



Record breakers

After enduring what meteorologists have confirmed as the driest spring since 1893, followed by the warmest summer on record and the earliest start to harvest in 20 years, autumn has finally hit and brought some much needed rain and cooler weather.

The impact of the earlier challenging conditions is apparent, where fields that have been parched and already grazed are past the point where much recovery can be expected. With the impact on grass growth, herds that should have been thriving on quality grazing have been instead entirely dependent on supplementary feeding, crippling margins for the extensively managed herds.

The silage situation is also a challenge that will stretch well into winter and next year, with a mixed picture across farms in terms of both quality and quantity available. While second cuts were reasonable for many, the lack of subsequent growth means winter feed planning requires more careful consideration than usual. Some farms have already had to dip into winter stores to supplement cows over the summer.

The conversations I'm having with dairy farmers now are increasingly about rationing existing silage stocks and sourcing additional forage from wherever it can be found. Herd management decisions are becoming increasingly critical. Housing preparations, winter feeding strategies, and breeding decisions all need careful consideration given the extended impact this year's conditions will have.



The show's over!

What a fantastic show season it's been, and we definitely made the most of the good weather throughout it all. It was brilliant to see and be able to catch up with so many of you at Oswestry, Newport, and Nantwich shows, and the Ploughing Match a couple of weeks ago. A break from the normal work environment is good for everyone!

In case you missed it

This was Mollie Yarwood's amazing entry for the "Model of a Scarecrow" competition at this year's Nantwich Show. Despite the scarecrow's face bearing a distinct likeness to her dad, she managed to win third prize. Terrific work, Mollie!



Team News

We're excited to have Erica Pierce joining our farm vet team this month. Erica was born and bred in North Wales, and qualified from Liverpool in 2015. She completed a certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice in 2021. She is married to Rob (an NFV client) and her hobbies include helping him with the dairy cows and sheep and rearing calves. Away from the farm she's into hockey, baking (we might have to initiate "Cake Friday" at NFV...), drinking tea and anything Welsh!



We're sure you'll give her a good welcome (and a nice brew) whenever she shows up on farm!

How much do you know about your herd's genetics and what can you do with it?



Genetics plays a crucial role in dairy herd performance. By understanding the genetic makeup of your cows, you can better understand your herd's performance and make informed breeding decisions that significantly improve productivity, fertility, and overall herd health.

The dairy industry has advanced rapidly due to genetic selection, particularly with the use of transportable semen and trait assessment in physical animals. Coupled with data from milk recording and fertility programs, this has led to the development of PTA (Predicted Transmitting Ability) values—figures that indicate the genetic potential of each cow for specific traits.

Recently, AHDB published the *Herd Genetic Report*, a powerful tool that allows producers to access PTA data specific to their herds. By logging in, you can compare cows within your herd and benchmark them against national averages. With support from your NFV vet, you can interpret this data and identify key areas to improve—whether it's milk yield, fertility, or disease resistance. For example, if your average PTA for milk is high, you're likely to see that reflected in actual milk production. Traits like milk yield are highly heritable, making genetic selection a very effective strategy.



ENTER GENOMICS

Genomics takes genetic selection a step further. While it's been around for some time, it's now becoming more affordable—bringing the technology within reach for many farms.

Genomic testing compares an animal's DNA with large databases that link genetic markers to desirable traits, such as:

- Higher milk yield
- Better butterfat/protein levels
- Improved fertility
- Longer lifespan
- Disease resistance (e.g. mastitis, TB, digital dermatitis)

Simply put, by selecting bulls and cows with superior genetic profiles, you can breed more productive and

resilient herds. This is especially useful for identifying traits that are less visible or have low heritability. For example, disease resistance is difficult to assess through traditional breeding but can be better understood through genomic data.

For farms that have already optimized environmental, nutritional, and management factors, genetics becomes the key differentiator. Investing in genetic selection, therefore, can provide some of the best returns—especially for high-performing farms.

However, genomics isn't for everyone. Some farmers may be hesitant to adopt a system that seems to take breeding decisions out of their hands. But as the genomic databases grow, the accuracy and reliability of this approach will only improve.

