October 2026

FARM FOCUSED VET PRACTICE

with Industry Leading Livestock Services

ROUTINE VISITS | HEALTH PLANNING | VET TECH SERVICES

BLUETONGUE UPDATE: PROTECT BREEDING STOCK AND CHECK FERTILITY BEFORE AUTUMN SERVICE

Bluetongue virus serotype 3 (BTV3) is still circulating widely in our area, with more than 2,500 cases confirmed in the UK. Scotland, England and Wales are now included in the same restriction zone, so animals can move within this area without pre-movement testing.

Bluetongue remains a notifiable disease. If you suspect it, contact us immediately and do not move affected animals unless officially advised. Where clinical signs are clear, vets can now examine animals and report cases directly to APHA without requiring confirmation by a blood test. Most outstanding results have now been returned as the government laboratory catches up with testing, and the vast majority have been positive for BTV-3.

Vaccination and reducing risk to future fertility

Vaccination remains the best available protection against severe BTV-3 disease. Vaccine is available, and vaccination is still worthwhile now to protect animals during the final part of this year's midge transmission risk period and to prepare them for next season.

Vaccination does not adversely affect fertility in rams or bulls. In contrast, infection with wild BTV can impair male fertility because fever and testicular swelling may damage sperm production.

Vaccination reduces the risk of severe disease, but a vaccinated animal may still have been exposed to wild BTV. Infection can affect semen quality, so we advise checking bulls and rams whether they have been vaccinated or not.

Breeding soundness/MOT checks vital for Bulls and Rams

The adverse effect of BTV on fertility may persist after an animal appears to have recovered. Sperm development takes around 50 days in rams and 60 days in bulls, and recovery of breeding soundness in affected rams may take up to 100 days. Cattle may have had a mild or unnoticed infection, so visual assessment alone is not sufficient.

We have already tested more rams and bulls this autumn than in a typical year, and we are **identifying a higher proportion of sub-fertile animals.** We assess and grade results using guidance from the national veterinary associations for sheep and cattle. A sub-fertile result does not necessarily mean that a male will remain unsuitable for breeding, and reassessment is often advised. Testing sufficiently far in advance of mating allows time for reassessment or for sourcing replacement males, helping to protect flock or herd fertility.

- **Book a breeding soundness examination or MOT now for every bull and ram you plan to use during the autumn breeding season**. This will leave enough time to retest animals, source replacements or add extra sire power if required.
- For unvaccinated animals, and for animals vaccinated after the risk period began, arrange the breeding soundness check as close to service as practical while still allowing enough time to respond to an unsatisfactory result.
- Semen assessment is particularly important where the consequences of subfertility would be greatest, for example, in single-sire groups, where female-to-male ratios are high, where the service period is short, where sires are especially valuable or where an animal has had suspected illness.

Cont. Overleaf

BLUETONGUE UPDATE: PROTECT BREEDING STOCK AND CHECK FERTILITY BEFORE AUTUMN SERVICE *(cont. of page 1)*

- Treat any ram that has shown clinical signs of BTV within three months before mating, or any bull that has shown clinical signs within two months before breeding, as being at very high risk of infertility.
- Remember that a fertility check provides reassurance only at the time of examination. Infection or illness after a satisfactory result can still impair fertility, so continue monitoring breeding activity and returns throughout the service period.

During the breeding period

During the breeding period, use raddles or harnesses with rams and watch carefully for repeat returns. Monitor bull activity and consider additional sire power or a longer service period. In cattle, arrange early pregnancy diagnosis so that you can respond quickly to problems. Promptly investigate poor conception, abortions, stillbirths or abnormal newborns to give the best chance of identifying the cause and limiting losses.

Please contact your regular vet now to discuss BTV-3 vaccination and arrange breeding soundness or MOT checks for every bull and ram you intend to use this autumn.

Tom Clarke
Clinical Director

RESPIRATORY DISEASE IN YOUNGSTOCK

As we head into the damper and cooler months, it's important to take a look at your current strategies to protect youngstock against pneumonia. Respiratory disease in youngstock isn't only about immediate treatment costs, or reduced growth rates during the period of clinical disease. Disease early in life can compromise a heifer's growth far beyond the time it takes to recover, and increases the likelihood of her not making it into the milking herd.

The majority of heifers need to reach a second lactation to become profitable, and therefore heifers leaving the herd early represent a significant financial loss. It's been demonstrated that for every additional 100g of increased daily liveweight gain during the first two months of life, an additional 225kg of milk can be expected during the first lactation.

