

Short press release:

Fifth Anniversary Meeting of the European Mastitis Panel (EMP):
Experts on mastitis evaluate the efficiency of management measures to prevent the disease

Udder health on dairy farms remains a priority and the control of infectious pressure of mastitis causing pathogens is key to improving dairy herd productivity. This was the conclusion from the fifth European Mastitis Panel (EMP) which took place near Bristol in Southwest England. Fifteen experts from seven European countries participated in a two-day workshop which involved visits to typical regional farms and intensive exchange of expertise on the latest approaches to mastitis control throughout Europe. EMP group leader, Jantijn Swinkels from MSD Animal Health states *"Understanding the causes of mastitis on dairy farms enables us to make informed decisions that can improve on-farm productivity. By building a platform for exchange of expertise of European Udder health specialists, we hope to improve our experience and knowledge that can be disseminated in the local markets to improve milk yield and productivity"*.

Watch the views from the leading mastitis experts at www.studiobovine.com.



Members of the 5th European Mastitis Panel in the UK take time out on sharing best practice on mastitis control.

END of short press release

Long press release:

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Flexible Management

Talking about the weather as a farmer in the United Kingdom is more than a casual chat since on the British Isles dairy cattle farming is pasture based. Rain quantity has a significant impact on grass growth and thereby on the quality and quantity of the main fodder for the dairy cattle. Seasonal calving ensures that freshly lactating cows are on pasture when growth is optimal. This means that in spring and summer, milk production may increase up to 15 percent.

"Here, smaller as well as larger farms work profitably", says Julie Macleod, market researcher at Dairy Co. (www.dairyco.org.uk). "Input and management are the decisive factors and farmers are very flexible and react quickly on changes in the milk market."

Cattle and milk in the UK

No. of cattle: 1.8 million

Farms: 12,000

Subsistence coverage: 90%

Milk output: 7,100 kg/cow/year

Milk price: 31-35 euro cent/kg milk

Milk processing: effective and sustainable

The bulk of the milk is processed as fresh liquid milk (50 percent) and cheese (28 percent). Visiting Robert Wiseman Dairies in Bridgewater, the EMP vets experienced how fresh milk is being collected, processed and bottled daily according to modern standards. 500 million liters of milk are bottled at Bridgewater Dairy each year.

Effectiveness and sustainability are the main concerns of the company and as a result, decisive measures have been taken to significantly reduce water, power and fuel consumption.

Distinguished cheddar cheese

At Brue Valley Farm (www.brue-valley.co.uk) in Somerset the team of experts visited the dairy cattle herd of the Clapp family with 600 Holstein-Friesian cows and a yearly milk output of 9,200 kg. The family can look back at a 500 year tradition of farming cattle. Today it is known for the production of the distinguished Cheddar cheese and homemade butter. Veterinarian Dr James Breen and owner Robert L. Clapp showed the

group that their immediate herd health priority was cow comfort. Cows calve on rubber mats and clean sawdust and freshly-calved heifers rest on water-beds.

At the cheese dairy on the farm, cheddar and butter are produced daily. Cheddar in the UK by far is the most popular cheese with a market share of 51 percent.

Cheddar production process

To produce cheddar milk is being heated and laid thick with rennet. After separating the whey from the curds the so-called 'chedarring' starts. The curds are cut in blocks of approx. 15 cm length and are put in layers. These piles are then milled, salted, filled in forms and pressed. Finally, the cheddar is put to rest for maturation for 1 month or up to 15 month in wooden boxes.

New laboratory offers modern testing techniques

Since there is no public milk recording in the UK, vet Dr James Breen works closely with Quality Milk Management Service Laboratory (www.qmms.co.uk). The EMP group was welcomed to the newly opened premises of Dr Andrew Bradley's QMMS. The new facility offers farmers the opportunity to take their own milk samples to the laboratory and receive the results of the analysis the following day together with a veterinary interpretation of the data giving information on the herd's health status. Moreover, the laboratory offers bacteriological culturing of milk samples with state-of-the-art equipment and offers serological testing for para-TB (Johne's disease). Dr Andrew Bradley also offers software for vets and farmers that enables them to find the right causes of mastitis and fine tune herd management measures.

Mastitis control plan: science for practical application

After the vets from different parts of Europe had gained a comprehensive overview of the local organization of milk production and animal health management, veterinary Chris Hudson presented the priorities of mastitis research in the UK. The University of Nottingham is one of the most active institutes in this field, and many relevant studies are conducted there. Adjacent to a modern campus that is shared with the agricultural faculty, the University also runs a state of the art dairy farm with 180 cows milked through a robotic voluntary milking system. "*Research conditions are very favourable here*" says Chris Hudson. He is a member of Professor Martin Green's, Dr Andrew Bradley's and Dr Breen's working group. All scientists in this group are to a certain extent involved in veterinary clinics. As a consequence they chose a very practical approach to their research. Recently, they have focused on development and national roll-out of a mastitis control plan. Their objective was to develop a structured, herd-level approach to mastitis control by which udder health can be improved in the UK. This National mastitis program was initially tested using a randomized controlled trial on 52 UK herds, and demonstrated to have a significant benefit for udder health. Subsequently, the plan has been put in place on almost 1,000 UK dairy farms, and early indications are that similar improvements have resulted. The success of the program depended largely on the degree of compliance with suggested changes, and understanding how to improve this was a key to success.

The most effective measures to lower infection pressure

Taking the management factors of this National mastitis control plan in the UK as a starting point, Professor Theo Lam, of Utrecht University in the Netherlands, presented Dutch Udder Health research results. The objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of eighteen different management measures and their positive effect on bulk milk and mastitis rate. The Dutch found that dipping after milking, and good nutrition has the best economic return on improving udder health. Professor Sarne de Vliegher from Gent University in Belgium pointed out that looking at epidemiology of different CNS species—whether they are contagious or environmental—experts will get a better insight into prevention of this pathogen. Lively discussion developed on the relevance and cost-benefit of different herd management factors. Log in at www.studiobovine.com to see the different views from the leading European experts.

The European Mastitis Panel is an MSD Animal Health initiative and consists of a selected, well-established group of mastitis experts. It presents a unique and important platform for udder health related debate and net-working in Europe. This year's fifth anniversary meeting has again improved the co-operation between the experts from different countries.



5th Anniversary European Mastitis Panel in the UK



Modern standards at Robert Wiseman Dairies



Waterbeds ensure optimal cow comfort



Vet Breen and Robert L. Clapp at the Brue Valley Farm of the Clapp family



Hand-made Cheddar from Brue Valley Farm



Lively debate on several mastitis control measures

