



The Christmas Edition



FARM FIRST NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2022

FARMING CONNECT CLINICS

Farming Connect Clinics are back for clients who live in Wales. Registered farms are allowed one £250 clinic per farm to cover the cost of testing and follow-up advice. At this time of year there are a number of useful tests which could be carried out.

1. **Sentinel Testing for Liver Fluke:** blood samples from 5 spring-born lambs or calves to see if they have been exposed to liver fluke. These youngstock act as the indicators for the rest of the animals – if they haven't been exposed, other stock on that area will not need to be treated.
2. **Worm and Fluke Egg Counts:** particularly useful in thin lambs or ewes, or to carry out post drench checks.
3. **Trace Element Tests:** blood samples can be taken to check whether there are any deficiencies in your stock that are affecting fertility, growth rates or general health.
4. **Barren Ewe Checks:** blood sample barren ewes after scanning for infectious causes of infertility, as well as Trace Element status.
5. **Bacteriology:** mastitis cases, watery mouth cases, pneumonia in cattle and sheep.
6. **Calf Pneumonia:** new sampling techniques can be used in fresh cases (see overleaf). This can help us to pinpoint exactly which diseases are present in your herd.
7. **Post Mortem:** often a very useful way to diagnose what is going on in a herd or flock. Fresh carcasses are required.
8. **Ewe Metabolic Profiles:** bloods taken in the last 3-4 weeks before lambing to check energy and protein levels are adequate. This is vital to ensure good colostrum production, enable lamb growth, reduce mastitis risk and avoid Twin Lamb Disease.
9. **Mobility Scoring of Cattle and Sheep** – a useful way to get a vet out to give specific advice on reducing the lameness in your stock
10. **Teat Scoring** - mastitis control advice can be given after a parlour visit.
11. **Thin Ewe Testing** - if you have thin ewes in your flock, they can be tested for the Iceberg Diseases – Johnes, OPA and MV.
12. **Johnes Screening in Cattle** – but not for assurance schemes.

If you would like more information on any of the above tests or would like to book a clinic, please call us on 01873 840167.

The funding has a limit, so it is first come, first served.



FARMING
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08456 000 813

MATT TRICKS

Many of you will have met Matt Tricks who carried out TB testing for us over the last year. We recently received the very sad news from his wife, that Matt had died suddenly from acute pancreatitis while leading a cycling tour in France. Matt was well liked by both staff and clients, and we have sent our heartfelt condolences to his wife and the rest of his family.



CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS

Friday 23rd December - 8:15am to 5.30pm

Christmas Day and Boxing Day - closed

Tuesday 27th - closed

Wed 28th to Friday 30th - 8:15am to 5:30pm

New Years Day and 2nd January - closed

Open as usual from
Tuesday, 3rd January

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AVIAN FLU RULES

2022 is unfortunately notable for yet another reason, with the failure of Avian Influenza (AI), commonly known as Bird Flu, to disappear through the summer months.



The symptoms of Bird Flu can be varied, but most often and worrying would be a sudden increase in bird deaths. Other vaguer signs are possible, and include discoloured faeces or diarrhoea, neurological signs such as lack of coordination and twitching, changes in appetite, drinking, egg laying or activity as well as other signs of ill health. It's worth noting that waterfowl such as ducks and geese are more resistant to Bird Flu and less likely to show severe clinical signs or deaths.

If you have concerns about your own birds then please call your avian vet. If they cannot rule out Bird Flu, then they will report it immediately to APHA as the disease is notifiable and there is a legal requirement to report any suspicions. Should you find one or more dead birds of prey, 3 or more dead gulls or wild waterfowl (swans, geese and ducks) or 5 or more dead birds of any species, then call the Defra helpline on 03459 335577 and they may arrange collection and testing if concerned. It is important not to handle dead or sick birds due to the health risk of Bird Flu to human health. In England it is already a legal requirement to house birds, although good housing maintenance is key to stop even the smallest songbirds getting in. New compulsory biosecurity and housing requirements were introduced for poultry and captive birds in Wales from Friday 2 December. It is a legal requirement for all keepers to keep their birds indoors or otherwise separated from wild birds. All keepers must also complete and act upon a bespoke biosecurity review of the premises where birds are kept. Follow this link to go to the compulsory biosecurity review: <https://gov.wales/mandatory-biosecurity-self-assessment-checklist>

Pneumonia – New Tests , Vaccines and How to Treat

Testing

We have been carrying out a new form of testing over the last couple of years, which has proved very successful at finding out exactly which pathogens are causing the pneumonia on a farm. This PCR test is carried out on a small amount of fluid which is flushed into the lungs and then sucked back out again. The fluid is tested for 7 causes of calf pneumonia. The tests can also be carried out on post mortem samples (ideally fresh cases, not ones that have been ill for 2 weeks) and swabs. The problem with nasal swabs is that some of the bacteria are present in the nose and throat of normal calves, so isolating them does not mean that they are the cause of the problem.

Vaccines

Coupled with this, there are also some new vaccines available, which cover Histophilus and Mycoplasma, both common causes of pneumonia. If we can get an accurate diagnosis as to the cause of a problem, we can provide a bespoke vaccination programme for your farm, which may include one of these new vaccines. However, it is important to remember that improving the environment is the first step in pneumonia control – vaccines can't work well in the face of extreme challenge.

Treatment

Just a reminder that the most important aspect of pneumonia treatment is the ANTI- INFLAMMATORY DRUG. These medicines:

1. Reduce tissue damage- less long -term effect on growth rates.
2. Reduce pain - pneumonia is painful, this helps to keep them eating.
3. Reduces fever – also helps to keep them eating.

Many cases of calf pneumonia are viral, and antibiotics have no effect at all on these organisms. Some mild cases of pneumonia can be treated with anti-inflammatories only. The best products to use if antibiotics are required are the combination products, e.g. Zeleris or Draxxin Plus. These have faster rates of uptake into the lung and Draxxin Plus costs the equivalent of Draxxin and Metacam.



We wish all our clients a
Merry Christmas
and a Prosperous New Year

!!! JOKE TIME !!!
Why did The Grinch rob the off licence?
He was desperate for some holiday spirit!