



AUGUST 2025

Potential Increased Disease Risks Related to the Hot and Dry Weather

With the period of prolonged hot weather impacting on forage levels and quality, there is an increased risk of certain infectious and non-infectious diseases. An APHA VIC and a partner postmortem provider have both recently diagnosed mortality due to **Hemlock Water Dropwort** poisoning. The tubers of this plant (known as dead man's fingers) can become exposed when the levels of watercourses drop, or when soil is disturbed or eroded. A shortage of grass can also lead to the ingestion of this and other toxic plants such as **bracken fern and ragwort**.



The APHA surveillance network has also recently diagnosed cases of blackleg and we have had other cases reported to us. Soil erosion, and hot dry weather, can both be risk factors for clostridial disease and for anthrax.

Anthrax, blackleg, and plant poisonings should all be considered as differential diagnoses in acute onset illness and mortality cases in ruminants out at grass. It is advisable to check pasture for these risk factors and consider moving animals, fencing off high risk areas, and vaccinating for clostridial disease.

Legal Position on Transport of Cows using Shackles

APHA have recently written a letter to alert vets to the above issue. They have been made aware of this issue by OV's working for the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in abattoirs. They have identified multiple occasions where cows were transported using/wearing shackles, sometimes over long distances and taking several hours to reach their destination. In some instances, cows became recumbent during transport and were unable to stand back up at the abattoir. To protect cattle welfare, they are reminding farmers and vets of the legal requirements for cattle transport in GB:

'It is an offence to transport any animal in a way which causes, or is likely to cause, injury or unnecessary suffering to that animal... No animal shall be transported unless it is fit for the intended journey, and all animals shall be transported in conditions guaranteed not to cause them injury or unnecessary suffering.'

The use of shackles can have an important role in the treatment and management of down and injured cows on farm. **However, where they are relied upon to support a cow when it is walking, then that animal is not to be considered fit for transport.**

A cow in shackles is more at risk of falling during transport, and is likely to find it difficult to stand again. Additionally, the cow will have increased difficulty during loading and unloading due to the angle of the ramps into the vehicle.

Within the regulations there is a section which would allow for example transport of an injured cow a short distance from an out farm, back to the home farm for treatment, nursing and care.

In summary, **cattle that need shackles are not fit for transport to slaughter.** Those that suffer an injury where the use of shackles aids management and supports recovery should remain on farm till they are fully recovered and fit for transport unassisted. If not, on-farm culling should be considered.

Risk Of Parasites in Lambs and Ewes

The weather has become more mixed with some very hot dry spells and also some periods of heavy rainfall.

- This creates the ideal conditions for worm larvae to survive and migrate up the grass stem, increasing the risk of ingestion by grazing lambs.
- After a prolonged dry spell, large numbers of immature worms may be present and cause significant clinical disease before a high faecal egg count (FEC) is detected, particularly with nematodirus.
- Therefore, assessing lamb and ewe body condition, clinical evidence of disease and performance as well as FECs is really important.

Our advice to farmers is critically assess lamb performance and growth rates, have a zero tolerance of scouring and **'test don't guess'** - monitor FECs on a regular basis. We are seeing more cases of Haemonchus (Barber's Pole Worm) in ewes, than ever before, so if ewes are not doing well, take a sample to check if they are at risk of this serious disease.



Faecal Worm Egg Count Offer: Submit 4 counts and get the 5th FREE

Please submit samples during office hours. Samples can be submitted on different days. Includes cattle, sheep, goats and alpacas. Promotion running until 31st December 2025

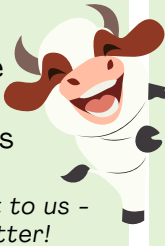
Quarterly Prize Draw: Summer Winner

The winner of the summer quarterly prize draw is Mr. G Evans who will receive a £30 credit on his account. To be in with a chance of winning next time, and to get all the latest information about meetings, new products and special offers, please sign up for one of our Whatsapp groups or join the email list for the monthly NADIS parasite forecasts.

Joke of the Month

Why do cows never have any money?
Because the farmer milks them dry!

If you know a good joke, please send it to us - you might see it in our next newsletter!



Royal Welsh Show

Congratulations to our clients who won prizes at this year's Royal Welsh Show. This year Farm First Vets was associated with two awards presented at the show by Arwain DGC, a project that



looks at various ways of reducing the use of antimicrobials in sheep, cattle and horses. Jane Anscombe was presented with the Livestock Vet of the year for antibiotic stewardship, and one of our clients, Messrs Watkins, Upper House Farm were presented with the Livestock Farmer Award for putting in place management changes which have enabled them to reduce their antibiotic use significantly.



Charity Sports Day

On Wednesday 3rd September the team will attempt to travel the length of Wales (170 miles) within the working day to raise money for Alzheimer's Charity.

Come to the surgery to help us reach our target on the rowing machine, bike or running machine!



Raffle Winner

During June and July we held a raffle in aid of Alzheimer's Charity raising money as part of the 20th Anniversary of XL Vets. The winner was Howard White of Portfield Farm. We hope he enjoys tucking into his BBQ Box from Beavan's Butchers.

Upcoming Meetings

If you would like to book your place at an upcoming meeting please phone the office on 01873 840167.

Wednesday 12th August: Faecal Egg Count Day with Farming Connect
at Monmouthshire Livestock Market, NP15 2BH

