

Industry News

The TB advisory service (TBAS) has successfully received new funding to expand their service with vet-led on farm biosecurity advice to help protect herds.

From autumn, TBAS will be available to any farm in England which keeps livestock susceptible to TB, not just those in high risk and edge areas. The TBAS service fits into wider TB control strategies including testing, culling and vaccinations.

To use the service, the first step is for you to get in touch with us or TBAS directly. We can then offer over-the-phone advice on how to stop infected livestock coming on-farm, reduce the risk from other livestock, minimise infection from manure and restrict contact between badgers and livestock by managing access to feed and water.

In addition to free phone advice, there is funding for farm visits, in which our TBAS-trained vets come out to provide tailored advice focused on TB biosecurity and how to reduce the impact reactors can have on a farm business.

There are six main risk factors that we look at when it comes to TB:

1. Minimising TB risk from purchased cattle

2. Minimising TB risk from contact with cattle in other herds - looking at boundaries
3. TB risk from your own animals, including having your own farm policy for dealing with inconclusive reactors
4. Muck and slurry management. What are the risks of shared equipment?
5. The risk of TB to and from badgers on your land - identifying wildlife paths and identifying ways to minimise the risk to cattle
6. Having a contingency plan for a TB breakdown - what policies are available that could reduce the impact of finding reactors?

If you're interested in a TBAS visit, even if you have done so in the previous round of funding, please contact the practice (all risk areas now eligible).



Disinfection is just one of the many things that came be done to increase biosecurity on farm

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Are you ready for lambing?

Our team are looking forward to a busy lambing season. Here are some useful tips:

Feeding for profit

Three-quarters of foetal lamb growth happens in the last six weeks of pregnancy and the final two weeks are key for udder development. Ewes have to be in the right body condition throughout this time; getting it wrong will cause low birth weight lambs and poor quality colostrum, both of which lead to poor survival rates. Many pre-lambing diseases such as vaginal prolapse and twin-lamb disease are related to poor nutrition. Ewes in good body condition over the final six weeks have the lowest lamb losses so feed them right until lambing.

Vaccination...have they had their jabs?

Clostridial diseases and Pasteurella are the most common causes of death in growing lambs. Lamb losses to these diseases can be greatly reduced by vaccinating the ewes in advance so that antibody levels have time to rise in the colostrum. The best time to boost the ewe is usually between four and six weeks before lambing. If replacement ewes have been bought in, it may be best to give them a full primary course (two jabs, four weeks apart; so start eight weeks pre-lambing) to make sure they have immunity to pass on to their lambs through colostrum.

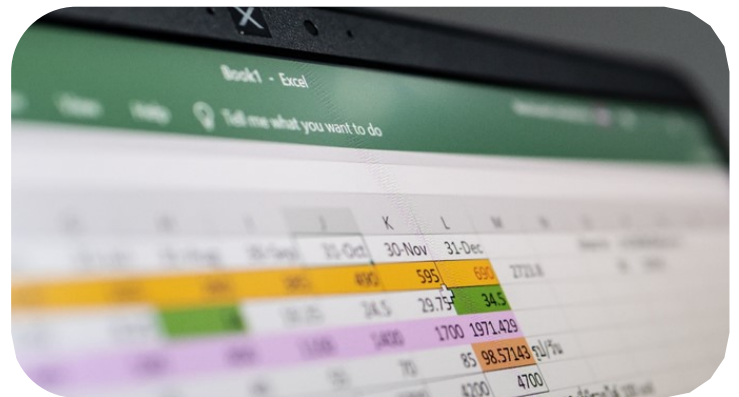
When things go wrong

Isolate and mark aborting sheep and clean and disinfect the area. Don't mother lambs on to these individuals. If more than 2% of your flock are aborting, contact your vet to investigate. Put freshly aborted lambs (with their placenta) into separate bags and identify the aborting ewes for blood sampling.

The power of data

Collecting data at lambing is hugely informative. It can help identify potential issues and trends allowing you to carry out any remedial action much earlier. You should capture the data that's meaningful to you, such as:

- Lamb losses
- Ewe losses and cause
- Body condition score at point of lambing
- Daily live weight gain for lamb development
- Treatment records
- Nutrition and supplements used

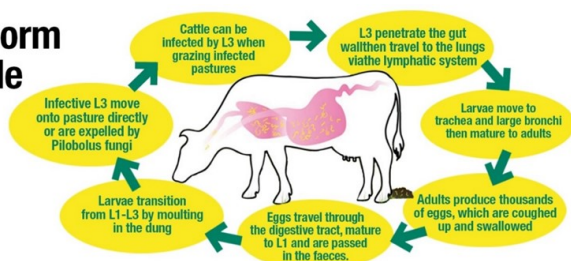


Make it easy for yourself. You may have EID tag readers or a book, but whichever method you choose it must work for you, though we do recommend doing it digitally to save replication further down the line! With this data you can even go as far as working out the kilo of lamb reared per ewe per lambing cycle – that's powerful information for breeding and maximising efficiency.

