



Newsletter

November 2024

Welcome

The autumn colours are on fire this year. Driving around the shades of oranges and reds are amazing. There are also plenty of colourful backends of sheep telling us that in just over 4 months we will be busy with lambing and the spring will be upon us.

Cattle are coming into the sheds and the winter routines are starting. Lungworm has been common this year so all youngstock and cows that have been grazed should be assessed for lungworm and treated if needed.

Pneumonia vaccination should be carried out in youngstock to protect them over the winter months. The value stock has risen to makes the cost of vaccination a lot easier to justify.

Jim McKinstry

There is No Milk in the Cows



This is a statement we are hearing a lot this year. There is no getting away from it autumn and early winter is the difficult period to get milk from cows. Silages are still pickling in the pits; some cows are settling in after coming off grass and farmers and nutritionists are still trying to fine tune diets. We usually see things settling down after Christmas.

This summer has not had a huge amount of sunshine and this has resulted in average silages that are without a lot of poke. There will be a big temptation to push cows with concentrates as feed prices

are manageable and milk price is nudging up. Please be careful as it does not take much to push cows into acidosis and this will make milk yields fall further. The first sign of acidosis is inconsistent dung. Some cows will be fine and others will be loose. There may be cud balls at the front of the cubicles. Some cows will have less rumen fill and may not eat their cake. Other conditions can cause this so it is useful for one of us to come and examine them to make sure we are not missing anything. Cows need fibre. Feeding young multi cut silages will not have a lot of fibre in them and this can lead to problems. Adding straw into the diet will help the rumen to cope. A cow will produce about 2kg of Sodium Bicarbonate a day through her saliva if she is ruminating properly. That beats a 150g of equaliser any day!

If cows are not milking as well as they should it is worth checking if there are any other diseases kicking about in the herd. Some samples can help us rule things out or in and let us identify where we need to focus on.

Jim McKinstry

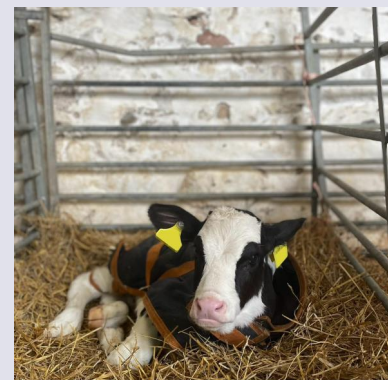
Included this month

- **There is no milk in the cows** - Jim McKinstry
- **Keeping Calves Cosy** –Mary Brownsord
- **Fluke**– Thom Leman
- **Moving the Goal Posts** – Sarah Harker
- **Johnes 30 cow screen**— Rebekah Carling
- **News and Diary Dates**

Keeping Calves Cosy

It's that time of year that if you need a jacket, so do your calves. Calves that are not in suitable temperatures can end up with compromised immunities and poor growth rates. Ones that are less than 3 weeks of age are the most vulnerable to temperature changes so using calf jackets can help maintain their body temperature during the winter months. When using calf jackets we recommend:

- To have the right sized jacket for the calf- be sure the jacket is a snug fit and covers the calf from neck to tail.
- Only put jackets on once the calf is dry- drying newborns helps prevent heat loss.
- Wash the jackets regularly to reduce a risk of disease transfer- ideally a newborn calf should have a nice clean jacket.
- Adjust the straps weekly so they don't become too tight- calves grow quicker than you think. The jacket should be just loose enough for you to slide your hand under.



Mary Brownsord

Crystal Ball needed once again for Fluke control this season.



It's been a miserable summer in terms of the weather with the vast majority being blighted by rain. It has resulted in another unusual fluke season as typically the acute fluke risk period runs from August to October, yet we have not seen high numbers of fluke cases/positive test results. This may be due to heightened awareness due to the damp summer resulting in dosing being done based off of risk factors and tugging time coming around, catching fluke early, but this is impossible to say for sure without testing. Going forwards it is good to be aware of all the usual risk factors including wet, muddy ground such as gateways or around feeding troughs being a hotspot for mud snails (the intermediate host pivotal in the fluke lifecycle). These snails require

warm (10°C) and wet conditions so will certainly still be active.

The clinical signs of fluke can vary depending on whether the animal is suffering from acute or chronic fluke. Acute fluke typically presents in animals old and young alike being listless with pale eyes and quite often being found dead either from severe blood loss or secondary infection such as Black Disease. This is the common presentation at this time of year as it is caused by young fluke migrating through the liver (>3wks post-infection) vs chronic fluke caused by adult fluke in the bile ducts in the liver which takes longer to develop (10-12wks post-infection). Chronic fluke presents as sheep with a poke or oedema under the jaw, poor body condition score and poor fleece quality.

Diagnosis of fluke can be done multiple ways but at this time of year, post-mortem is the quickest and easiest method of identifying fluke. Using blood from this year's lambs is another way to find the fluke status in your sheep, if naive lambs have fluke antibodies then fluke is active on the farm. Later in the season you can move on to using faeces for either Coproantigen ELISA or a worm egg count (coproantigen is able to pick fluke up 3wks earlier).

Treatment of fluke can be tricky as well. In the early season the common product would be a triclabendazole based drench such as Endofluke and this would be the first line product as it treats down to 2 week old immature fluke. Some farms are finding Triclabendazole resistance and if this is evident on your farm please speak to a vet regarding a treatment plan. Later in the season you can move onto products containing closantel as this treats down to 6-8wk old fluke.