A pneumonia outbreak is rarely caused by one thing alone. Infectious agents, a calf's immune system, and environmental conditions all interact to create the perfect storm.

This is why it's important to control what you can to put calves in the best position to fight disease.

A strong immune system starts from the first feed. Good quality, clean colostrum in the appropriate quantity is one of the most important things we can do to set a calf up to successfully fight disease. Nutrition continues to be vital in ensuring a calf has enough energy and protein to support both growth and their developing immune system. If nutrition is lacking, one of these will have to be sacrificed, either making the calf less likely to fight disease or reducing growth rates.

As temperatures drop and buildings are closed to keep calves warm, effective ventilation can quickly become an issue. Balancing effective ventilation with protecting calves from draughts can be tricky. Calf jackets are a cost-effective tool to prevent cold stress. Temperatures below 10°C are likely to cause issues for calves under three weeks old, as they will divert energy away from immune function and growth to keep warm. Having a thermometer in your calf shed is a quick way to check just how cold the environment is for calves, especially first thing in the morning and last thing at night.

Minimising cumulative stress is also important for keeping respiratory disease low. Routine procedures like disbudding, weaning, group changes, and even vaccinations all add stress to a calf which can temporarily suppresses the immune system. Stacking these stressful events together creates a window of time when a calf will be particularly susceptible to disease. Ideally stressful events should be spread out to allow the immune system time to recover.

Finally, vaccination is an important tool for a robust pneumonia strategy. Most vaccinations will not eliminate disease entirely, especially if contributing environmental or nutritional factors are too challenging. If you utilise vaccines but still experience a high level of disease, it's important to reach out to your vet for a thorough review of your calf housing and management protocols.

Charlotte Leppard-Padula
Veterinary Surgeon

Medicine Updates

REMINDER: Loxicom alternative to Metacam

We have sourced an identical alternative to **Metacam** that comes in a 250 ml bottle. **Loxicom** and has the same dosage and milk/meat withhold. We are pleased to say that we have been able to reduce the price of this compared to Metacam by approximately 35% (per dose). For some farms, a large bottle might not be appropriate and so Metacam 100ml is still available, and with some further negotiating with our suppliers we have managed to reduce the price of this by just over 20%.

SYNERGY STAFF CONGRATULATIONS!

Massive Congratulations to Synergy Lympstone vet Nick Britten on passing his European Diploma exams, and becoming a European Specialist in Bovine Health Management!!

We are extremely proud to have another nationally recognised cattle specialist in our midst, and to bring this expertise to our clients in our Lympstone region!

All of our clients who have worked with Nick will be aware of his huge enthusiasm for cattle vetting, and will be equally delighted that his hard graft has paid off!

Congratulations to our Commercial Director Sam Gayton who made it to the final of the Farmers Weekly Britain's Fittest Farmer competition!

After many hours of hard work and training, the final took place on 26th September at Diddly Squat Farm!

From tyre pulling and barrel lifting to sandbag throwing and truck dragging, Sam was put through his paces. Britain's Fittest Farmer isn't just about physical strength. 25% of the points are awarded around mental wellbeing and how competitors look after themselves, recognising that being fit and healthy is about more than physical fitness.

UPCOMING TRAINING COURSES

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO BOOK PLEASE VISIT: www.SynergyFarmHealth.com or call 01935 83682

Youngstock Rearing Foundation

BASIS Dairy Pro 14 POINTS

£168 ex VAT
21st October
Rampisham

£50 OFF for members of our 0-6 Youngstock Advisory Service

Safe Use of Veterinary Medicines (General)

BASIS Dairy Pro 8 POINTS

£89 ex VAT
16th November
Rampisham

Practical Lambing

RoSA 8 POINTS

£117 ex VAT
8th December
11th December
Lympstone
Rampisham

Did you know?

Bespoke training courses are available and can be delivered on farm for your staff – speak to Emma in our Marketing Office for further details

Autumn Dispensary Products*

STARTECT DRENCH
1LT £129 5LT £493.50
WITHHOLD MEAT: 14 DAYS
WITHHOLD MILK: DO NOT USE IN LACTATING EWES PRODUCING MILK FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

ENDOFLUKE 10%
2.5L £66 5L £99
WITHDRAWAL: CATTLE & SHEEP, MEAT AND OFFAL 56 DAYS; MILK, NOT INTENDED FOR USE WITHIN 45 DAYS OF CALVING. MILK MAY BE TAKEN ONLY AFTER 48 HOURS POST CALVING. NOT AUTHORISED FOR EWES PRODUCING MILK FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION.