Vaccinate against lungworm pre-turnout, or cough up later

If you heard your cattle coughing at grass in autumn, this means they could have been harbouring lungworm burdens that compromise growth rates and lifetime milking performance.

Lungworm lifecycle



Most lungworm cases are reported at the back end of the grazing season. Unfortunately, lungworm larvae can overwinter on pasture and in carrier cattle to propagate infection year to year, which means cattle can pick up infection as soon as they are turned out in the spring. And if they do, it could be very costly.

Vaccinate now or cough up later!

It pays to vaccinate

Vaccination against lungworm is a no brainer. In the dairy herd, lungworm infection could easily cost you £140 per cow with lost milk production averaging 4kg per cow per day – and that’s a conservative estimate – because you can also lose cattle to lungworm.

Home-reared dairy replacements tend to graze on a separate pasture away from the milking herd and are often treated with long-acting wormers, perhaps in both the first and second grazing seasons. When this replacement group enters the main herd, they have no immunity to lungworm and the risk of a disease outbreak at grass is very high. Lungworm is unpredictable and best controlled through vaccination.

Boost immunity through vaccination

Huskvac is a live vaccine, made from irradiated lungworm larvae, which are incapable of causing disease. Vaccination should be completed at least two weeks before the herd is turned out to grass. Wormers should not be given until two weeks after the final dose of vaccine. The vaccine allows a small number of lungworm from natural infection to complete their life-cycle, this means there is a continued development of natural immunity throughout the grazing season. Over-reliance on wormers does not allow this natural boosting to occur.

Vaccination with a pre-turnout course of Huskvac is the most reliable and cost-effective way of ensuring the development of immunity to lungworm.

Please give us a call to discuss your parasite control plan for the Spring and Summer.



Lungworm PM diagnosis in Autumn grazed

Meet the Vets

With Stuart currently taking a well-earned break from practice, we will be working alongside Cornwall Dairy Vets. Below is a quick introduction to all the vets you may meet out on farm!

Miranda, BVSc MRCVS (Calweton Farm Vets)



Miranda is an experienced mixed practice vet with a particular interest in sheep. She is an active member of the Sheep Veterinary Society and the South West Initiative for Sheep Health. She also enjoys working with camelids and has a keen interest in udder health and mastitis management in dairy cattle.

Phil, BVSc MRCVS (Cornwall Dairy Vets)



Phil has been working in the dairy industry for over 10 years, focusing mainly on dairy cow fertility and working alongside AI technicians, foot trimmers and nutritionists to help farmers better manage their herds. He has a keen interest in teaching and has spent time training farmers in Africa as well as running courses in the UK.

Jenn, BVetMed MRCVS (Calweton Farm Vets)



Jenn enjoys all aspects of farm animal medicine, particularly working with beef cattle and sheep. She also has a keen interest in goats and camelids and takes a leading role with our small holder clients.

Ben, BVSc CertCHP MRCVS (Cornwall Dairy Vets)



Ben, a local dairy farmer's son, has been back focusing on dairy vet work in Cornwall for over a decade. He completed a post-graduate qualification in Cattle Health and Production in 2008 and uses this knowledge during his day-to-day work on farm.

Lucie, BVMS MRCVS (Calweton Farm Vets)



Lucie enjoys all aspects of farm animal medicine but has a particular interest in working with both beef and dairy cattle. She is currently undertaking a further postgraduate qualification in Cattle Health and Production and now runs the Women in Dairy Cornwall Group.

Spike, BVetMed BSc CertCHP DBR MRCVS (Calweton Farm Vets)



Spike has worked in dairy practice in Somerset for the last 17 years. He joined Calweton in 2021 and, alongside clinical work, he oversees the training courses at the practice having a particular interest in AI and lameness.

Amy, BVSc MRCVS (Cornwall Dairy Vets)



Amy is Cornwall born and bred, studying at Bristol University before returning back to her roots. Amy has a keen interest in cattle lameness, mastitis and fertility.

Eddie, DVM MRCVS (Calweton Farm Vets)



Eddie is a keen all-rounder and enjoys all aspects of farm animal medicine.

Emma, BVM&S MRCVS (Calweton Farm Vets)



Emma has lived and worked in Cornwall for 20 years. Having worked in mixed practice for 13 years she then decided to focus on farm work. Her particular interests are in cattle health and production, cattle fertility (including bull fertility), and youngstock management. Emma thoroughly enjoys mentoring younger vets helping them achieve their ambitions.

Sally, BVMS MRCVS (Calweton Farm Vets)



Sally joined Calweton Vets in late 2020 following graduation from the University of Glasgow. She is enjoying getting stuck in to all aspects of farm animal medicine!

Cornel, DVM MRCVS (Calweton Farm Vets)






Cornel graduated in Romania and came to the UK in 2018. He enjoys all aspects of farm animal work, but particularly reproduction and obstetrics.

