FARM FIRST VETS NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2025

Long Bone Deformities in Beef Herds

During the spring calving season of 2025, SRUC were involved with several cases of long bone deformity (LBD) in suckler herds, and this is something that we have also seen in herds in this area in the past.

LBD presents at birth, with affected calves being born with dwarfism and shortening of the long bones. Some joints often have restricted movement and other joints are lax. Other clinical signs that can be present include doming of the skull and jaw deformities. Some calves are stillborn, but many are born alive and are either unable to stand or are not able to be reared due to the extent of the limb deformities and require euthanasia. At the stage the calves are born there is nothing we can do, however late autumn around housing and diet change for suckler cows is the time to act!

It is hard to predict future risk, but here are some points to consider:

- LBD has been associated with suckler cow diet during months 4-5 of gestation when the bones and joints are developing in the foetus.
- A suspected cause is that Manganese (Mn) deficiency in the dam during this critical period is linked to the condition.
- It is thought that an (as yet) unknown factor within grass silage stops the absorption of Mn even though the dietary analysis for Mn in the silage is adequate.
- It is more commonly associated with feeding pit silage (higher quality, fast growing grass and wetter silages) than big bale silage or hay.
- Red clover silages have also been found to have higher predisposition to LBD.

Strategies to help prevent LBD risk for 2026 include:

- Blood sampling cows 1 week after the start of the Winter ration to assess cow Mn levels.
- Feeding a maximum ratio of 75% grass silage to 25% straw.
- Avoid higher quality, wetter pit silages during the critical stage of foetal development.
- Supplement with dietary minerals with a higher inclusion rate for Mn (cows need 1000mg Mn per day), this requires feeding a supplement with an inclusion rate of 7000mg/kg or by using targeted Mn supplementation via injection.

If you would like to have your cows tested after housing, please give us call. We have an injectable product available, Multimin, which contains Manganese.

Bluetongue Update

From **10th November** an **All-Wales Bluetongue Restricted Zone** will come into place. Among other things this will revoke the existing Monmouthshire control zone and remove all Bluetongue movement controls between England and Wales. Vaccination is still strongly recommended as blood sampling and surveillance is revealing active circulation of the virus in this area. For more information visit: https://www.gov.wales/bluetongue-virus-btv

New TB Rules

From **1st January 2026:**

- All standard interpretation IRs in Wales that have a negative result on re-testing will be restricted for the rest of their life to their current holding.
- The only permitted off movements for such animals will be to slaughter either directly or via an Approved Finishing Unit (AFU) under an individual or general licence issued by APHA.
- Movements of resolved standard IRs to AFUs can occur directly or via a TB Dedicated Sale (Orange Market). Movement to slaughter can occur directly or via an Approved Slaughter Gathering.
- Resolved standard IRs will be restricted following their clear re-test and keepers will receive a restriction notice in the post.

Ovine Pulmonary Adenocarcinoma (OPA)

OPA, also known as Jaagsiekte, is a transmissible viral disease of sheep which causes lung tumours. As these tumours grow they impair lung function and secrete large volumes of fluid. OPA is spread through the aerosol route but also through colostrum and milk. Over time, sheep with OPA lose condition and develop progressive respiratory signs, often leading to respiratory distress and eventually death. The disease is most commonly observed in 3-4 year old sheep but can be seen in sheep less than a year old.

Ultrasonography can be used to differentiate chronic lung lesions in adult sheep including detection of OPA lesions as small as 2cm in diameter. Transthoracic ultrasound examination can be used to support an initial diagnosis of OPA, for screening purchased adult flock replacements for OPA or for screening sheep in a known OPA-affected flock.

Detection of OPA lesions by ultrasound examination allows culling at an earlier stage than recognition of clinical signs by the farmer and enables culling while the sheep is still in good body condition, fit to travel and has greater value for slaughter. In addition, the ability to identify affected animals using ultrasound scanning reduces transmission of OPA as tumours are picked up quicker, before OPA is spread to other sheep in the flock.

Scanning for OPA before weaning allows the farmer to identify which lambs belong to any positive ewes (if they were not recorded at birth), so that they are not kept as replacements. Young lambs are highly susceptible to OPA infection, therefore removing any lambs born to positive ewes will decrease the chances of keeping infected animals in the flock.

National Johne's Management Plans

If you haven't had your plan updated for 2025, this will need to be done by the end of the year. There have been changes to the scheme this year. If you don't carry out regular screening of your herd throughout the year, you will need to test 60 cows (or the whole herd if it is less than 60 cows).

Key changes for Phase III include:

- All herds are required to obtain an Average Test Value (ATV) for their herd to help assess the level of disease present and allow progress to be tracked over time.
- The minimum requirement to generate an ATV will be a 60-cow random screen. The 30-cow targeted screen is no longer an acceptable option.
- The creation of a national Johne's Control Index target of ATV 5.5 with a goal to achieve this by 2030.
- The ability, through the creation of a national Johne's Tracker database, to track progress nationally using ATV, % incidence and other drivers of infection within herds.

Joke of the Month

What do you call a cow in an earthquake?

A milkshake

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

Upcoming Meetings

Tuesday 11th November 7pm - Smarter Antibiotic Use
Kindly sponsored by Arwain DGC. Monmouthshire Livestock Market, NP15 2BH

Friday 14th November 11am - Mastering Medicines
The Bryn Village Hall, The Bryn, Abergavenny NP7 9AP

Thursday 20th November 7pm - NADIS: Understanding Johne's Disease
Monmouthshire Livestock Market, NP15 2BH

Thursday 4th December 7pm - NADIS: Sheep Parasite Control Scab, Lice and Liver Fluke
Monmouthshire Livestock Market, NP15 2BH

If you would like to book onto a meeting please phone the office on 01873 840167

IMPORTANT

Do not give yellow drench at the same time as dipping sheep. Leave at least 2 weeks between.