

FARM

NEWS

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STAFF NEWS

DFV Baby Boom!

Huge Congratulations to both Emily & Jack and Ella & Andrew who, as we are sure many of you already know, are expecting their own new arrivals later this spring!

Locum

In order to provide additional clinical vet cover as the girls begin to wind down towards maternity leave, from the beginning of February we will be joined by an experienced locum – Josh Batterham. Josh has previously worked for a number of years for Tyndale Farm Vets in Gloucestershire, prior to joining Zoetis Animal Health as a Veterinary Advisor. We hope that you will make Josh welcome as you meet him in the coming weeks, he will be with us for 6 months whilst we look to recruit a more permanent extra pair of hands!

Veterinary Attestation Certificates

As a consequence of Brexit, a new Veterinary Attestation rule came into effect in December 2023. This means that all producers selling livestock for slaughter will now require Veterinary Attestation to certify exports of Products of Animal Origin to the EU.

The Veterinary Attestation form is a signed declaration from your vet detailing that we have seen your animals and discussed matters such as welfare and biosecurity with you. An Attestation Certificate is required for every registered CPH number that you use, with certification lasting for up to 12 months. This requires a visit to each premises where you keep livestock, it can be combined with any

other routine veterinary visit/TB test and should only take around 20-30 mins. When you present animals for sale at the abattoir or livestock market, you will be required to record the vet attestation number (VAN) on the Food Chain Information documentation.

Please Note - If you already participate in a qualifying farm assurance scheme you do not need a separate attestation declaration

Membership of an official farm assurance scheme is automatically accepted as evidence that you meet the necessary requirements, this includes being Red Tractor Assured and also if you have participated in the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway. ■

Bluetongue Virus

Bluetongue (BTV) is a viral disease transmitted by biting midges, which affects all ruminants (e.g. sheep, cattle, goats and deer) and camelids (e.g. llama and alpaca).

The latest strain which has been detected in the UK in Kent and Norfolk is BTV Serotype-3. This strain appears to mimic the behaviour of BTV Serotype-8, which circulated in the UK a number of years ago; however the existing BTV-8 vaccines will not offer cross protection against this new strain, there is not a vaccine available for BTV-3.

Please note – BTV-3 is not currently actively circulating in midges in the UK causing clinical disease; the animals which are being tested and found to have BTV-3 antibodies in their blood are being identified by active surveillance blood testing. This likely reflects exposure to the virus earlier in 2023, with no observed symptoms. However, there is a significant risk that as BTV virus has been present in the UK in 2023, that it could potentially over-winter in any midges that survive the winter period causing a disease outbreak when midge activity increases in the spring as the weather warms up. We all need to remain

vigilant in the coming months and be aware of the type of clinical signs that we may see in different categories of livestock.

What are the clinical signs of bluetongue?

Adult animals may show little or no clinical signs, so farmers and their vets need to be vigilant.

In sheep:

- Lethargy, reluctance to move
- Crusty erosions around the nostrils and on the muzzle
- Discharge of mucus and drooling from mouth and nose
- Swelling of the muzzle, face and above the hoof
- Reddening of the skin above the hoof
- Redness of the mouth, eyes, nose
- Breathing problems
- Erosions on the teats

Note – Some strains of Bluetongue virus can have significant morbidity and mortality rates in sheep.

In cattle:

- Crusty erosions around the nostrils and muzzle
- Redness of the mouth, eyes, nose
- Redding of the skin above the hoof

- Nasal discharge
- Reddening and erosions on the teats

Cattle do not often show clear signs of disease so owners should also look out for signs of fatigue and lower productivity including reduced milk yield.

In Neonatal Lambs & Calves:

Lambs/Calves can become infected with bluetongue (BTV-8) before birth if the mother is infected while pregnant. Signs of infection include:

- Lambs/Calves born small, weak, deformed or blind
- Death of lambs/calves within a few days of birth
- Abortions

Livestock keepers and vets should consider bluetongue as a possible cause for calves showing these signs.

Bluetongue Virus is a **notifiable disease** which has the potential for rapid spread via biting midges to other ruminating animals and is associated with significant production losses in livestock. Any suspicion disease due to BTV must be reported to APHA on 03000 200 301. Failure to report suspicions of a notifiable disease is an offence. ■

Schmallenberg Virus

It is now a number of years since we have seen any significant levels of disease due to Schmallenberg Virus (SBV), with the virus last circulated in the UK in 2016-17 causing foetal abnormalities in both lambs and calves, and poor reproductive performance. Similar to BTV, SBV is transmitted by biting midges during the warmer months.