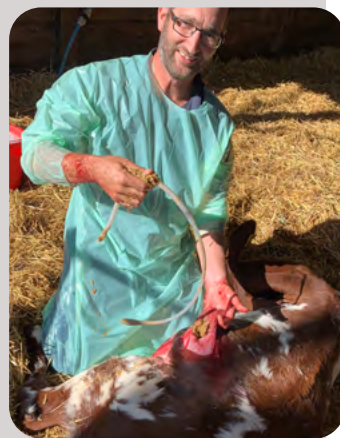
It's also important to remember that genetic gain takes time—you'll need to wait at least 30–34 months before a breeding decision results in a milking heifer. But the long-term benefits can be substantial.

As the saying goes:

"The best time to plant a tree was yesterday. The second-best time is now."

Out and about

In farming life we all know disasters sometimes happen, even when you're doing the right thing. This calf bloated up after escaping out of its pen and gorging on far more concentrate than it's belly could handle. The farmer initially saved its life by putting a feeding tube down to release gas from the rumen, but to thank him for his efforts the calf bit through the tube and swallowed the end of it! It wasn't feeling too bright the next day when Peter was on farm, so was sedated and operated on to remove the offending article - and a lot more of it was in there than we expected. We're happy to say the patient is recovering well. And next time you're putting a tube down a calf, just keep an eye on how much chewing it's doing!



NFV on the hoof!

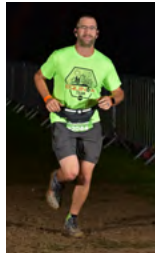
The NFV team appear to have gone a bit mobility mad last month!

Vet Nora and Tech Sophie completed their first half marathons (Sophie's was unofficial, but still worthy of mention!). Unfortunately Nora suffered a nasty hip injury in the process which will see her out of action for a while. We wish her a speedy recovery!

Steve competed in the Berlin Marathon, and battled hot conditions to come in at a tidy 2:50:28 - pretty tame by his standards!

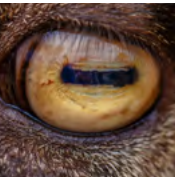
That same weekend Pete ran 70k in 24 hours at Equinox24. Also pretty tame by Steve's standards!

And from our office team, Courteneee has been walking two miles every day for September, along with her kids Noah and Lillie, to raise money for Children with Cancer UK. If you'd like to donate then find her on FB or ring the office!



Just for fun

Eye, eye, eye - there certainly are plenty of weird and wonderful ones in the world! Can you tell what creatures the optical beauties below belong to?



Answer: chameleon, cuttlefish, crocodile and goat. A goat's uniquely rectangular pupil gives it a wider field of vision.

Did you know?

You can find more information and register for all our up-coming courses on our website! Just go to

www.nantwichfarmvets.co.uk/training

Moo-tual Connections

The best way to keep up-to-date and connect with what is going on, new services, meetings and other news is by joining our new NFV Dairy Community on WhatsApp. Just scan the QR code below using your phone camera and follow the link.



Nantwich Farm Vets
Dairy Community
WhatsApp community



Dates for your diary

1st October, 6:30-9pm

Protecting Your Investment: The Future of Heifer Rearing

Join the farm team, plus NFV Vet Lewis Hodgson and the MSD team to learn how Sensehub has helped improve calf health at Smeaton Hall. Hot food and drink provided. It's free, but booking is essential, so register online or call the office.

New Herdspersons' Course

- 1st October, 10am - Milking routine and mastitis
- 8th October, 10am - Fertility fundamentals
- 15th October, 10am - Lameness and mobility scoring

You can sign up for each of these sessions individually for £50+VAT. Includes hot and cold refreshments.

26th - 28th November

Intermediate Hoof Trimming Course

A course suitable for all skill levels, from those with no trimming experience to those having done it for years and needing a knowledge refresher. Theory includes anatomy, lesion id and risk factors, and on-farm practical includes use of both knives and grinders. £750+VAT.

Get in touch...



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