

Newsletter

February 2026



Welcome

February is here already. A little short month when we start to see more lambings and calvings and maybe some cows grazing if the weather is kind. There is no getting away from it that it has not been a happy new year for our dairy farmers. Milk prices have dropped below the cost of production, and this will be making everyone look at their costs. We may appear as a cost on an accountant's balance sheet, but I hope it's clear that spending on veterinary care and medicines is essential for the health of the herd. This investment ensures the cows remain in good condition so we are ready when the milk market turns around. I have seen it all too often that it is the cows that suffer when milk price is poor. Cull cows and beef calves will be a useful income stream so it is important to keep getting cows in calf and keeping them fit if they are to be culled.

On a positive note, we have taken on a Downland franchise. This will allow us to benefit from a long-established company dedicated to animal health like ourselves. We see Downland benefitting your businesses as it will give you access to another quality supplier of animal health and agricultural products. Over the next few months, we will be rolling out to you the different Downland products.

Jim McKinstry

Announcement—We are now a Downland Franchise!

Many of you will remember the name Downland from a previous franchise that operated in our trading area. But for those that aren't familiar, formed in 1979, Downland is a UK wide network of independently owned Agricultural Merchants, Veterinary Pharmacies and Vet Practices who work together to source great quality and competitive products. By joining Downland, we're joining a network of independent businesses that pride themselves on providing unbiased advice and personalised solutions to their local farming community. This strengthens our overall offering for farmers, enabling sound veterinary advice coupled with the supply of premium quality products, along with access to regular updates and training for our vet and SQP teams. From February we can start offering the Downland range of POM-VPS products (mainly wormers, fly products) and boluses, sundries, marker sprays, lamb milk etc. Downland products include the Zermex range (moxidectin) which is made by Zoetis and Downland Lamb Force Ewe Milk Replacer, which is made by Volac, to name just a couple. Please bear with us as we shift existing stock and look out for further updates and product details! More information here <https://www.downland.co.uk>



Farm Gate Vets Directors

Included this month

- **Downland Announcement – Directors**
- **Feeding Animals Close to giving birth– Jim McKinstry**
- **Leptavoid Vaccine discontinued - Hannah Lawrence**
- **Lungworm Control– Sol Elliott**
- **The Straw Pen – Jim McKinstry**
- **Changes to the AHWP - Rebekah Clayton**
- **News and Diary Dates**



Our 2026 Lambing List is out now! Please pick up a copy. Submit an order on the list and receive a packet of biscuits, and get entered into a prize draw to win a Swampmaster Waterproof Jacket!



Feeding Animals Close to Giving Birth

Like the Loch Ness monster there are some great myths in farming that vets come up against. One of the biggest is the belief that feeding cows and ewes too much in the run up to giving birth will result in a big calf or lamb and a difficult birth. Research has been done into this and over feeding in the last month only increased birth weight by about 1.5kg compared to cows that were fed normal amounts and 4.75kg compared to cows that were fed low amounts. Yes, they are a bit bigger, but it will not be significant enough to prevent them being able to give birth naturally. Looking at this research under feeding gives you a smaller and weaker baby. The biggest reason calves and lambs grow is the length of time they are in their mothers. I have caesared some cows that have been in calf 300d, that is 15 days over!



Condition scoring sheep and cows' mid pregnancy is really important as we do not want fat mothers. Over conditioned sheep and cows will have excess fat in the birth canal that will make giving birth more difficult. They also have more fat in the uterine muscle so they can't push as well, and this leads to calving problems.

Cows and sheep that do not get enough feed in the last month will have poorer colostrum and this has the potential to cause problems with scour and infections due to the offspring having a compromised immune system. Just improving the protein in the diet in the last month of pregnancy will really help that colostrum and lead to a healthy calf or lambs. A little bit of a good cake will do as much good as a lot of a poor-quality cake.

Jim McKinstry

Leptavoid Vaccine Discontinued.

MSD animal health announced last year it was discontinuing the production of Leptavoid H vaccine. We are pleased to let you know that we have secured a supply of Spirovac vaccine, which can be used to boost this product. The only key thing to note with the vaccines is that heifers need to receive a primary course of the same brand of vaccine, before they can be boosted with either product. Please let us know when you are ordering, whether you are ordering first doses for stock or whether they are boosters and one of our vets will ensure that your vaccine schedule can continue unaffected by the change.

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that can lead to decreased milk production, reduced fertility and abortions in cattle. It is also an important zoonotic disease that can be passed from livestock to

humans and can cause serious disease in humans with symptoms like fever, headache and vomiting all the way up to severe liver/kidney failure. Because of this risk, leptospirosis is included in the core vaccines we would recommend all cattle are vaccinated for.



Hannah Lawrence

Lung Worm Control

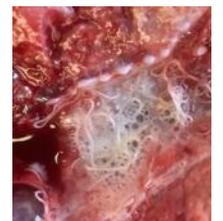
Now that we've made it through January we need to start fore-planning for turning cattle out. For youngstock there are a few options for managing lungworm.

Huskvac: an oral vaccine administered in two doses, four weeks apart, before cattle are turned out. Cattle should ideally remain housed until for two weeks after the second dose before going to grass.

Moxidectin LA: An injectable wormer given under the skin behind the ear, providing 4 months of protection against lungworm.

Some farmers chose to periodically treat cattle through the grazing season with **pour on or injectable ivermectin ("clear wormers")**, especially where they can be easily handled.

A note on immunity - immunity declines over time, so annual exposure is vital for keeping cattle protected. Be cautious if you have kept animals indoors for a season—even adult cattle can become susceptible if they miss a grazing year. As always if you have concerns about managing lungworm, please give us a call.