The key takeaway from all of this is to be extremely vigilant with regards to fluke when checking stock due to the slightly unusual behaviour so far this year and if you are at all concerned please speak to one of the vets.

Thom Leman

Moving the Goal Posts

The advice we give you at any one time depends on current scientific understanding and our translation of this into the real world, as suited to your particular circumstances. This changes over time and is particularly well illustrated by our advice on worms and other parasites. Original advice when worming sheep or lambs was to 'dose and move' to clean grazing. This would be appropriate in the absence of any resistance to wormers, but now, as resistance is becoming a problem, this strategy is no longer appropriate. What happens is the treated sheep take only resistant worms on to the clean grazing, they become a larger proportion of the worm population and resistance develops quicker. We need sheep to be on pasture that carries some worm burden when they are treated to dilute out remaining resistant worms. In reality, very little grazing is truly clean as it needs to have been free of sheep for over 12 months or cropped/reseeded.



We have long preached that adult ewes have good immunity to worms, and treatment should only really be a consideration around lambing when this immunity can be weakened by the demands of pregnancy and lactation. Even then, good nutrition goes a long way towards avoiding this. However, a worm called *Haemonchus contortus* is becoming an increasing problem as seasons become warmer and wetter. It was classically a problem of southern counties of England but this year, weather patterns have been perfect for its survival and we have seen cases across the practice. Adult sheep as well as lambs are affected as they have poor immunity and we have seen illthrift, very sick sheep and some deaths. However, many farms remain unaffected. Worryingly, *Haemonchus* develops resistance to our wormer drugs very quickly, so over-treating in the short term means we will have reducing treatment options in the long term. We cannot give a simple answer on this one and our advice will change for each farm and each season.



Haemonchus is one parasite that is changing the goals in worm control. This was discussed at our sheep client meeting last month.

Liver fluke is another interesting example. It can also be a big problem as it thrives in warm, wet conditions but it has a year-long life cycle and recent years have had hotter, drier spells in May and June that have interrupted this cycle. Even if it has then turned wetter through later summer and autumn, the cycle has been broken and problems reduced. However, we haven't had this break this year, so it is likely that fluke will be a bigger problem this autumn and winter.

So I am sorry we keep moving the goalposts, but we aren't just making it up as we go along. The management of parasites changes year to year with the seasons and evolves longer term as weather and disease patterns change. We need to keep up and pass advice to you to optimise the health

and productivity of your stock but this will inevitably involve us changing our minds at times for which I apologise. We can make an intelligent, educated guess on what you should be doing, but going forwards, the only way we can get near to getting thing right for your particular farm is with at least some testing of muck and/or blood and investigations of deaths through post-mortems.

Sarah Harker

Johnes 30 Cow Screen

For those of you that test for Johnes via a 30 cow screen, this is a reminder that there needs to be 2 tests a year (ideally 6 months apart) for us to be able to sign your annual declaration. If you've only done one in 2024... please get the second one scheduled! The whole point of the 30 cow screen is to give you an idea of your Johnes status on farm, to see if your current protocols are working. These 30 will be the 30 most likely to have Johnes, so if all come back as low then you can be happy. Animals that are most likely to show Johnes are ones whose immune system are under pressure for some reason e.g. are old, lame, sick, carrying twins etc. i.e. unlikely to be the first 30 through the parlour!



Rebekah Carling

A Warm Welcome to our New Vets

Fraser Jackson

After nearly 2 months since starting at Farm Gate, I reckon it's about time I introduced myself. My name is Fraser, I'm originally from Holme village and I studied at the Royal Veterinary College. After escaping London, and the hefty prices down there, I'm now based at the J36 practice, but you may see me at Sedbergh every now and again.



Outside of work I enjoy painting/drawing, going on hikes with my labrador Bea and gardening at my new allotment courtesy of Sarah. I look forward to meeting you all.

Alex Vayro

Alex also joined us in September after graduating from Cambridge University this summer. She is originally from Northallerton, North Yorkshire where she spent most of her time on visits with her mam who is also a farm vet. In her spare time you will most likely find her in a swimming pool, but on sunny days she enjoys hiking and mountain biking with her husband Jack.



Lambing list Prize Draw

As Jim pointed out in his introduction, lambing time 2025 is just around the corner. At our sheep meeting last month we made the prize draw from the 2024 submitted lambing lists and the winner of the pair of wellies was **Carter at Cragg End**. Look out for the 2025 edition!



Wedding Bells

Congratulations to vet Hannah on her marriage to Richard last month. From all of us in the team, we wish you both all the very best for the future.

No waterproofs or wellies in sight!



Furness Young Farmers Club

Rebekah and Alex thoroughly enjoyed spending an evening with Furness Young Farmers club last month at Tynedale, Greenodd. They spoke about animal welfare and freedom from disease and pain. Lots of great audience interaction, thank you for inviting us and thank you to Tynedale for hosting such a great night.



AgriScot
The Farm Business Event

Coach Trip Kindly supported by Boehringer, Wednesday 13th November 2024

Coach leaving Lancaster Auction at 6am, picking up at J36 6.45am.

Meal at Carlisle Auction on the return journey, arriving home at approx. 9pm.

To book your seat please phone 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

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