



# Newsletter

## December 2023

### Welcome

December is here and so is the countdown to the big day is on. Not Christmas but the 13th of December when all non-farm assured farms need to have their attestation forms done. We have had a lot of chats on this subject and what it boils down to is if you sell any sheep or cattle that go to kill and you are not farm assured you need this done. After the 13th of December you will not be able to sell them easily.

Cows have been milking indifferently this winter so far with cows not reading the silage analysis and producing less milk than the computer says! We always find in the new year they settle on the rations and the silages become more stable and milk nudges up.

TB testing is in full swing with us at the moment and to help out you will see an unfamiliar face helping us over the next couple of months. This is Steph our locum who comes to us with over 10 years of farm experience.

From all of the Farmgate team we would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year.

Jim McKinstry

### Blue Tongue Virus - Update

Confirmed cases of BTV Serotype 3 in cows in Kent.

Hopefully the lower temperatures as we head into winter will suppress disease spread **by midges**, however we must always stay vigilant. Bluetongue is a notifiable disease meaning suspect cases must be reported to the APHA. Signs to look for in cattle include: **crusty lesions on the face and teats; redness of the eyes and skin above the hoof; abortions and nasal discharge.** Similar signs are seen in sheep, although more pronounced, with drooling caused by sores and swelling of the mouth as well as swollen coronary bands.



As part of our veterinary visits for issuing attestation forms, we are required to confirm freedom of notifiable diseases on farm. It is therefore important with this new information that we all remain vigilant. If you suspect Bluetongue in your herd or flock you must inform DEFRA on 03000 200 301. We are here to answer any questions you may have.

Sol Elliott

### Included this month

- **Blue Tongue Virus Update** - Sol Elliott
- **Healthy Heifer Club Meeting**– Hannah Tatham
- **Handling Systems** Jim McKinstry
- **Calf Milk Powder** - Jim McKinstry
- **A Low Risk Year for Fluke**
- **Movember**
- **News and Diary Dates**



#### REMINDER FOR DAIRY CLIENTS

All Johnes declarations must be completed by the end of the year. If you haven't had a review in 12 months, please contact us ASAP.



## Healthy Heifer Club Meeting

On 1<sup>st</sup> November we held a healthy heifer meeting kindly hosted by the Barton family of Lupton Hall. We all enjoyed a tour of their new calf facilities built with health and productivity in mind; from the inclusion of a kitchen area to clean



buckets and prepare calf milk hygienically, to raised individual pens on slats to keep the calves warm and dry and even a spare, clean calf feeder pen ready for the next batch to allow complete cleaning and disinfection between groups.

Discussion focused on benchmarking of growth rates and total protein results within the group.

The difficulties of achieving the 3 Qs of colostrum (quality, quantity, quickly) were

discussed and ideas were shared. On the topic of growth rates, the farms on the graph that were achieving over 0.7kg/day were managing this through a combination of increased feeding rates of milk e.g. 8L daily and good disease control in the calves through vaccination and good hygiene. If you are interested in knowing more about the healthy heifer club then please speak to us.



**Hannah Tatham**

## Handling Systems



TB testing is in full swing as we get through our second rounds of radial testing. A good handling system makes the job so much safer and easier. You do not need to spend thousands on a shiny new set up. A bit of forward planning makes a hard job a bit easier.

Self locking crushes are the bane of a TB testing vet's life! I am sure there are a few of you have heard my thoughts on them. Cattle do not like going into them and when they are in, they are swinging their necks around bashing the person testing them. A head scoop does help..

A bit of a race leading to the crush also lets cattle flow better. Just having a gate at the

back of the crush allows cattle to turn and stress levels to rise!!!!

If you are thinking of modifying your system or buying a new one, have a word with one of us. We see the good, the bad and the ones that should be at Morecambe metals. We can give an honest opinion on what works well before you spend a lot of money on something that may not do what you want.

**Jim McKinstry**



## Calf Milk Powder - What's in your bag?

It is the time of year when we start to get phone calls about poorly calves. Calves we monitor on the healthy heifer farms also show a dip in growth rates in the winter months. There is no getting away from it the cold, damp weather and higher stocking rates do not help but are we blaming disease and weather and not looking at what we are feeding them?

Over my career the number of calf milk replacers (CMRs) have mushroomed. All of them claim to be the best for your calves but when you look at the ingredients there are many different things going into them that it is claimed will make your calves healthy and grow like a weight lifter on steroids!!!!

A couple of the farms that we track their calf weights on the health heifer scheme have been feeding cow's milk due to their B litre price being low. Their calves have had the best weight gains of all the farms we track. This got me asking what is in the milk powder they were feeding as it is obviously not as good as cow's milk.

There are 2 groups of CMRs. They either are skimmed milk based or whey based. This is where the protein comes from. Then they have to add oil to the mix for energy but this has to be plant based so palm oil, coconut oil or vegetable oils are used. Not all of these are easily digested by calves so they can't unlock the energy they need. Whey based powders can contain more lactose (milk sugar) than cows' milk which you would think is good as that will give them energy, but whey is digested in the small intestine and too much sugar in here will draw water from the calf into the gut (the opposite to what should be happening) and you guessed it we will get a scouring calf.

