LEPTOSPIROSIS in DAIRY and BEEF CATTLE

Although several herds have an established Leptospirosis vaccination regime to control this common pathogen of breeding cattle, this remains one of the most commonly seen diseases on dairy and beef farms.

It causes significant economic and performance losses.

Recent Dairy Check and Beef Check surveys demonstrated that approximately half of all dairy or beef herds tested positive.

The disease is caused by the spirochaete bacterium, of which there are two strains - Leptospira hardjo bovis and Leptospira hardjo prajitna.

Risk factors increasing likelihood of infection include buying in cattle, grazing them with sheep, using a bull rather than AI and cattle having access to watercourses for drinking.

Losses will occur in terms of milk yield, reduced fertility efficiency and sudden abortions in dairy and beef cattle. Leptospirosis can also affect humans (zoonosis).

Diagnosis of infection in cattle can be done simply by checking a number of blood samples for L hardjo antibody. Dairy herds can be screened as a group, using bulk milk tests. Further information can be gained from testing abortion cases. Most of these tests can be free to the farmer, as drug companies support the Practice and help us to investigate herd disease status - including Lepto.

What should you DO?

- Talk to one of the vet team to discuss herd status. Some herds don’t have it - but they're a rarity!
- Vaccination may be the prudent control method - advice will be given.
- There are some units that have lapsed vaccination and are likely to be at risk!
- Vaccinating herds will soon be planning an annual booster, ideally in the spring around turnout. Ensure that heifer replacements receive a primary two-dose course BEFORE serving begins.