

Newsletter July 2026



Welcome

I think this is a first to be complaining about the good weather but as we know you can have too much of a good thing! We are seeing sick cows and more mastitis when the weather is hot and humid.

The only thing that is enjoying this heat is the maize. I am sure you can see it growing.

With the heat comes the flies and the midges. After the good uptake of Bluetongue vaccine last year, a lot of people are now saying it was a non-event and a waste of time doing it. I completely agree with you if you are referring to sick and dying animals but that is not what we are seeing. We are seeing “dummy calves” due to bluetongue affecting the calf’s brain in the uterus. We are also seeing decreased fertility from lost embryos, so a lot more subtle but still causing problems. Please have a chat to one of us because vaccination is the only prevention we have. We know it is in the area, and we know the midges are biting.

Jim McKinstry

Calibrate your Dosing Guns

Making sure your dosing gun is correctly calibrated before busy treatment periods is a quick and straightforward task that gives you confidence every animal is receiving the correct amount of product. Whether you're vaccinating calves, worming sheep or administering other drenches, your dosing gun is one of the most important tools in your medicine cabinet.

A gun that's under-dosing may not provide the treatment your animals need, potentially leading to poor recovery, reduced vaccine effectiveness and contributing to resistance. Over time, dosing guns naturally wear as seals deteriorate, springs weaken and moving parts become less accurate through regular use.

For the most accurate results, you want to be calibrating using the product you'll be administering

- Take a measuring jug with volume markings.
- Connect the gun, set the required dose and prime it by pumping until all air has been removed.
- Dispense three doses into the measuring cylinder and check the measured volume matches the gun setting.
- If the gun under-doses, inspect and replace worn seals, clean the gun and test again or get yourself a new one.



Katie Spence

Included this month

- **Calibrate your Dosing Guns**—Katie Spence
- **Killing Crypto**—Rebekah Clayton
- **Heat Stress In Dairy Cows** - Sol Elliott
- **Are “Ewe” feeling fit**—Beth Griffiths
- **Upskilling Hoof Trimmers**—Finbarr
- **News and Diary Dates**



Killing Crypto in your Calf Shed

Many of you will unfortunately have experienced Crypto outbreaks in your calves. These outbreaks are common because the oocysts (eggs) have a tough outer shell making them highly resistant to killing and therefore spread between calves is inevitable without specialised cleaning.

Crypto oocysts love cool, moist conditions so at the very least getting your pens mucked out ASAP and leaving them to dry for as long as possible before restocking will go a long way to reducing infection levels. However, the oocysts are only destroyed at temperatures above 60°C, with the hotter the temperature the less time needed. For instance, to prevent calf jackets being a source of spread, washing them at 65°C would require 30 minutes, whereas only 2 minutes is required at 80°C.

Steam cleaning is therefore a good option on mucked out pens, or if not available, you can use a disinfectant, but not all disinfectants kill Crypto.

According to Farmer's guardian:

- **2-3% Kenocox – kills 99% oocysts after two hours of contact**
- **2-4% Neopredisan – kills 99% oocysts after two hours of contact**
- **10% Ox-Virin – reduced oocyst infectivity after one hour of contact**
- **3% hydrogen peroxide – reduced oocyst infectivity after four minutes**

However, The Journal of Dairy and Veterinary Sciences, suggests that the concentration of hydrogen peroxide needs to be at least 6% with a 20-minute contact time to effectively inactivate Crypto oocysts. You do need to be careful though as this concentration is caustic and corrosive, so proper care needs to be taken when handling this product. You also need to store hydrogen peroxide in an opaque container because it breaks down when exposed to sunlight.

If you are doing all the above and still having problems, then it might be worth adding the Bovilis Cryptium vaccine to your repertoire. The vaccine is given to the

dams with protection coming through in the milk, therefore requiring it be given in the third trimester of pregnancy at least 3 weeks before calving. The initial course is two doses 4-5 weeks apart (second dose needs to be at least 3 weeks before calving) with a single booster every pregnancy after that. As an incentive to try the vaccine the company are offering the second dose of the initial course FOC for new customers until the end of August.



Rebekah Clayton

Heat Stress in Dairy Cows

While I was enjoying some time off over the May heatwave, it did cross my mind the effect this would be having on cattle fertility, particularly in the dairy cows. Heat stress decreases eating and therefore rumination, which can push your cows into acidosis and negative energy balance. As you will be aware this causes all sorts of issues for dairy cows. Don't be surprised if those cows served in the heatwave haven't held and if fertility is poorer than normal in hotter months. Negative energy balance damages the follicles that begin developing 3 months before she's bulling. You are more likely

to get twins when cows have been under heat stress too – it all comes back to not eating enough or not eating the right thing affects how the follicles develop and leads to multiple, poorer quality follicles releasing eggs instead.

As always, making sure cattle have access to enough water during these hotter weeks to ensure they produce enough saliva to act as a buffer in the rumen is crucial. Cows can drink up to 14L every minute, so ensuring your troughs and water system can handle refilling at a faster rate than normal on the hot days is worth thinking about before the next bout of hot weather arrives. Trough space of at least 10cm per cow should be available and allow for 10% of the herd to drink at any one time, with high yielding cows consuming up to 200 litres per day in hot weather. We also need to think about a potential increase in mastitis, as bacteria on the beds multiply rapidly in hot weather. Extra bedding, liming and a meticulous pre and post milking management in the parlour can help.

