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APRIL 2023 NEWSLETTER

GRAZING OF DARTMOOR & NATURAL ENGLAND

We have recently been made aware of clients receiving notification from Natural England regarding the future of grazing livestock on Dartmoor: in brief, they have been told to radically reduce livestock on common land.

Offers of rollovers of existing Higher Level Stewardship Schemes have been made, but these will not allow any winter grazing, and summer grazing must also be reduced, by an average of 75%. Even those not making use of Stewardship schemes will be affected if the land is designated as SSSI. This will obviously have significant impacts upon the viability of those farms affected, with significant knock-on effects to the local community and businesses.

There was a Radio 4 Farming Today report on this on 17th March which is still available online if you wish to hear more. North Park is collaborating with the other main vet practices that serve Dartmoor to lend our support to the Dartmoor Commoners Associations to challenge this instruction from Natural England. If you will be affected by these changes, please contact Jonathan. Only through widespread collaboration will any challenge succeed.

OUT ON THE ROAD

As always, we have been very busy this spring. There have been several sheep abortion investigations as per normal, but we have seen some more unusual causes this year, including Salmonella and Border Disease Virus, alongside the “usual suspects” of enzootic abortion, toxoplasmosis and campylobacter.

We had a particularly busy afternoon a few weeks ago with a uterine prolapse and two cow caesareans all coming in at once. One of the caesareans was required due to the pictured calf – that was never coming out the back end! All of the vets were amazed at the size of the head, with none of us ever seeing one quite as dramatic as this – certainly a “once in your career” event.

Thanks to our team of Approved TB Testers (ATTs), we were able to attend all of these emergencies without disruption to other work, including TB tests. Our ATTs are key for us to be able to deliver the increased volume of testing that has come from 6-monthly statutory TB testing. There simply are not enough vets in the country to do all the TB testing without them, and all farm vet practices are now using ATTs. All our ATTs – Charmaine, Ashleigh and Julie – have undergone rigorous training, audits and examination and have been approved by APHA to undertake TB tests to the same standard as vets. We therefore expect all our clients to accept ATTs as equal to vets for TB testing. We will not always be able to guarantee a vet for your TB test, and other vet work such as PDs may have to occasionally be arranged for another visit with a vet.



COBALT/ VITAMIN B12 DEFICIENCY IN LAMBS is a common problem, and one we are increasingly seeing. Cobalt is converted into Vitamin B12 in the rumen, an essential vitamin for growth, general health and wool production. Often ewes on the same pasture do not have a deficiency, as their demands are much less than in lambs. Cobalt is a non-essential mineral in grass and when growing rapidly takes up very little cobalt from soil. Furthermore, heavy winter rainfall (sounds familiar?!) leads to extensive leaching of cobalt from soil and greater rates of vit B12 deficiency in lambs in the subsequent summer. Clover and herbal leys have much higher concentrations of cobalt than permanent pasture or reseeded rye grass, so dependent on your farm situation you may be more (or less) susceptible to problems.

Prevention of vit B12 deficiency can involve bolusing lambs (but this also contains iodine and selenium, which may not be required, and cannot be given until 20kg bodyweight, which maybe too late). Oral drenching is cheap and effective, but this only lasts for 3 weeks (labour intensive). A useful alternative that we are seeing good results with is **Smartshot B12**. This is a long acting injection, given once to lambs from 4 weeks of age (ahead of problems) at a dose of 0.5ml or 1ml/lamb depending on whether you are fattening or retaining breeding. It is only available in 500ml bottles at £378 + VAT (76 pence per lamb @ 1ml dose) and requires a Special Import Certificate from New Zealand. *Contact us if you would like any more information.*

Due to production issues, **Pen/Strep** is unavailable until at least the end of April. We will advise you as to the most suitable alternative on a case-by-case basis. In some instances, the product may require refrigeration.

GET AHEAD OF BLOWFLY STRIKE & NUISANCE FLIES to reduce the likelihood of associated clinical diseases (strike, summer mastitis, New Forest Eye disease, etc.) by putting in prevention strategies from now on. For **cattle**, topical permethrin (e.g. **Flypor**) has 8 weeks action or deltamethrin (e.g. **Dectospot**) typically offers 4-8 weeks of protection. Alternatively, **Electron Fly Tags** (cypermethrin) can be applied to the ear, with one tag *usually* sufficient to achieve acceptable levels of fly control throughout the season. For **sheep**, the **CLiK range** is an effective preventative if given in a timely manner and applied correctly with the fan-spray nozzle. Where broader ectoparasite prevention is also required, such as tick control, **ectofly or crovect** can also be used in sheep. *Speak to us today for information as to the most suitable products and strategy for your farm. We are now also supplying these products on a next day basis.*

The Government has just opened up applications for new **Animal Health and Welfare Grants**. These grants, of between £1,000 and £25,000, go towards the cost of items from a list which are designed to improve the health and welfare of your livestock. More details, include links to application, can be found here <https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2023/03/23/animal-health-and-welfare-grants-apply-now/>

RED TRACTOR HEALTH & PERFORMANCE REVIEWS – For many of you spring is the busiest times of the year and red tractor paperwork isn't high on your list of priorities. The same counts for our vets for who the last couple of months have been exceptionally busy. That's why we ask you to let us know well in advance if your red tractor paperwork needs to be done.

A Health plan and performance records need to be filled out beforehand. The correct, up to date paperwork is available in all north park branches or you can print it at home from the Red Tractor website. After you have filled these out you can drop them back in to a branch so the vet can read through before the actual review. If you haven't had a vet on farm during the year we will have to come out for the review, otherwise we could meet you in the surgery as well. All reviews should be conducted in person however, to facilitate a useful and proper discussion.



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