



Newsletter

January 2026



Welcome

2026 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the formation of Farm Gate Vets. It is hard to believe that a decade and a half has passed since Jim and I separated the farm animal work from our original practices in Lancaster and Kendal to create a dedicated farm-animal-only business.

A great deal has changed over that time. What began as a five-vet team has grown to fourteen; following the purchase of the Sedbergh practice from Jim and Nick, we now also provide some companion animal work; and Jim and I are no longer the only directors, instead sharing both the pleasure and responsibility with four additional colleagues.

What has not changed is our commitment to providing the best possible service to our clients, our friendly and approachable ethos, and our determination to remain an independent practice owned and run by the team working at the coalface.

Thank you for your continued support over the years. We very much look forward to working with you all in the year ahead. **Happy New Year.**

Mark Stott

Foot Rot Vaccine at Scanning

Sheep being very near each other at lambing time, either by being brought inside or through feeding outside, unfortunately means that footrot and CODD can spread like wildfire.

My recommendation would be to get Footvax into them at scanning, with benefits being:

- You're already handling them
- It's not when you would be giving them Heptavac P - both at the same time would be too much for the sheep to handle as they are both several-in-one vaccines
- It's not too close to lambing (licence says not to give within 4 weeks of lambing)
- It'll have chance to get into their system before risky period starts and still have plenty of cover left by the time lambing happens (vaccine lasts about 6 months)
- You're reducing the level of footrot on the ground that the lambs will be on, thereby reducing scald in future lamb crop

For those of you who say CODD is your main issue not footrot, current research suggests that CODD requires a damaged foot to take hold, so keeping your footrot and scald at bay with tools such as Footvax will indirectly help with CODD.

Please do speak with us if you want to talk further.

Included this month

- **Foot Rot Vaccine at Scanning** - Rebekah Clayton
- **A Reminder, Drug Orders**— Jim McKinstry
- **Getting Cows in Calf** - Jim McKinstry
- **Strong Ewes and Lambs**— Alex Vayro
- **Changes to the Low on Sheep Worrying**— Liusaidh Troughton
- **News and Diary Dates**



Don't miss diary dates this month, we have—a Sheep Club meeting on Fluke—A Red Tractor Medicine Course—Lambing Courses— A Cattle Foot Trimming Course



A Friendly Reminder - Ordering Medicines

Please can I give a friendly reminder to everyone that we need notice before you land into any of the offices for Medicines. I want to remind you all now as we are approaching lambing time when time is short and tempers can be shorter!

In November 2024 the dispensing rules tightened, and we need to comply with them. The main point that is being enforced is the need for a vet to check the medicines before they are dispensed. This has not been an easy transition and most of our clients are working with us to stay within the rules. As we are a farm animal practice giving a really good, specialised service, there is not always a vet in the office to check an order when someone walks in. We need to get in contact with a vet before dispensing the medicines. If all our vets are on farm and not near their phones, there will be a delay in getting the medicines to you. Just think we are like a chemist shop. You cannot just give them a prescription and expect to walk out with the medicines in 5 minutes.

We have a WhatsApp number to text us your order which works really well, and you can always just phone us and we will get the medicines ready for you. Ideally, we would like 24 hours' notice for medicine orders, if you are struggling for time, please call us when you are setting off to the office and we will do our best to get your order dispensed and checked before you arrive. It will save you having to hang about.

It is a legal requirement that we can only dispense medicines to animals under our care, so we need to have been on your farm in the last 12 months. If we have not been on your farm in that time, you will need a medicine visit before we can dispense medicines. Yes, this includes footrot sprays and footrot injections. Please check with us when we were last with you as this will save problems at lambing time.



**Whatsapp
Ordering
Number
07442
862092**

Jim McKinstry

Getting Cows in Calf



The more I learn and read about bovine fertility, the more it amazes me we actually get cows in calf. Interestingly about 90% of services result in conception, but then many problems affect the survival of the embryo giving you an in-calf rate of about 40-50% per service. As cows produce more milk, we need to improve their diets to keep up with the extra energy they need. Here are some pointers to help improve or to maintain fertility.

If you serve a cow that is standing today, the follicle that will ovulate started its journey 3 months ago, usually in the dry period. That is why it is so important to get the correct diet into cows in the late dry period and early lactation. If a cow is

struggling around calving and starts to lose condition, the breakdown products from her fat damage the developing follicles. This causes a breakdown in communication between the follicles and the brain, and this is why we get non cycling cows, cysts and silent heats. The damaged follicles can also ovulate normally, and the cow seems to be doing everything correctly, but the egg is damaged and this leads to early embryonic death. Hard work I know.

How we can try to help the situation is keeping cows in the correct body condition through the dry period and early lactation. Keep them eating a good diet that is not going to allow them to pile fat on, but we do not want a diet that is so full of straw that the cow loses condition coming up to calving. We want our dry cows to have at least 3 feet of feed space and when they calve, we want them to have access to fresh water and plenty of fresh feed. If a cow eats and drinks plenty in the 24 hours after calving, that is a good sign that she should have a good lactation and good fertility.

Protected fats are really good at helping to boost fertility. With milk price dropping this may be something that may be dropped from diets. Keeping about 250g per cow in the diet for the fresh calved cows will really help fertility and improve conception rates.

Jim McKinstry

Strong Ewes and Lambs

The highlight of the farming calendar has once again rolled around, with our earlier lambers already well under way and other flocks queuing up ready to go. Lambing is one of the most demanding stages of the ewe's year. Around **70% of lamb growth happens in the final six weeks of pregnancy**, therefore ewe nutrition is critical for lamb survival, ewe health and optimum milk production.