Pre-calving trace elements

The pre-calving management period is a key time to set up the herd for calving, lactation and return to service and is vital for healthy calves. The trace elements with the most significance during this period are copper, iodine and selenium - partially because of their importance for healthy offspring and partially because of their role in fertility.

This is why:

Trace Element	Importance	Signs of deficiency	Comments
Copper 	This is the trace element which gets the most attention in terms of reproduction. Copper is an essential component of a number of different enzymes which allow the animal to thrive including enzymes responsible for energy utilisation and fertility.	Typically seen in youngstock. Speckling of dark coated cattle (where depigmentation of the coat around the eyes gives a spectacled appearance), poor growth, scour, poor fertility.	Often seen as secondary deficiency due to high levels of sulphur, iron and molybdenum reducing availability of copper in the diet.
Selenium 	Plays a role in the immune system, fertility, muscle tissue health and iodine utilisation. Deficiency of selenium is a risk factor for retained foetal membranes which can increase the time taken to get back in calf.	White muscle disease – stiff calves, unable to stand, weak/sickly calves, heart problems	Important role with vitamin E in immune function
Iodine 	Integral to the thyroid hormones which increase the rate of absorption of carbohydrate from the gastrointestinal tract and control metabolism. This trace element should be a key consideration pre-calving.	Infertility and weak/stillborn calves most common. Also reduced growth rates, decreased milk yield, and retained cleansings	Major role in fertility

There are a number of diagnostics available for determining the trace element status of animals and it can vary greatly between farms and seasons. The simplest way to get a good picture is to use forage analysis in conjunction with blood samples.

Which form of trace element supplementation is the best?

There is an array of different forms of trace element supplementation available and it can be difficult to know which is best for your herd:



- **Drenches** - can be a cheap and convenient option, however they are relatively short acting and repeated doses mean greater labour. Iodine and cobalt (another trace element to be aware of, especially in sheep) are not stored in the body and we would not recommend using a drench for these.

- **Free access systems** - lick and block intakes vary greatly and there is a greater risk of either over or under supplementing animals within a group. Some trace elements are toxic if animals eat too much.

- **Injections** - unfortunately there are few options available for injection.

- **Trace element boluses** - boluses provide a convenient, cost-effective and controlled method of trace element supplementation. The continuous, controlled release of the bolus is particularly important for animals requiring cobalt and iodine which cannot be stored in the body and therefore a daily supply is required.



If you have any questions on trace elements pre-calving, please get in touch with your vet or the practice.

Upcoming Courses

January 2022 will see the return of our highly practical Lambing Courses!

We will also be running a new course, "**Fundamentals of sheep keeping: What's New?**". This will cover the latest advice in lameness control, ewe nutrition and other core subjects.



Please register your interest in any of our upcoming courses by emailing stcolumbfarm@calwetonvets.co.uk

Feeding the pregnant ewe: Have your cake and eat it!

As ewes become more heavily pregnant, there is less room for the rumen, yet energy requirements increase. Therefore, it is typically necessary to introduce cake in the run up to lambing. So how much cake is required?

Insufficient energy intakes will result in cases of twin lamb disease, but this is the tip of the iceberg. Less visible, yet more significant effects will include reduced colostrum quality and poor mothering ability. Just throwing more cake at the problem is not the answer, however. As well as the obvious cost implications of this approach, sheep are ruminants, and the rumen – a fermentation vat full of microbes – works best on forage (grass, silage etc). In addition, excess feeding of concentrate (more than 500g in one feed) will cause a ruminal acidosis which disrupts rumen function for several hours, reducing the efficiency of digestion. Offering more concentrate than required results in “substitution”, meaning that ewes will eat more cake and correspondingly less forage.

So how do we know how much concentrate should be fed? Requirement is in large part related to the number of lambs carried, and ewes should be grouped according to scanning results. Body condition scoring should fine tune feeding: fit doubles may require no supplementary feeding, whereas

thin doubles may need grouping with triplets. Forage quality adds further complexity.

The single most important nutrient is Metabolisable Energy (ME), which is converted by microbes in the rumen to protein. The amount of ME per kg dry matter in silage can vary widely from farm to farm, and from year to year, therefore the amount of concentrate required cannot be guessed.



The ME content will be stated on silage analysis, and in combination with D value (an indicator of palatability) and dry matter content, can be used to calculate feeding requirements.

It is also essential to consider feed space. Insufficient space will result in shy ewes feeding less frequently, which adversely affects rumen function and will increase the risk of twin lamb and other problems. For free access forage allow 15cm per ewe, and 45cm per ewe for concentrate.

Use that forage analysis – you may save yourself health complications, or reduce your cake bill, or both!

If you would like guidance on feeding your flock pre-lambing, please call the office on 01579 386132 (Callington) or 01637 889231 (St Columb).