

ISSUE 91 Autumn 2025

Livestock NEWS

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ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

Staff News

Farewell

Sadly we say goodbye to two colleagues from the farm team this quarter.

Firstly Heather, who has spent more than 4 years working as our Tarn branch technician and administrator. Heather is moving on, though we're pleased to say she's not leaving the area and we hope to be able to continue to work together as the farm team develops over the coming months. Heather will continue to co-ordinate TB testing for the South of the practice so won't be gone completely. We thank Heather for all her hard work and efforts and wish her all the very best with everything she does going forward.



Leanne joined us just over 2 years ago as a Veterinary Technician and quickly found her feet on farm. Over recent months she has successfully completed her TB testing qualification. Leanne leaves us to return to the world of Land Agency and we thank Leanne for her efforts and wish her well with her future endeavours.

Get ready for tupping time

It's hard to believe it's almost time for the tups to go back in again but getting organised beforehand can help to boost the number of lambs that will be born next Spring. There are 2 aspects to look at; maximising the number of lambs conceived in the first place and then maintaining those pregnancies/reducing losses during pregnancy.



By Shona Mouncey

Ewes need to be in suitable body condition score (BCS) at the time of tupping (lowland 3.5, upland/hill 3.0). Ovulation rate is affected by nutrition and body fat reserves, as well as the age and breed of the ewe. Flushing ewes 2 - 3 weeks before tupping is believed to improve ovulation rates but when ewes are either in BCS of more than 4 or less than 2, flushing has no effect on ovulation rate. On good grass alone, it can take 6 - 8 weeks to gain one condition score therefore weaning is the best time to assess body condition score in time to make changes by tupping time. No dietary changes should be made for 3 weeks after the tups are removed as embryos take 15 days to implant and therefore abrupt changes should be avoided during this time.

Fertility testing tups is also a really useful tool to ensure that they are fertile and functional before use. A physical exam is carried out to ensure they are in appropriate body condition, are not lame and their scrotal circumference is sufficient. A semen sample is then collected and assessed under the microscope. Ewe: ram ratio is also important. Mature rams can work at 1:50 but if ewes are synchronised or teasers have been used more tups will be needed.

To help reduce pregnancy losses vaccination against abortion should be considered as every abortion is thought to have a cost of at least £85 to your business. Enzootic abortion is a bacterial disease that is spread by infected/carrier ewes at lambing time and causes about 50% of diagnosed abortions. Buying in ewes is a high risk for introduction of disease and so vaccination at least 4 weeks before tupping time should be considered.

Toxoplasmosis is a parasitic disease for which the source of infection is cat faeces. It presents as either barren ewes (which will have been infected early in pregnancy) or abortion for those infected late in pregnancy. It accounts for

25% of diagnosed abortions but can also be vaccinated against (at least 3 weeks before the tups go in).

Getting Ready for Housing: Health Prep for a Smooth Autumn

As the days shorten and we move towards housing season, it's time to think ahead to avoid problems later. Autumn brings big changes for cattle — from pasture to sheds, from fresh air to close quarters. With that change comes stress, and with stress comes a greater risk of disease. But a bit of planning now can reduce that risk and set your stock up for a healthy winter.



By Chris Bailey

Lungworm and Fluke: Don't Let Them In With the Straw

Before housing, it's important to assess parasite risks — especially **lungworm(husk)**. We're still seeing cases into autumn, and infections can cause coughing, weight loss, and even death. Lungworm can also trigger major **pneumonia outbreaks**.



Animals most at risk are those coming to the end of their **first grazing season**, or cattle with limited previous exposure. Take care with **bought-in dairy cows**, especially if their grazing history is unknown. Also be aware that **dry cows turned out to grass** — in herds where the milkers are housed 365 days a year — may not have grazed for several seasons and can also be

susceptible due to loss of immunity.

Ideally, at-risk youngstock should be treated **a few weeks before housing**. Treating at housing can cause lungworms to die in the lungs and trigger **inflammatory pneumonia**.

Liver fluke is another concern. Cattle pick up fluke from wet pasture in late summer and early autumn, but signs often don't appear until winter. Choose products carefully — different flukicides target different stages. For example, **closantel-based products** only kill fluke that are 6+ weeks old, so treatment

maybe more effective a few weeks or months after housing, depending on pasture exposure.

Vaccination: Give Them Time to Respond

Pneumonia vaccines are most effective when given well before housing. Many require two doses, with protection developing only after the second. Don't forget IBR vaccination as part of your housing protocol. Aim to complete vaccination courses at least 2–3 weeks before housing, especially for youngstock and bought-in animals.

Minimise Stress Where You Can

Stress reduces immunity and increases disease risk. Avoid stacking stressful events. If you're planning to wean, castrate, dehorn or mix groups, aim to do these a few weeks before housing or stagger them. Letting animals recover in familiar surroundings helps reduce the disease load at housing.

And Finally...

If you're bringing in stock this autumn, isolate them, treat appropriately, and monitor closely. New animals can bring new bugs – prevention is far easier than cure.

Give us a call to plan your housing health strategy. A bit of prep now means fewer problems, better growth, and quieter sheds this winter.

CHECS Dairy BVD Negative scheme

With the ending of the BVD Free England scheme there is potentially a gap for herds that don't want or are unable to comply with full BVD accreditation but need to demonstrate BVD control for Red Tractor or purchasers. From October SRUC are running the Checs Dairy Negative scheme to plug this gap.



By Anne Abbs



Some of the strict biosecurity requirements for accreditation are reduced e.g. the need for double fencing. For this reason vaccination is strongly recommended for this scheme.

The testing consists of quarterly bulk milk samples which have to be taken by a vet (or delegated independent person) or milk recorder. Youngstock also need to be screened either by blood sampling representatives of each unvaccinated youngstock group or tag and test of all calves.

There are also controls on incoming animals which have to be tested individually either before they come onto the farm or within 40 days of arrival.

Additionally, if the added animal is pregnant at the time of purchase, her calf must be tested as soon as possible after birth in case she has been infected during pregnancy.

Milk is tested for virus by PCR which is highly sensitive but there is a limit to how many cows can contribute to the sample depending on which lab does the testing. In large herds this could mean using emergency/overflow tanks or milking groups in a different order to cover the entire milking herd.

All BVD results for the preceding 12 months must be declared at registration. Status is awarded after 12 months of negative tests including added animals.

If failures occur then the emphasis will change to one of investigation and elimination of any PI animals. Bulk milk can still be used to screen the adult milking herd but blood samples would be required for dry cows and any youngstock, heifers and bulls that are not tag and tested.

For more information have a chat with your vet to see if this scheme is suitable for your herd.



Image Caisley Tags

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