



FARM NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2024

FLUKE AND WORM DIAGNOSTICS WHILE TB TESTING



Many farms in this area are required to TB test on a 6 monthly basis. While this may be frustrating when testing dates do not line up easily with housing times, gathering the cattle can provide opportunity for management tasks such as vaccination, bolusing and parasite treatments. The 2-day TB skin test, with 72 hours gap in-between, does lend itself to diagnostic testing. Especially at this time of year, **testing the dung for evidence of fluke and worm burden on day 1** can be helpful information for decision making on day 2 of the test. All medicines with withdrawal times must be given after the TB test has been read as clear for each animal and we strongly advise against any unnecessary treatments at all on day 1, due to the risk of interference

with the TB test. Worm egg counts can be carried out in-house at any NPVG branch and we aim to report all **results on the same day** as receiving the sample. Fluke testing may also be carried out in-house, but the age, type of cattle, clinical signs and time of year may indicate that **copra-antigen testing** by an external laboratory will be more sensitive and reliable. External lab fluke testing has an approximate turnaround of 2-3 days, thereby leaving some time to choose and source appropriate anti-parasitic treatments. Both tests are **financially-friendly, effective** measurements of parasite burden and becoming increasingly **valuable to the long-term management of pasture**. So, hold off buying the wormer/ flukicide, make the most out of the requirement to gather the cattle for inspection. If found to have low burdens, you **could save time, money** and reduce the risk of farm-specific parasites becoming **resistant to treatments**.

STAGGERS WARNING We have recently attended several cases of grass staggers in cattle, occurring when the **grass is lush (in Spring and Autumn)**. Cattle that are susceptible include **cows close to calving or recently calved** with young calves at foot, and occasionally cows that are sick for other reasons e.g. redwater, poor body condition etc. There is some breed susceptibility, but all breeds can be affected. Magnesium levels are very poorly maintained by ruminant's metabolism so a short supply in the grass, paired with a high demand from late pregnancy or peak lactation can cause the characteristic "stagging". Affected cattle can appear **more aggressive, tremor, collapse and have seizure-like movements**. Cases need **urgent treatment with injectable magnesium**, ideally a measured amount in the vein, followed up with a bottle under the skin. Prevention methods include **magnesium flakes in the water or feeding roughage/ silage in the field**.



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BLUETONGUE UPDATE: As of 30th September 2024, 109 confirmed cases of Bluetongue have been reported, with restriction zones in **East Riding of Yorkshire, City of Kingston upon Hull, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Greater London, Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex and part of Hampshire**. Two days earlier, a case was reported in the **Bath and North East Somerset area**; the affected premises are now under restriction, and the infected animals have been culled. The APHA has stressed the importance of **biosecurity** measures to mitigate further outbreaks.

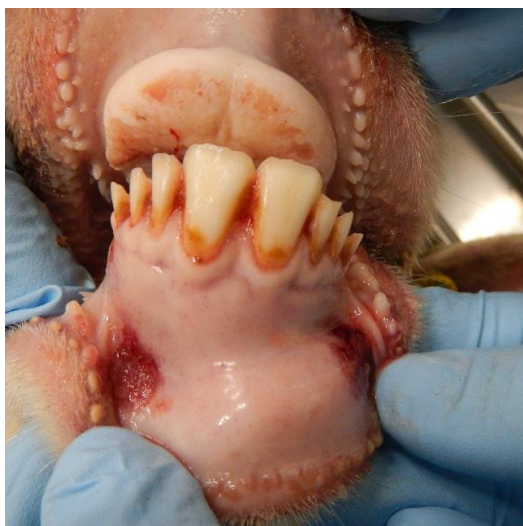
Key Symptoms:

In sheep: Symptoms tend to be **more apparent in sheep** and can include:

- Ulcers or sores in the mouth and nose
- Drooling/ discharge from the eyes or nose
- Swelling of the lips, tongue, head and neck, and at the coronary band (where the skin of the leg meets the horn of the foot)
- Reddened skin
- Fever
- Lameness
- Breathing difficulties

In cattle: Be vigilant for symptoms such as:

- Lethargy
- Crusty erosions around nostrils and muzzle
- Redness around the mouth, eyes, nose, teats or above the hoof
- Nasal discharge
- Fever
- Milk drop
- Loss of appetite



Instances of **abortion, foetal deformities, stillbirths, weak or small newborns, or death within a few days of birth** should also raise suspicion. For further details, please visit the APHA website: www.gov.uk/government/collections/bluetongue-information.

At present, there are no movement restrictions in place in the Devon area, but it is important to remain vigilant. If you have any concerns about your herd or flock, please contact us.

REGISTERING YOUR BIRDS – DEADLINE 1st OCTOBER 2024

The deadline to register your birds with DEFRA and the APHA, a regulation introduced to monitor and reduce the spread of Avian Flu, has now passed. If you keep any birds, excluding parrots or budgerigars that are housed entirely indoors, they should have been registered via the government website by the 1st October 2024.



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