Newsletter
November 2026



Welcome

The long hot summer is but a memory now the weather is wetter and the clocks have changed. Everyone is starting to get into their winter routines. November is a difficult month. Dairy cows are not settled on their rations as the clamps are changing, Youngstock have just been housed with its challenges, sheep are deciding what to die from (the list is long this year) and if they do decide to come into season are the tups working? We have never tested as many tups and there are very few farmers have had all their tups with no problems. Everyone has been glad to get them tested.Sarah is talking about bluetongue vaccination which is at the front of most farmers minds. Do not forget about the other vaccines as well. Vaccination is our main defence against disease. We use it for many diseases and it makes a big difference. With the price stock is at the moment, anything that limits production or kills the animal is even more costly. The cost of preventing disease becomes more and more worth the investment. If you have niggling disease problems, don't wait for your annual health plan, have a word with one of us to see how we can help.

Jim McKinstry

Pasteurellosis

Even though I've only just learnt how to spell this, we are seeing far too much of it. Farmers are finding fit lambs dead, with no obvious signs as to why. We've had an influx of postmortems, with the majority being Pasteurella as the cause. Sheep have these bacteria sat in their mouths and throat normally, any stressor can allow it to take hold, whether that's handling them, weather changes, a high worm burden or merely seeing Jim drive by in his pickup. It's worth having a think about how you're utilising the vaccine. In an ideal world for Heptavac-P, ewes should be booster vaccinated 4-6 weeks prior to lambing, so that the lambs get decent antibodies in the colostrum. Lambs should then be vaccinated twice at 3wks+ and again a month to 6wks later. Any stressor whilst vaccinating, can mean it isn't as effective. Like myself, sheep want an easy and stress-free life (I think I'm in the wrong job).

If you are seeing an increase in mortalities, it's worth bringing us a fresh carcass to have a look at, we can also rule out other disease that can cause sudden death such as liver fluke and barber's pole worm etc. Sometimes lambs will look really dull before death, with signs of pneumonia. However, in a lot of cases the toxins have already taken hold before they have chance to show signs of illness. As we head into autumnal weather, it's worth having Pasteurella in the back of your mind and know that we're on the end of the phone if you need any advice.

Fiona Wallbank

Included this month

Pasteurellosis – Fiona Wallbank

Bluetonge Don't Dither - Sarah Harker

Taking the Perfect muck Sample – Sarah Harker

Johnes Declarations in 2026 – Rebekah Clayton

Housing Vaccinations – Jim McKinstry

News and Diary Dates

Picture above from our recent calf meeting at White Lund Farm

JOHNE'S

Dairy Clients - Johnes Declarations need to be submitted by the end of December. Please contact us if you need to complete this.

JOHNE'S

Blue Tongue Vaccine – Don't Dither!



As Autumn advances, we are past the immediate clinical risk of bluetongue and over the panic of sourcing and distributing vaccine before breeding sheep sales and tupping time. No corner of our practice has escaped, with confirmed cases from North to South. October saw an unprecedented demand for fertility testing in tups, with some disappointing results that could likely be attributed to bluetongue and some poor scanning results in beef cows. We now await scanning results in sheep and consequences on pregnancies such as deformed lambs and calves.

I spent 3 days at the Sheep Veterinary Society Conference last month, in the company of vets, scientists and farmers from all over the UK, Europe and further afield. Most interesting was listening to the experiences of those from the South-West of England. They had their bluetongue warning last year with a moderate level of infection, but this year has been awful. Arguably exacerbated by drought, shortage of grass and sheep that were already a bit weary. This year has been our warning. I have no crystal ball but it is probable that levels of infection will build locally and next year will be worse. It is naive to think that natural infection will have passed through our farms and left good levels of immunity.

The South-West woke up in the last week of July and first week of August and took all available vaccine supplies, hence our struggle through August and September. As immediate demand wanes and production catches up, we now have vaccine available. If farmers demonstrate they will use it, it will be produced but we cannot expect to dither all summer and then get it next day. We are talking to manufacturers in an attempt to gauge demand and anticipate good supplies of all 3 brands of vaccine through winter and spring. I would recommend vaccination of breeding cows and bulls and breeding ewes and tups at a convenient time before the risk comes round again. Demand for vaccinated stock at next years breeding sales is likely to continue and we need advance planning here too. Price fluctuations and inconsistent supply are less likely if we can all plan ahead.