Feed to Condition and Number of Lambs

Body condition scoring (BCS) is a useful tool to help guide feeding up to lambing time, and scanning is a great time to get hands on sheep. Target body condition score at lambing should be targeted as:

- **Lowland ewes:** 3.0–3.5

Hill ewes: 2.5–2.75

The best way to perform this is to feel the fat coverage over the spine just behind the last rib. If the same person performs the BCS this allows for repeatable data. Doing this at scanning means that there is time for slight alterations to be made to feeding.

Additionally, we should use scanning results to group ewes by litter size and feed accordingly. A 70kg ewe 3 weeks prior to lambing twins needs roughly 20% more energy than one with a single. Nutrition level in feed and grass is variable farm to farm so please contact us if you have any queries.

By body condition scoring and grouping ewes based on scanning result, this will allow for optimum nutrition levels. This helps to prevent issues with undernutrition like low lamb birth weight and poor udder development, whilst not allowing for over-nutrition which can increase metabolic disease, difficult lambings and pre-lambing prolapses. Just like everything in farming, it is a fine balance and we are happy to discuss any questions that you may have.

Alex Vayro






Changed to the Law on Sheep Worrying

The law on dogs and livestock worrying has changed in the UK, with the recent amendments being passed through the House of Commons on the 5th December, and royal ascent expected shortly. These include:

- **Unlimited fines** – this replaces the £1,000 cap which has now been removed and courts can place unlimited fines on offending dog owners, including covering costs of seizing and detaining dogs found to be worrying livestock, before the dog is released.
- The law now applies to public footpaths and roads, as well as fields and enclosures, to cover incidents while livestock are being moved.
- **Enhanced powers for police**- including the ability to seize and detain dogs involved in incidents, enter premises to gather evidence, and collect samples from both livestock and dogs to aid investigations. This means there does not need to be witnesses as evidence can be gathered after the incident.
- The definition of 'livestock' now covers llamas and alpacas, as well as sheep, cattle, pigs, goats, horses and poultry.
- The definitions of "worrying" (chasing, running at, causing stress, being loose and not under proper control) and "attacking" (biting, grabbing, injuring or killing) are both criminal offences but are now clearly separate, to allow those more serious and violent offences to be punished accordingly.

Hopefully this acts as a stronger deterrent and fewer incidents amongst our livestock. However if you do suspect a dog has been worrying or attacking your livestock we are always available to assist should you need us.

Liუსaidh Troughton

Score 1		The vertical and horizontal processes are prominent and sharp. The fingers can be pushed easily below the transverse and each process can be felt easily as individuals. The loin is thin with no fat cover.
Score 2		The vertical processes are prominent but smooth; individual processes being felt only as corrugations. The horizontal processes are smooth and rounded, but it is still possible to press fingers under. The loin muscle is a moderate depth but with little fat cover.
Score 3		The vertical processes are smooth and rounded; the bone is only felt with light pressure. The horizontal processes are also smooth and well covered; light pressure is required with the fingers to find the ends. The loin muscle is full and with a moderate fat cover.
Score 4		The vertical processes are only felt with hard pressure, individual vertebrae difficult to detect. The ends of the horizontal processes are only felt with hard pressure. The loin muscles are full and rounded, and have a thick covering of fat.
Score 5		The vertical and transverse processes cannot be detected even with pressure; there is a dimple in the fat layers where the processes should be. The loin muscles are very full and covered with very thick fat.

Credit AHDB



Wishing all our clients a very **Happy New Year** and all the very best for a successful and peaceful 2026

Christmas Crossword—WINNERS

Chris and Cath
Halhead,
Newlands



Good Luck Mary !

Mary left us at the end of December to pursue a new line of work in the feed industry. We would like to wish her every success and thank you for all your hard work at Farm Gate Vets.



Christmas Quiz- Thank you!

Thank you to all of you who came, took part and donated so generously to our Christmas Quiz.



We raised a total of **£1000** for **St John's Hospice**, a charity so close to the hearts of many of us.

Winning team pictured to the left!



Lambing Courses 2026

Practical Lambing PLUS - Sat 17th January 2026, 9.30am—2pm (includes farm visit & light lunch) £60.31 inc. VAT

Practical Lambing - Saturday 21st February 2026, 9.30am—12.30pm, £48.89 inc. VAT



To book please
phone the practice
on 015395 67899

**Free place for
Farm Gate Sheep
Club members

Aimed at all levels of experience we cover-

- A presentation on all aspects of ewe and lamb husbandry.
- Practical lambing techniques.
- Disease prevention and simple treatments.
- Hands on training in general skills including injections and stomach tubing.
- All Welcome, light refreshments provided.
- An ideal gift!

Farm Gate Vets, Unit 2B Rural Auction Centre,
Crooklands, LA7 7FP

Diary Dates



Sheep Club—Fluke Night (All Welcome). Tuesday 13th January 2026 at J36.

Supper Included. A discussion on all things fluke control including the new pen side blood tests. To book please call the office or e mail linda@farmgatevets.com



Understanding Veterinary Medicines (Red Tractor Approved Course) Thursday 15th January 2026

Course Cost £40.00 including course book and certificate. To book please call the office or e mail linda@farmgatevets.com

Lambing Courses 2026—Please call the office to book.

Saturday 17th January— at J36 including a farm visit 9.30pm—2pm £60.31 inc. VAT

Saturday 21st February - 9.30am—12.30pm £48.89 inc. VAT



First Aid for Feet—One Day Cattle Foot Trimming Course

Thursday 29th January at our J36 Practice. 9am—5pm

This one day LANTRA course aims to set the foundations in good hoof first aid including blocking and first line treatment. A mix of theory and practical. Course cost £327.60 plus VAT.

To book your place please call the office or e mail linda@farmgatevets.com

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



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