CALWETON FARM VETS

FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER

Spring 2025

Nematodirus Hatching!

Nematodirus is a risk to lambs that are grazing pasture that was grazed by lambs last spring, if lambs are old enough to be eating grass during the high risk period. Lambs under stress, such as triplets, or those also at risk from coccidiosis are at particular risk. Recent weather conditions have resulted in a number of high risk Nematodirus areas.

Nematodirus battus is one of the most significant parasitic worms of UK sheep. It typically affects young lambs aged between six and 12 weeks old in late spring and early summer. A strong immunity usually develops over the first grazing season making this a disease almost exclusively of lambs.

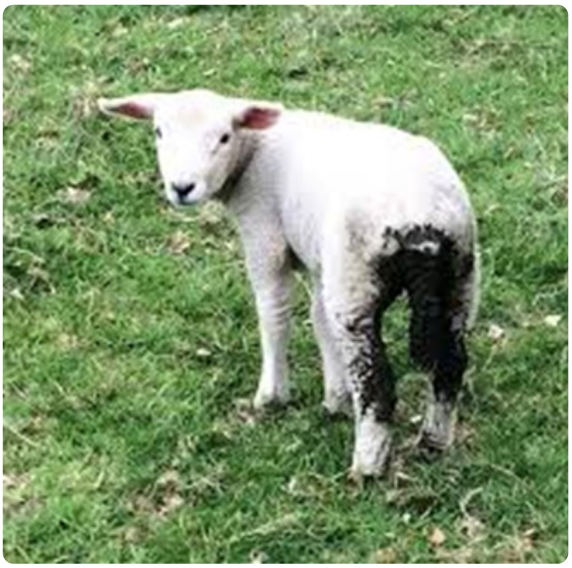
Unlike the other gut roundworms, Nematodirus battus infection passes directly from one season's lamb crop to the next. This occurs through the survival of eggs on pasture over the winter, that were passed in the faeces of infected lambs the previous year. Infective 3rd stage larvae develop within the eggs once on pasture, but usually these will not hatch until temperatures rise again in the spring. Following a period of further development in the new year as temperatures increase eggs will hatch en masse, leading to high levels of pasture infectivity. If this occurs at a time when lambs are beginning to graze extensively, typically from 6-12 weeks of age this can result in widespread and severe disease. Once hatched, the infective stage larvae are relatively short-lived and usually die off to low levels on pastures within 2-3 months of hatching.

As with most other PGE-causing roundworms affecting growing lambs, the main clinical signs seen with Nematodirus infection are diarrhoea, loss of appetite and weight loss. As a result of dehydration caused by sudden onset diarrhoea, affected animals may also show a profound thirst and are often seen congregating around water troughs. In severe cases lambs may deteriorate rapidly and die as a result of this dehydration. Due to its unique life cycle, Nematodirus generally occurs earlier in the grazing season than other causes of PGE.

It is important to note, however, that due to similarities in presenting signs and the age of animals affected coccidiosis should also be considered.

Timing of dosing for Nematodirus is generally early in the season to prevent clinical disease, and can be informed by local temperatures and risk forecast predictions. Check the SCOPs website for the risk in your area https://www.scops.org.uk/forecasts/nematodirus-forecast/

In the event of clinical outbreaks treatment is indicated in the affected group. Faecal worm egg counts 10 days post treatment are also useful in checking whether treatments have been effective. We are able to provide you with appropriate nematodirus treatment at competitive prices - please contact your local practice for more information.



In this edition...

vetPartners

A Round up from our Bluetongue Meeting

Thank you to everyone who attended our bluetongue meeting! For those that couldn't make it, below is a quick summary of the complex topic. If you have any questions regarding Bluetongue, phone your Calweton branch and chat to one of our vets. We are here to help!

Bluetongue is an infectious viral disease, which was first detected in the 1700s. It is widely found in many parts of North Africa and the Middle East, and there have been occasional outbreaks of the disease recorded in Southern Europe over the past century. In 2006 the first major outbreak was seen in Northern Europe, followed by re-emergence in 2015 and again in 2023.

