NWL Newsletter

NationWide Laboratories

April 2009

Well, well—Pitfalls of Health Screening!

Using blood profiling to screen clinically normal animals is on the increase—particularly in older animals or before routine surgical procedures. When interpreting these profiles, it is important to bear in mind that the statistics used to derive the reference intervals mean we compare our results against those of only 95% of a healthy population.

In practical terms, this means that in a preanaesthetic screen of 4 - 5 selected biochemistry parameters, there is around a 20% chance that one result will appear abnormal in a healthy animal. In a senior wellness screen of 12 parameters, this rises to a 46% chance.

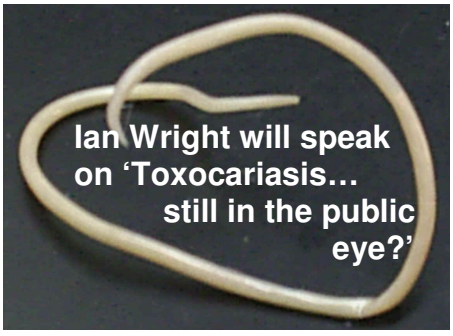
These concerns relate primarily to testing well animals. In a sick animal, clinicians are looking for abnormal results to support their clinical suspicions, or if a large panel is selected because there are no clear differentials, then abnormal results give a direction for further investigation and normal results help to narrow the diagnostic focus. That is, the same results might mean different things depending on whether sick animals or healthy ones are being tested!

Also, the statistics of testing well animals means that following up mild abnormalities found on wellness screens may not be appropriate. The support of experienced professionals who see hundreds of sets of results every day can be immensely helpful in understanding the likely significance of different degrees of abnormality.

In conclusion, if you are doing wellness screens, be careful how you interpret them, or use a laboratory with professionals who will review the results and advise on likely significance.

NWL Clin Path Club

The next North East region meeting will be at 8.00 pm on 30 Apr 09, at the Holiday Inn Leeds Bradford, Tong.



May Bank Holidays

NationWide Laboratories will be closed on Monday 04 May and Monday 25 May 09.

Parasitology Update

The increase in organically farmed units and heightened awareness of the potential for drug resistance logically leads to increased demand for faecal and serological testing for evidence of endoparasitism to minimise and optimise the use of anthelmintics and flukicides.

At NWL Leeds we have already received several faecal samples from cattle with relatively large numbers of fluke eggs present and also a number of sera and bulk milk samples with high levels of antibodies to *Fasciola hepatica*.

We have also reported some positive equine tapeworm serology results during March. Another notable equine result was from a scoured, 2 week old foal with 7800 *Strongyloides spp.* eggs per gram of faeces. Infection is primarily via milk - interestingly, the mare had lost a foal at a similar age last year.

As lambing progresses, we will begin receiving pooled faecal samples for parasitological screening for both worms and coccidia.

For practices commissioning large amounts of parasitology we are able to offer discounted prices—please contact your area manager to discuss your requirements.

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