There are currently widespread reports of abnormalities due to SBV being

encountered across Southern areas of the UK as the lambing and calving season progresses. Typical abnormalities seen include severely contracted limbs, fixed joints, spinal defects and also nervous system signs attributable to a 'dummy' presentation (e.g. blindness, inability to stand/suck). Schmallenberg virus has also been implicated in some investigations of poor flock scanning results and/or abortion investigations. APHA are keen to understand the

extent of SBV associated disease in England, and as such are offering some free SBV testing for cases of abortion/neonatal deaths where there is a strong suggestion that SBV might be causal (**Note** – this free testing is not available for all cases of abortion, only if APHA lab gives approval). If you think that you are seeing clinical signs of SBV virus in your flock or herd, please call the farm office and speak to a member of the vet team regarding appropriate testing and outbreak management. ■

Product Updates

Bovilis Huskvac – Lungworm vaccine is both the most effective and sustainable means of controlling lungworm in your herd. Seasonal production of this live attenuated vaccine is underway, with the first batch of product now available to order. Please call the farm office with your order requirements and remember to allow enough time to complete your primary courses in youngstock prior to turnout – 2 doses, 4 weeks apart to be completed at least 2 weeks before turnout. **Please note** – Unfortunately MSD Animal Health have increased the Bovilis Huskvac price by 35% for 2024 due to significant increases in the cost of production of the product.

Spirovac Vaccine – There are supply issues with Leptavoid-H for this spring which is resulting in pressure on Spirovac

supply. We are confident that we will be able to secure enough product to fulfil our clients requirements, however it would be extremely helpful if clients could contact the farm office to let Toni know **how many doses you require and when** so that we can manage orders with Zoetis.

Risposal IBR Marker Inactivated – We have been informed that there is a limited supply of Zoetis's inactivated IBR vaccine, with no new stock expected until the autumn. However, we have managed of secure stock of sufficient doses to ensure that clients that require booster doses between now and end June will be able to boost their herds IBR immunity without any disruption. The stock which we have been able to secure is in 10 dose packs with a mid-March expiry, so a few herds will need to vaccinate slightly early in order

to avoid lapsing their protocol and having to re-start. Toni will be in touch shortly to discuss order requirements for everyone that is due a booster in the next 6 months.

Pen & Strep Injection – Many of you will be aware that we have had disrupted supply of Pen & Strep Injection in recent months, and that we are currently stocking an imported equivalent product. We anticipate Pen & Strep will be back in stock in the spring, however we have been informed that it will be returning as a **fridge product** requiring refrigerated storage. This will also mean that its shelf life will be significantly extended, which will reduce product wastage in the long term.

Ceporex Injection – This product is now unavailable again after a period of unavailability due to a manufacturing issue.

Sheep Lameness

FOOTROT Focus

Lameness is one of the most important health and welfare issues affecting sheep flocks in the UK, with footrot being the most commonly identified cause. Footrot is extremely painful for affected animals and has high costs associated with loss of production, increased labour, treatment costs and premature culling of chronically affected individuals.

Footrot is caused by a bacteria, *Dichelobacter nodosus*, which is carried by infected sheep and can survive in the environment for up to 30 days. The feet of infected sheep are the primary source of infection. *Dichelobacter* is also the causal bacteria in Scald, which is the second most common cause of lameness in sheep. In a recent study Footrot and Scald caused over 80% of lameness cases.

Control of sheep lameness is most successfully managed by a combination of preventative and therapeutic strategies, which are integral to the Lameness Reduction Five Point Plan. The five points of the plan can be split into three key objectives:

- **Vaccinate** to establish strong immunity
- **Cull** to build flock resilience
- **Treat**, Quarantine and Avoid to reduce the disease challenge

A firm commitment to reducing flock lameness levels is key to the success of the 5-Point Plan in your flock.

Implementing the 5-Point Plan

Vaccinate all animals to stimulate immunity. Footvax vaccine use forms a key part of the whole flock approach to disease control by raising immunity within the flock, which contributes significantly to increasing the success of the other four points in the plan. Vaccination frequency varies depending on the structure of your flock, but is either 6-monthly or annually – please discuss the most appropriate strategy for your flock with one of our vet team. A 1ml dose of Footvax is given subcutaneously one month prior to the main risk period, however vaccination can also be used as part of a treatment programme to reduce disease severity in flocks with a significant footrot outbreak.

Avoid spreading infection at gathering and handling. Things to consider include the appropriateness and practicality of footbathing, consideration of investment in a mobile handling facility, cleanliness and drainage of the handling area. Measures to reduce poaching in key areas e.g. entrance to handling facility, field gateways, around water troughs/feed areas.

Treat clinical cases early. Treatment should be initiated as soon as possible after identification of a lame animal (within 3 days), which is important for both welfare and lameness control. Footrot affected animals should also be isolated from the main flock to reduce disease spread and to allow monitoring and repeat treatment if necessary.

Please discuss appropriate Footrot treatment with a member of the vet team, however please note that Footrot should be treated with an appropriate injectable antibiotic product and foot-trimming is no longer recommended at the time of treatment. Simple scald should respond well to topical antibiotic spray treatment, however this is very labour intensive in an outbreak.

Quarantine incoming animals. Aim to quarantine any bought in animals for a minimum of 4 weeks on arrival on farm. If possible footbath the group during this period and monitor for lameness. If possible buy from a source which has a strict lameness control protocol.

Cull badly or repeatedly affected animals. Chronic cases and repeat offenders (>1 case of footrot in a season) must be considered for culling to help break the cycle of infection in your flock. This may mean higher than target culling rates in the first year, but this will reduce significantly in subsequent years as your flock lameness control policy progresses. ■