Sol Elliott

The Straw Pen

I am choosing my words carefully here as all dairy farms have them and they are used for a lot more than just calving! It would make my life a lot easier if they were just used for calving and you had a separate pen for the sick/lame/old/pets.

Calving pens are the first of many places that a calf will be challenged by disease. We want that challenge to be as small as possible so that the calf



has time to get its colostrum for energy and immunity so that it is fit for its life ahead. If it is born into a cocktail of lameness bugs, pneumonia bugs, scour bugs and oh dear I want to die bugs, you can sort of see why we have to use many jabs and powders in the first weeks of life to keep these calves healthy.

Calving pens can also cause problems with cows if they are not managed properly. I have seen new calved cows get infected with mastitis bugs and this leads to an increase in environmental mastitis cases in early lactation. Lack of feed space will increase the risk of cows getting slow fever and twisted stomachs.

Here are my calving pen tips

- Try to have enough calving pens for the number of cows that you have. I find herds increase in size and calving accommodation stays the same.
- Clean out pens regularly so that cows are not calving on top of a muck heap.
- Have a separate pen for sick/lame cows that is not used for calving
- Have a calving gate to make life easy if you need to provide calving assistance.
- Have plenty of feed and water trough space as heavily pregnant cows do not like to move too much
- Try not to have a big calving pen as I think they contribute to twisted calf beds due to cows mixing and fighting. It would be better to have a few smaller pens for calving.
- Make sure cows and heifers off cows that have tested high for Johne's disease are not calved in the pen with any other cows. The calving pen is where Johne's disease spreads to the next generations of cows.
- Get calves out of the calving pen as soon as possible after calving. Get their navels dipped and a good 3-4 litres of colostrum into them to give them the best start that you can.

Jim McKinstry

Changes to AHWP

Good news! There is now more money available for the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (AHWP) without any additional work having to be done. The new rates are only for visits done on or after 22nd Jan 2026 so if you still need to claim for a visit done previously to this you will only receive the old rate.

You don't need to reapply or get a new agreement number; you'll just get more money once you claim.

For those of you who still haven't applied, it

really doesn't take long at all, and you only apply once with the same agreement number covering all species for multiple claims. The AHWP is in place until June 2027 and you can claim for each species every 10 months.

Species	Animal health and welfare review		Endemic disease follow-up	
	Current	New	Current	New
Pigs	£557	£648	£923	£1,087
Sheep	£436	£574	£639	£658
Beef Cattle	£552	£647	£837	£954
Dairy Cattle	£372	£447	£1,714	£1,844
Biosecurity (All Cattle)	–	–	£215	£258

Rebekah Clayton

A Warm Welcome to Anna Holliday

Anna joined our busy Vet Tech / Admin team in October last year.

I'm Anna — some of you may already recognise me, or have spoken to me on reception. I'm originally from a village near Penrith up North. My grandad had a beef and arable farm, which I used to help out on and has since been passed down to my uncle. Before joining FarmGate, I worked on two dairy farms mainly doing milking and calf rearing, as well as spending time working at a pony trekking centre. I'm really enjoying getting out on farms, meeting new clients, and getting to know everyone. I love that no two days are the same and that I get to do a job where I can help make a difference to future generations of your herd. Outside of work, I enjoy socialising at Young Farmers, spending time with friends, and going on walks while exploring the Lake District.



Whatsapp Order number
07442 862092



The 2026 sheep abortion testing scheme is now open, allowing

farmers to test unvaccinated sheep for exposure to toxoplasmosis and enzootic abortion (EAE) with lab fees paid for by MSD. The scheme which is open until the end of June 2026, allows farmer to blood test 6-8 unvaccinated sheep that have scanned geld, have aborted or have produced weak lambs. This can be incredibly useful to identify which of these abortion causing bugs are in your flock and can help decision making when it comes to vaccine use. Please ring the practice to book sheep in.

Beth Griffiths

Lambing Product focus -

NoBacZ Navel Spray is unique antibiotic free formula for calves and lambs, proven to clean, protect and dry navels. The product is long lasting with claims to be more effective than iodine, plus the bitter taste deters licking. Can also be used on ear tag sights, tail docking and castration.



Arkguard - Appeared last season, to help support the digestive health of a new born lamb.

Containing specific proteins that support the lambs natural defences and can help to prevent watery mouth, alongside good colostrum management and hygiene.

Diary Dates



Healthy Heifer Members Meeting

Alternative Treatments —Bestico Fly Control- 2 years in.

FerAppease—Natural Stress Reduction (for animals not you!).

Healthy Heifer Bench marking and general catch up included.

Wednesday 25th February 12.30pm at Lancaster Auction Mart Café (The Bull Pen) , Lunch included. Please phone the office to book or e mail linda@farmgatevets.com



BESTICO

Practical Lambing Courses - Saturday 21st February / Saturday 14th March 2026

9.30am—12.30pm at our J36 practice. £48.89 inc. VAT. Please call the office to book.



Lancaster Office

Tel: **01524 60006**

Open 8:30am-5pm

Monday-Friday

9am—12noon Saturdays

CLOSED Sundays

J36 Kendal Office

Tel: **015395 67899**

Open 8:30am-5pm

Monday-Friday

9am—12noon Saturdays

CLOSED Sundays

Sedbergh Office

Tel: **015396 20335**

Open 8:30--5pm

Monday-Friday

CLOSED Saturdays

CLOSED Sundays

farmgate
vets

www.farmgatevets.com



PLUS 24 hour emergency service 7 days a week