Skimmed milk powder based CMRs are definitely the best as they are the closest to cow's milk. You don't see a biproduct of cheese coming out of a cows udder do you? I do worry that as the price of skim goes up that less will go into CMRs and more whey will go in. On the bag it does not tell you exactly how much of the ingredients are in it just what there is most of. The oil blend may also change. Coconut oil is the closest to C16 (butterfat) but it is more expensive than veg oils. If you want to assess how good your CMR is it should have no fibre in it (cow's milk doesn't) and it should have an ash content of less than 8%. More than 8% ash will cause scours.

Please look at what you are feeding calves. If you need a bit of impartial advice, ask one of us. I would prefer to sort out the feeding of calves before I have to prescribe Halocur or start dripping calves!!!

**Jim McKinstry**



## A Low Risk Year for Fluke

Blood sampling can detect fluke antibodies 2-4 weeks after infection which is why testing some of this years lambs is a good way to find out if you need to dose yet. Older ewes would have antibodies anyway so we can't blood sample these, however a quick PM and examination of the liver is a good way to check for fluke (regardless of cause of death) in these sheep.

So far across the practice blood samples have come back negative which means we haven't seen active fluke yet this season, even on some of our wetter farms. All recent post-mortems have also come back with clean livers. We are also hearing from the vet labs that this is in line with the national picture. However fluke infection is very farm specific and certainly neighbouring practices are just starting to see positive results. Your options are to fluke drench anyway and potentially waste money and time or to sample a few lambs.

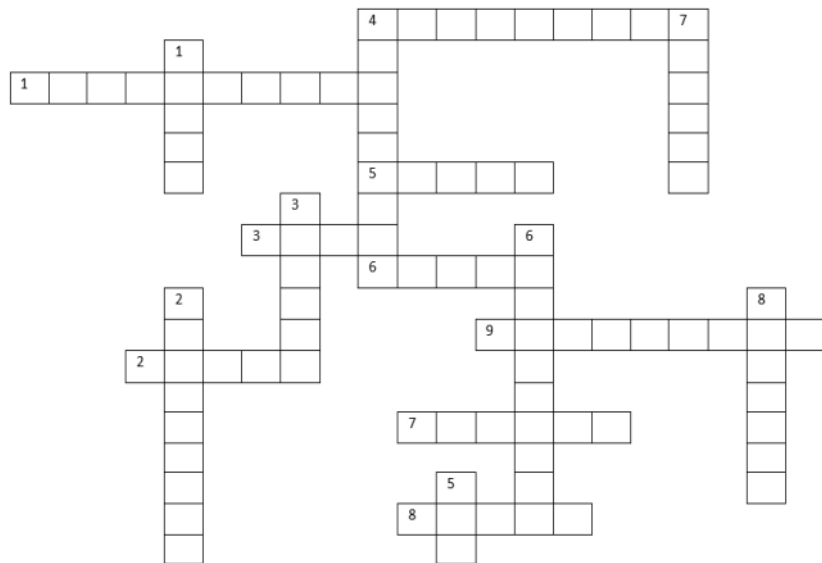
### Changing the Face of Men's Health

November at the time of writing is progressing nicely!! Our donation website and practice boxes are still open so please support us in our plight by making a donation to our team either at the practice or online -

<https://uk.movember.com/team/2445978>



## Christmas Crossword !!



### Across:

- 1) This bird is a symbol of friendship and love in a famous Christmas film.
- 2) Hanging this up supposedly helps with ringworm.
- 3) Last year Farmgate Vets helped Santa with this disease.
- 4) Which vaccine caused Jim the biggest headache as it only became available when no longer needed?
- 5) How many sheep were drinking in 2021's Farmgate Vets Christmas production?
- 6) Why? [Using answer to 1) Down]
- 7) Dairy farmers need this declaration signed by end of December.
- 8) This female animal is also the name of one of Santa's reindeer.
- 9) Which King was about when the snow was deep and crisp and even?



### Down:

- 1) Weather in May influences onset of this disease.
- 2) What is the difference between a snowman and a snow woman?
- 3) Christmas day 2023?
- 4) Who were the first to be informed of Jesus' birth?
- 5) At Quernmore Church's Christmas Tree competition last year, which animal was featured the most in Farmgate Vets' entry?
- 6) What European disease are we currently concerned about since it reached Kent in November?

Please submit you entry for a prize draw win a Farm Gate Goodie Bag!!

Name

.....

Farm Name

.....

## Dates For Your Diary



**Charity Christmas Quiz Night - Tuesday 5th December 7pm for 7.30pm** at Kirkby Lonsdale Rugby Club. £10 entry per team (up to 6 people), supper included, raffle. All proceeds to be donated to MacMillan Cancer Support. To book in your teams please call the office or e mail [linda@farmgatevets.com](mailto:linda@farmgatevets.com)



### Lambing Courses 2024

**Practical Lambing PLUS - (includes a Farm Visit). Saturday 6th January 2024, 9.30am—Approx 2pm, lunch included. £55.00 including VAT.**

**Practical Lambing - Saturday 3rd February 2023—9.30am—12.30pm** refreshments provided. £45 including VAT. To book either course please call the office on the numbers below. **Free place for Sheep Club Members**

**DAIRY CLIENTS—SAVE THE DATE - Tuesday 9th January - What can Dairy Farmers learn from Chickens?** Lunchtime meeting looking at comparisons between the dairy and poultry industries and what we can learn from each other. Venue and timings TBC

#### 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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