There are 29 different bluetongue strains. There is NO CROSS IMMUNITY between strains. If an animal recovers from an infection from one strain it gains immunity to that strain but NOT others. The strain in the UK currently is BTV-3, a more severe strain than those previously seen.

The Bluetongue virus (BTV) can infect all ruminants, including cattle, sheep, goats and camelids. Sheep show the most severe illness, with up to 70% mortality rate. Other species are tending to show less severe signs but huge losses in production have been noted.

BTV is spread mainly by Culicoides biting midges, but other biting insects may also transmit the virus. BTV remains in the blood of an animal for up to 60 days post infection. This is crucial as BTV can be spread from animal to animal via contaminated needles. It can also be spread through semen.

What to look out for (clinical signs):

- Fever
- Redening of the mucus membranes
- Sores on the nose, gum and inside the mouth
- Swelling of the face, lips and tongue
- Chronic Lameness, leading to culling
- Abortion or weak lambs or calves
- Lethargy
- Milk Drop
- Death

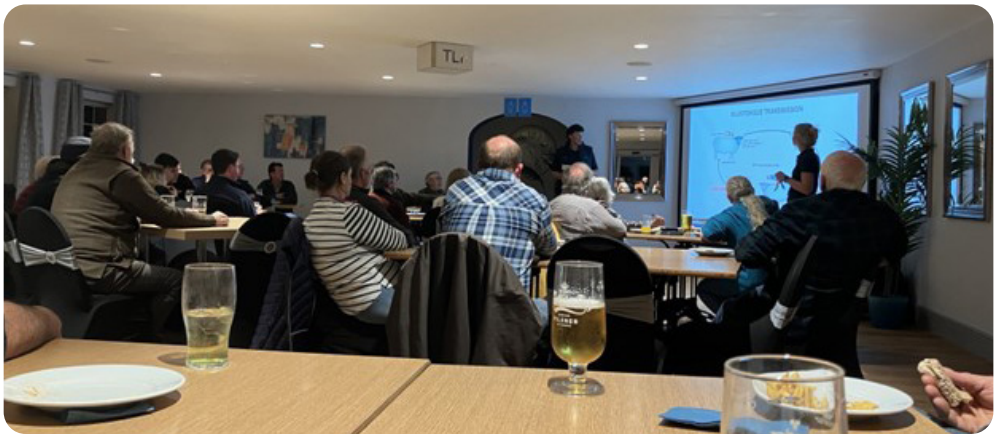
The "blue tongue", from which the disease gets is name, is not frequently seen. Animals may also develop breathing difficulties if the tongue swells. It is also possible for animals to be infected but show no clinical signs.

BTV-3 cases have been concentrated to the southeast of England but have slowly spread towards the west and the restriction zone has now been extended as far as Sidmouth. The colder weather of winter has meant the midge lifespan has been shorter and they were not reproducing as quickly. However, this situation might change dramatically if we continue to have a warm and early Spring. This is increasingly likely due to the high density of ruminants in the southwest. The southeast of England has only 12% of UK ruminants and therefore the spread of disease will have been slower than what is anticipated in a ruminant dense area such as the southwest.

As there is no treatment for the virus, prevention through vaccination and restricted movements in affected areas remains the best defence.

Fly products are not licensed against the species of midge that spread bluetongue and importantly they do not kill prior to biting. As little as one bite from an infected midge can kill an adult sheep. You can reduce your risk by moving stock to high, windy pasture but this is not a fail-safe method.

For any more information on the disease or vaccination, do not hesitate to contact your branch!



In this edition...

Changes to the National Johnes Management Plan

To satisfy the requirements of the National Johne's Management Plan (NJMP), there are three steps that should be completed on-farm, as seen below. The changes have been made to Section Two; each herd must now have an ATV (average test value) and work toward this being below the national target of 5.5 by 2030. In addition, targeted testing of 30 animals is no longer a valid testing option.

1. Know your Johne's disease risks

Farmers and their BAJVA need to know their risk status for Johne's disease to enable development of a robust plan to keep the disease out or to manage the infection if present.