If it helps to allay fears, there has been no detrimental effect on tup or bull fertility from use of the vaccine. Ongoing surveillance monitors circulating strains to ensure vaccines remain appropriate, and it is still all BTV-3. Annual boosters are currently recommended but the duration of protection is being monitored, and if it looks like it might last longer, advice will be updated.

I know bluetongue vaccine is another to add to the list of those that we recommend, but I think it's use is an insurance that we cannot ignore. At the moment, we do not feel the need to stockpile ready for next year but we are keeping in close contact with manufacturers and suppliers. Please speak to us if you are wanting to order vaccine to use sooner rather than later, and do not hesitate to make us aware of your probable requirements for next year. We can then pass this information onto manufacturers with the aim of vaccine supply meeting demand in 2027.



Sarah Harker

Taking the Perfect Muck Sample

I can't remember a time when we had so many sheep muck samples brought into the practice, and although we do prefer flowers and chocolates, we are delighted with the level of engagement with faecal worm egg counts in helping to control worm burdens in your flocks. Any sample is better than nothing, but to allow maximum accuracy of results and therefore the best advice possible, please remember the following:

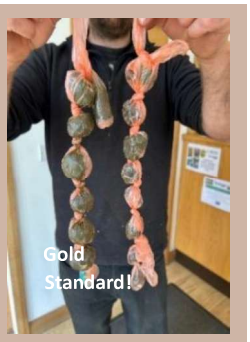
- Samples must be collected fresh (if they are still warm, they are fresh!) and certainly no more than 1 hour old.
- They should be refrigerated but not frozen and reach the practice as soon as possible, and certainly within 48 hours. Fill pots or eliminate air from bags or gloves and keep sealed to limit contact between the sample and air.

- If collecting from a group, hold in a pen or corner of the field for a few minutes then pick up appropriate samples. Take a random selection ie: do not take from the best or worst sheep; we need an average. Take at least 10 samples or up to 10% for larger groups.

In groups of mixed ages (eg: ewes and lambs) keep samples separate.

- Different ages and classes of stock can carry very different worm burdens even on the same ground, so need assessing separately.
- Do not mix samples together before bringing to the practice. We will measure equal amounts from each individual sample and pool them at the surgery.





Eggs hatch in samples that are not handled properly, meaning the results we report are lower than they really are. Counts can also vary widely across a group so we need plenty of samples and the opportunity to mix them accurately to give you the best information possible.
Have a look at the photos for some ideal ways to collect samples, and some not so ideal!! We are grateful for whatever and however you bring it, but the better you do, the better the results and guidance we can provide. **Sarah Harker**

Johnes 2026 Declarations, What's different.

It is getting to that time of year again where the dairy farmers amongst you that haven't yet done so will need to get Johne's sampling done, in order for declarations to be signed and sent to milk buyers before the end of the year.
This year will be the first year we will be able to compare your herd's Johne's control index (JCI) to last year, giving us more of an idea of how your management strategies have worked for you over the last year.
Previously, the minimum level of testing required you to test twice a year the 30 most likely animals in the herd to have Johne's, although this helps you to find these animals and manage them accordingly, the nature of the disease means that an infected cow does not always show as positive. Therefore, last year the NJMP (National Johne's Management Plan) implemented the JCI which uses an ATV (average test value) to be able to encompass the whole herd. Therefore, minimum testing is now 60 random animals once a year (if you have 120 cows in milk test alternate animals, 180 one in every 3 etc) and from these you get an ATV for your herd. Depending on the results, we may suggest additional strategic testing to root out any high-risk animals, but having an actual number to be able to compare year on year allows you greater clarity that what you are doing is working, or not as the case may be. The aim is to have the national herd below an ATV of 5.5 by 2030; a herd ATV consistently below 5.5 suggests that Johne's is well controlled in the herd. Positively, the majority of our herds are below this value already.



