccinate leptospirosis ⁴ Check cull cow livers ⁷ Dose fluke (as needed/after eight weeks in) ¹ Dose worms (as needed/replacements and first-calvers) ⁸ Begin pre-calver mineral sup. (buckets/bolus)		Pre-breeding scan (late-calvers) ⁵ Dose worms (as needed/replacements and first-calvers) ⁸ Dose fluke (as needed/after eight weeks in) ¹ Scan and treat fertility problems ⁶	Vaccinate clostridial disease (Blackleg etc.) ⁹

¹Treat for liver fluke based on factory liver scores. Allowing eight weeks to pass post-housing means we can treat for mature fluke only. However, if symptoms present themselves prior to this we shouldn't wait. Treat rumen fluke on an individual animal basis.

²While salmonella vaccination is uncommon in suckler herds, outbreaks can cause abortions and scour. Two shots required initially and yearly booster thereafter.

³Some farmers choose to only vaccinate late-calvers against scour based on the idea that earlier calves are exposed to less of a disease build-up. However, there are risks around this strategy. Scour vaccine is the one vaccine we could drop in an autumn-calving herd to save money.

⁴Two doses required initially and single annual shot thereafter with Bovilis BVD. Bovela product requires only one initial shot and single annual thereafter. Some farmers will administer a leptospirosis vaccination at this point too, though the products are not licensed to be used together.

⁵While it might seem costly to scan cows pre-breeding, identifying and correcting even a single reproductive issue that otherwise would have delayed or prevented a cow cycling will pay for this.

⁶I like to scan any cow that has gone 40 days post-calving and not been served at this point. We still have time to act on any issues and achieve pregnancies and there might be scope to synchronise some late-calvers and pull them back.

⁷Check the livers of cull cows or indeed any slaughtered stock. Larger factory groups will provide a liver score with your killsheet. In smaller factories, make contact with the vet inspector.

⁸Generally, suckler cows can go without a worm dose, though this year saw a spike in worm cases in older cows. Replacement heifers and first-calvers may need dosing before natural immunity builds up. Be conscious of resistance to certain active ingredients, particularly ivermectin. Where there is a worm burden, use less aggressive doses like Levacide.

⁹Note some vaccines require two shots.

¹⁰Many will administer a blanket dose at this point. However, this year we have seen real-time anthelmintic resistance emerging on farms. While it can be as cheap to dose as faecal sample, doing the latter is better for us all down the line. Those grazing clean reseeded pastures may be able to reduce their treatments. Monitor thrive and coughing in groups. Where a burden is suspected, use less aggressive doses like Levacide.

¹¹There are a number of products now on the market for treating viral (Pi3, RSV) and bacterial (Pasteurella) pneumonia. Most require two shots and boosters thereafter. IBR vaccination is also recommended. If we are using a live IBR vaccine then in theory we should be treating the whole herd. In young autumn calves or where an outbreak has occurred use intranasal vaccines.

¹²Avoid any health treatments in the days around weaning. This can further weaken the animal's immune system.