2. Know your Johne's disease status

Testing to establish herd status and ATV (Average Test Value) should be carried out at least annually. There are two options to establish a herd level ATV; they are shown in order of reliability from low to high:

- Random 60 cow sample: 60 cows are selected at random from the herd (regardless of herd size) and tested for antibodies. This allows calculation of an estimated ATV. It should be noted that whilst this will give a value for ATV management changes will be needed to control Johne's. Further testing may also be necessary.
- Whole herd screen: All animals in milk are tested and a herd ATV calculated. This should be carried out annually, or more frequently if appropriate. These results can be used to facilitate individual cow management for Johne's control. Selecting the most appropriate testing for a herd is based on the BAJVAs clinical judgement.

3. Create a written Johne's disease management plan

There are six control strategies within the NJMP, one of the six strategies will suit every farm. The control strategies are:

- Biosecurity Protect and Monitor
- Improved Farm Management
- Improved Farm Management and Strategic Testing
- Improved Farm Management Test and Cull
- Breed to Terminal Sire
- Firebreak Vaccination

Within the chosen strategy there will then be a list of tasks which will need to be undertaken to make that strategy work.

Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (AHWP) – What's Happening Now?

What is the AHWP?

The AHWP was initially launched in 2023 to protect and enhance farm animal health and welfare across our national herds and flocks through government funding aimed at encouraging farmers to work alongside their vet to reduce levels of endemic diseases, improve biosecurity, and tackle production limiting difficulties on farm.

What does it involve?

The Animal Health and Welfare Review offers farmers funding for an annual visit from a vet of their choice to consider the health and welfare of their animals (this includes carrying out diagnostic testing, reviewing biosecurity and the use of medicines, and provide bespoke advice on actions and available support to improve the health and welfare of their animals). This funding is currently limited to a 3 year cycle.

The review is for farmers who have: 11 or more beef cattle / 11 or more dairy cattle / 21 or more sheep / 51 or more pigs

To be eligible to claim for animal health and welfare reviews, you must:

- have an Improve Animal Health and Welfare (IAHW) agreement in place before you do your first review, including any sampling or testing.
- ensure reviews on a particular species are at least 10 months apart
- have no more than 3 animal health and welfare reviews per species by 19 June 2027

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Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (AHWP) – Continued...

- Following your review you must submit a written report and a vet summary to the RPA to claim payment.

If you would like to book a review, please ensure you have your IAHW agreement number to hand

Use the following link to apply for your IAHW agreement number: https://apply-for-an-annual-health-and-welfare-review.defra.gov.uk/apply/endemics/start

Where are we now?

Endemic Disease Follow Up: support is available to help control and eradicate certain endemic diseases. Farmers will be able to claim funding each year based on the below rates:

Follow up funding is in addition to the funding received for doing the animal health and welfare review. **To claim follow up funding, you will need to have the animal health and welfare review, and have claimed the funding for this first**. The new funding will allow you to build on actions taken from the review and address other diseases on the farm.

To be eligible to claim for endemic disease follow-ups you must:

- ensure the follow-up takes place no more than 10 months after your review
- have the follow-up on the same species as the review
- ensure that subsequent follow-ups for that species are always at least 10 months apart
- have no more than 3 endemic disease follow-ups per species by 19 June 2027

As part of your IAHW agreement, you can have up to:

- 3 reviews on one or more species from the list of eligible livestock **on the same holding** – beef cattle, dairy cattle, pigs or sheep
- 3 follow-ups on one or more species from the list of eligible livestock **on the same holding** – beef cattle, dairy cattle, pigs or sheep

The service ends on 19 June 2027. Your review and follow-up visits must be done by then. You must submit your claims by 19 September 2027.

Please contact the practice if you have any questions or would like to book a review in!

Species	Animal health and welfare review funding	Endemic disease follow-up funding
Pigs	£557	£923
Sheep	£436	£639
Beef cattle	£522	£837 for a follow-up with a persistently infected (PI) hunt or £215 for a follow up without a PI hunt
Dairy cattle	£372	£1,714 for a follow-up with a persistently infected (PI) hunt or £215 for a follow up without a PI hunt

If you would like more information on what we've discussed in this month's newsletter, please speak to any of our farm veterinary team.

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