CYDECTIN 2% INJECTION
50ML £25 200ML £85
500ML £195.50
MEAT WITHHOLD: 104 DAYS
CANNOT BE USED IN ANIMALS PRODUCING MILK FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

ZOLVIX 2.5% DRENCH
500ML £127
1LT £190
2.5LT £476
MEAT WITHHOLD: 7 DAYS
CANNOT BE USED IN ANIMALS PRODUCING MILK FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

FLYPOR
3LT £89
MEAT WITHHOLD: CATTLE MAY BE SLAUGHTERED FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION ONLY AFTER 3 DAYS FROM THE LAST TREATMENT.
WITHHOLD MILK: CATTLE PRODUCING MILK FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION SHOULD BE TREATED IMMEDIATELY AFTER MILKING TO ALLOW AS LONG AN INTERVAL AS POSSIBLE (AT LEAST 6 HOURS) BEFORE THE NEXT MILKING.

*Other products are available so discuss your requirements with our Dispensary Team. Prices correct at time of print and are subject to availability. Offers end 30.11.26. All prices ex VAT.

CLAIRE RUDD

Autumn has seen a steady increase in workload on East. We've been PD'ing our spring block herds – results have been generally good considering the summer that we've had. Although dry off is still a while away, continuing to record all clinical cases of mastitis is essential when using selective dry cow therapy and along with cell count data, age and udder conformation will be used to make decisions later in the year. Clinical mastitis cases can be also be classified by severity. Recording this provides extra information to identify any patterns on farm:

Grade 1 – milk changes only

Grade 2 - milk and udder changes

Grade 3 - milk and udder changes, plus systemic signs such as a temperature or being off-feed.

Autumn block calving is now in full swing. The pre-calving catch up is an important date in the diary – making sure the correct protocols and infrastructure is in place to successfully manage large numbers of transition cows, calving cows and young calves. Calf pneumonia often rears its head around this time – cold nights and warm days can stress calves and predispose to infectious disease. Ensure buildings are properly ventilated without drafts, using artificial ventilation if necessary. Our vets can advise on building design and installation of fans and tubes.

TOM WARBOYS

Many of us have had conversations about magnesium control this year, and I wondered if another mention would just be repetitive - but recent results have shown it is still relevant! A feature of individual "down cow" cases this year has been the number that have had low magnesium. Some have responded to the usual calcium products but a fair few have needed additional supplementation.

More recently, I have taken surveillance bloods from groups of animals - particularly on autumn block dairies - and found almost universal low magnesium results. Animals appear to be transitioning well, but underneath it all there are many that will be on a knife edge as regards magnesium. With the current low levels within and across herds, anything that drops daily intake can precipitate a down cow or other issues. It would be great to take a few bloods at the next opportunity and just confirm what is going on at a herd level - there are some simple options to improve things very quickly!

ADAM ROBBINS

Well autumn has definitely arrived! I've introduced myself to several new clients at difficult calvings recently. Thankfully the initial rush of Bluetongue cases in the area seems to be slowing down thanks to everyone's efforts vaccinating. Between Bluetongue and calvings I also recently had the pleasure of meeting Ringo and Ziggy (pictured left) who needing sedating before having a foot and tusk trim!

LYMPSTONE NEWS

We were pleased to sponsor the Exeter Calf Show 2026 which took place at Exeter Livestock Market on 26th September. There was a fantastic turnout with over 30 young handlers taking part, some as young as 3 years old and over 70 calves entered ranging from a few weeks old to yearlings.

Special mention must go to Synergy clients, The Collins Family of Hale Farm, Honiton who turned out several well-presented heifers and came home with Reserve Champion in the Any Other Breeds Category with their Shorthorn heifer Hale Violet 82.

At the end of September we said a sad farewell to long-standing and much-loved Lympstone vet, Johanna Marsden.

Johanna has been an integral part of the team and a dedicated vet to dairy, beef and sheep farmers across the county. Her presence will be missed, but she is off to focus on her own needs and spend time with family down under in sunny Oz. We're sure you'll join us in wishing her all the very best for this exciting adventure.

Esme Moffett
Veterinary Surgeon