

## You catch the ewe but what did you catch from her?

As farmers you spend a lot of time handling stock, especially around lambing/calving time. Equally you consider all the diseases that can infect your animals but how often do you stop and consider your own health particularly what nasty diseases your stock can pass to you? If you employ staff or run an "open" farm for the public to have access to, you have certain responsibilities regarding their health and safety, including risk assessment of contracting zoonotic diseases.

"Zoonotic diseases" simply means diseases which can be passed between animals and humans. Frequently, they cause very mild disease, but some can be more serious. Most conditions pass directly from the cow/sheep/pig to the person, but some require an intermediate host e.g. Toxoplasmosis is caught from the cat faeces, rather than the sheep. Table 1, below outlines many of the zoonotic diseases of livestock and humans, along with whether they are viral, bacterial or parasitic. It also highlights some of the clinical signs the infections can cause in both species.

### How do you contract them?

There are several ways of catching an infection from animals and many diseases can be spread by more than one route:

- Direct contact with an infected animal's fluids such as faeces, placenta, or saliva. This can be by accidental ingestion of faeces through poor hand washing, bites or scratches, or contamination of an open wound or inhalation. Most of the pathogens that cause diarrhoea are often spread by ingestion of faeces.
- Indirect contact whereby there has been no direct contact with the animal, but the pathogen has been transmitted on an object such as contaminated clothing or equipment.
- Vector-borne is normally when insects such as ticks or midges carry the disease then transmit it when they bite the host.
- Food-borne is when food/water is either contaminated with the pathogen or the actual product itself is infected i.e. bovine TB in raw milk.

DISEASE	PATHOGEN	SIGNS IN HUMANS	SIGNS IN ANIMALS
Campylobacter	Bacteria	Fever, Vomiting, Diarrhoea, Stomach Pains	Diarrhoea, Abortion
Cryptosporidium	Protozoa	Fever, Vomiting, Diarrhoea, Stomach Pains	Diarrhoea
Ecoli 0157	Bacteria	Diarrhoea, Stomach Pain, Septicaemia	Diarrhoea, Septicaemia
Giardiasis	Protozoa	Diarrhoea, Stomach Pain	Diarrhoea
Enzootic Abortion	Bacteria	Flu-like symptoms, miscarriage of pregnancy	Abortion
Orf	Virus	Skin lesions	Skin lesions
Q Fever	Bacteria	Flu-like symptoms, chronic disease, miscarriage of pregnancy	Poor fertility, abortions
Salmonellosis	Bacteria	Fever, Vomiting, Diarrhoea, Stomach Pains	Diarrhoea, septicaemia, fever
Toxoplasmosis	Protozoa	Flu-like symptoms, miscarriage of pregnancy, birth defects, eye disease.	Abortion

### Who is at risk?

Anyone can be infected with a zoonotic disease but not all will succumb to the infection or show symptoms. People who are most at risk of developing a zoonosis are those who have lower immunity, namely young children, elderly people, people suffering another disease, pregnant women and people with suppressed immune systems either through disease such as HIV or AIDS or caused by treatments such as chemotherapy. These groups of people should be particularly careful when in contact with animals.

### How to protect yourself

The most effective way to protect yourself from picking up a zoonotic infection is to wash your hands with warm water and soap after handling animals, especially before eating or drinking. Unfortunately, this is one of the most common tasks yet a lot of us probably don't do it for long enough. Hand wipes, gels or sanitisers should not be used as a substitute for soap. Another simple way to limit exposure is to not eat or drink when working with animals. Other ways to reduce the risk is to ensure that vulnerable people avoid touching animals, especially those which are unwell or giving birth.

### What if you think you or someone else has picked up a zoonotic disease?

If you are concerned that your, or someone who has been on your farm, may have contracted a zoonotic disease please contact your GP or call NHS England (Dial 111) or NHS Direct Wales (Dial 0845 46 47). They can give you advice on health care and treatments where necessary.

Further information can be found via the [National Health Service \(NHS\)](#), [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) and [Animal and Plant Health Agency \(APHA\)](#).

# PLANT POISONINGS

Over the last few weeks, APHA have diagnosed both ragwort and hemlock water dropwort poisoning (HWD). Both types of plant poisonings have been diagnosed in cattle and in pigs. Anecdotal reports suggest that it has been a good year for both of these plants.

Ragwort is a good plant for wildlife, and this may have led to the resurgence of this plant seen over the last few years, particularly on verges and around field margins. It is associated with disease when typically gathered in silage or hay, however consumption of the growing plant is also a recognised risk. Clinical signs of poisoning include weight loss, oedema, and diarrhoea, with raised liver parameters on biochemistry testing.



HWD tends to grow in wet areas around field margins, and near ditches and streams. The roots (multiple cream-coloured tubers) can become exposed after ditching work, heavy rains, or flooding. Clinical signs include sudden death and neurological signs with plant sections often identifiable in stomach contents.

## USK SHOW

As usual, we will have our stand at Usk Show, and we would love to see you at some point during the day. Please call in for a chat and some refreshments – our trade stand number is E57. We are really looking forward to it!

### \* STAFF NEWS \*

Congratulations to our vet, Eleri Davies and Tom Vaughan on their recent wedding! Eleri Vaughan, as she will now be known, is also joining Rob, Jane and Vicky as one of the directors of the practice on 1st September 2023, with a view to her becoming a shareholder in the future.



## JOKE TIME!!!

There's a fine line between success and failure in international rugby. It's called Hadrian's Wall.

## SPOTINOR FOR LICE, TICKS & BLOW FLY

Spotinor is a topical product for use in cattle and sheep. It is used for the treatment and prevention of infestations by lice and flies on cattle; keds and established blow fly strike on sheep; lice and ticks on lambs. Please call in or telephone us to place an order.



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