If you are concerned how your herd coped in the previous heatwave or want to discuss improvements to minimise disruption to fertility give us a call.

Sol Elliott



Are “Ewe” feeling fit?

Keeping sheep at the right condition at the right time can make a difference between a decent or a nightmare lambing and tupping time. Keeping ewe condition scores on track means better conception rates, healthier lambs on the ground and less problems (for example those pesky vaginal prolapses or ewes with twin lamb disease). Thin sheep are also more at risk for not responding to vaccines, as they have less energy to mount an immune response. Having a “hands on” approach- literally- is key. Placing a hand over the loin of sheep can quickly allow you to assess how fit your sheep are and I’ve attached a handy guide provided by AHDB’s managing breeding ewes report (2024). Whilst keeping a mental note of how the sheep are “feeling” overall is ok, a tally of scores on paper (maybe a little black book), or through more technical EID readers allow for a more objective measure and a better idea of sheep fitness. Getting an idea of how “fit” the flock is looking, every time sheep are routinely handled, will allow smaller management changes to be made to avoid issues building up. I like to think changing sheep body condition scores are like controlling the direction of a ship, it’s easy to make a small change in direction frequently and early, rather than yanking the rudder round at the last minute and sinking the vessel. Identifying potential issues earlier, for example pulling out thinner ewes, can allow for management changes such as weaning lambs slightly earlier or feeding thin sheep slightly more to gain weight, such that at key points (tupping time) they are in a better (more fertile) state. It can also give us an idea if there are some underlying issues running through the flock. If thin sheep have been identified but even with management changes, they are still thin then investigating what could be dragging the flock can improve overall flock profitability. Feel free to give us a ring or pop into the practice if you want to discuss whether “ewe” are feeling fit and we would be happy to help!

Key takeaways

- Hands on approach to assess condition score
- Every time sheep are handled.
- Do something with the scores

Small changes in plenty of time, so we don’t “sink the ship”.

Sheep Consultant Nerys Wright will be talking on this subject and it’s practical application at the Downland Roadshow held at the J36 conference centre on July 7th, 5pm.

Beth Griffiths

Upskilling Hoof Trimmers



If you visited our J36 practice in mid-June, you may have noticed some large frames and several cows’ feet around the place! We were hosting another Cattle Hoof Care Standards Board Level 4 Professional Foot Trimming course: a five-day programme aimed at individuals building careers as professional foot trimmers.

By providing a northern training venue, and with the support of a willing client who hosted the three days of practical on-farm training, we hope we are helping to improve the knowledge and skill level of those delivering this increasingly important service on farm.

Finbarr O’Sullivan-Greene

Score 1

The spinous and transverse processes are prominent and sharp. The fingers can be pushed easily below the transverse bone and each process can be felt. The loin is thin with no fat cover.



Score 2

The spinous processes are prominent but smooth, individual processes being felt only as corrugations. The transverse processes are smooth and rounded, but it is still possible to press fingers underneath. The loin muscle is a moderate depth but with little fat cover.



Score 3

The spinous processes are smooth and rounded; the bone is only felt with pressure. The transverse processes are also smooth and well-covered; hard pressure is required with the fingers to find the ends. The loin muscle is full and with moderate fat cover.



Score 4

The spinous processes are only detectable as a line. The ends of the transverse processes cannot be felt. The loin muscles are full and rounded and have a thick covering of fat.



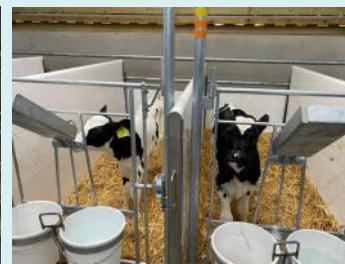
Score 5

The spinous 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.



AHDB Managing breeding ewes, 2024

Thank you to Metcalfe Farms & MSD



On behalf of our staff and clients who joined us on the visit to Metcalfe Farms at Leyburn last month, we wanted to extend our thank you to the Metcalfe Farm team and to MSD for supporting such a great trip. From a 120 acres with a small steading and 18 cows, it was incredible to see how the farm and other businesses have grown. We saw first hand the quality of stockmanship and the attention to detail diligently applied at each stage. Hannah, the lead calf rearer, comes from a pig background which means the same high standard of biosecurity, disinfecting, hygiene and all in, all out policies are applied to the calves. Colostrum management is also done to the letter with quality and quantity delivered in a strict time frame from birth. Record keeping is an essential ensuring staff are accountable and no heifers are kept that have underperformed as calves. We also got to enjoy a very nice hogg roast lunch organised by Claire from MSD, and to the delight of some of our group members we also got to see some very big machinery!

Linda Dawson

Whatsapp order no.
07442 862092

Diary Dates



Red Tractor—Understanding Veterinary Medicines Course

Wednesday 1st July 2026 1.30pm—3.30pm

Course cost £40 plus VAT inc. course book and certificate.

DOWNLAND
Partners in Farming Health

Shaping Future Flocks Roadshow

Practical Advice on ewe nutrition and health throughout the breeding cycle

Tuesday 7th July 2026, 4pm—8pm at J36 NWA.

Please book direct with Downland—<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/events/landing/114825>



Cartmel Show -Wednesday 5th August 2026.

We are pleased to be sponsor this event again and look forward to seeing many of you on the stand for refreshments and strawberries!



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