Rebekah Clayton

Housing Vaccinations

By the time you are reading this, most of the cattle will be housed. Housing increases the chance of disease in cattle as they have a change in diet, they are close to their mates which aids in the spread of disease and the weather is usually damp and cold which increases the spread of pneumonia.
You can help reduce the chance of disease in housed cattle by

- Clipping out backs to allow cattle to sweat and stay cooler
- Worm cattle at housing (with preferably an injection) to kill lung and gut worms that would cause lung and gut damage that would stress the animal
- Get cattle vaccinated against pneumonia. This is better to do before housing, but we have 1 shot vaccines that will give immunity quickly and can be done now.
- Treat for fluke at the correct time according to the product you are using. Drenches and injections are much better for fluke treatments than pour-on flukicides.
- Keep cattle well ventilated, without drafts. We want stale air to get out without cattle standing in a draught.

Jim McKinstry

Warm Welcome to Ellie Jackson

Hi, I'm Ellie! I joined Farm Gate in July 2026, bringing with me a varied background of experience from my previous roles at Westmorland Vets and Animal Rescue Cumbria.

I work across all three branches and am really enjoying getting to know everyone and becoming part of the Farmgate team.

I live in the small village of Dent, and life outside of work is always busy! When I'm not at Farmgate, you'll find me helping my stepdad and mum on the family farm. I also have my own small but growing flock of Suffolk sheep, alongside my dogs and cats at home, who keep me on my toes!

I'm looking forward to continuing to build my knowledge, getting to know everyone, and seeing what the future brings



Interview with Katie Spence

1) What was your first ever job? My first proper job was at the local chippy. **2) What do you enjoy most about working at Farm Gate Vets?** My favourite thing about FGV is the big team; there's so many great personalities. Everyone is super supportive and they give me plenty reasons to smile!

3) Where is your favourite holiday destination? Portugal with my mum:) you canny beat the breeze and the beaches of the Algarve and a good natter with your mam!

4) Who would you most like to have dinner with? My grandad! We have so much to catch up on ♡

5) How do you relax after a hard days work? I love a run and I am enjoying exploring the lakes. I need to get myself a little four legged companion, though, to accompany me on all the adventures!



Whatsapp Order No. Reminder

07442 862092 – ideally 24 hrs notice please.

Please leave details of

- **your name and farm name**
- **medicine required and quantity**
- **reason for use (e.g. lame sheep)**
- **which branch you wish to collect from**

Diary Dates

Understanding Veterinary Medicines Red Tractor Course

Wed 4th November 2026 - 1.30pm at our J36 meeting room.

Course cost £40 plus VAT which includes the course book and certificate. To book please phone the practice or e mail linda@farmgatevets.com

**** Dairy Clients if your last course was over 5 years ago, you need to complete a refresher, please book in!**



Managing Motivating and Retaining Farm Staff

Wednesday 18th November 2026, 11.30pm – 3.30pm at our J36 meeting room.

Back by popular demand, we have the chance another workshop with Nollaig Heffernan. We saw first hand last time how useful this workshop was for clients who attended. If you employ or manage staff, please sign up by phoning the office or e mail **linda@farmgatevets.com**



Annual Christmas Charity Quiz Night!!

Tuesday 8th December 2026 -7pm at Kirkby Lonsdale Rugby Club, Raygarth, LA6 2DS

Up to 6 per team, Raffle, Christmas Jumpers, Supper included, £15 donation per team, all proceeds go to charity.

To book your teams, please call the office or e mail **linda@farmgatevets.com**

Lancaster Office
Tel: **01524 60006**
Open 8:30am-5pm
Monday-Friday
9am—12noon Saturdays
Sundays CLOSED

J36 Kendal Office
Tel: **015395 67899**
Open 8:30am-5pm
Monday-Friday
9am—12noon Saturdays
Sundays CLOSED

Sedbergh Office
Tel: **015396 20335**
Open 8:30--5pm
Monday-Friday
CLOSED Saturdays CLOSED
Sundays

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