



With the UK into the 5<sup>th</sup> week of lock down there are a few talking points on how coronavirus is impacting us and farming businesses that we visit. By and large the day to day on the farms we visit has not changed and everyone is just getting on with the various spring jobs that, luckily, the weather has been pretty kind for. Thanks to everyone who has cooperated with our attempts to work at safe social distances. This is much appreciated and is essential if we are going to do our bit for minimising the spread of the disease. Whilst I don't know anyone personally that has been severely affected the impact is much wider than that and having family members that work in the medical profession, their professional and personal lives have been affected pretty severely.

The wider issues that the country will need to deal with is the major financial upheaval, most noticeable for those of us in agriculture in terms of the strange behaviour of the milk and meat markets and the industry readjusts to

the altered consumption patterns of the products that you produce and, to a lesser extent, the impact of the virus and government measures on the processing and logistics of the food industry.

Our accountants have been monitoring a large group of vet practices and how incomes have been affected and the small animal, equine and farm animal sectors have all been affected in terms of incomes. We have noticed a bit of a downturn but its hard to know if that's because everyone is out on their tractors as much as possible to make the most of the good weather.

Despite all this, farm life carries on and it's a busy time for advice calls on turnout management, seasonal vaccinations, pre-turnout jobs such as dehorning and castration (and we have been able to do this with good social distancing) and our usual planned health work, oh and I almost forgot..... delivering potatoes..... don't ask!

**Ben**

#### SEEKING PARTICIPANTS FOR RESEARCH PROJECT (Laura)

This is from Laura who worked with us up until Autumn last year. She is now doing a PhD on Johnes in sheep and beef and it would be great if you could help out!

The University of Liverpool is running a project to investigate Johnes' disease on UK beef and sheep farms. Ovine Johnes' disease is much more common than most people realise and this project will investigate the risk factors and effect of the disease on the productive lifespan of ewes and farm economics. Furthermore, little research has been done on cross species transmission and a major aim of this project is to better understand the risk posed by sheep to cattle for Johnes' infection and vice versa.

We would like to invite sheep only, beef only and mixed beef and sheep farms to participate in this practical research, whether you think you have Johnes' on your farm or not. If you wish to take part, please complete the short questionnaire which can be found here, <https://liverpool.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/johnes-disease-copy> along with further information about the project and a consent form. A follow up, free of charge visit for flock and/or herd-level sampling and further data collection will be arranged for later in the year for approximately 100 suitable farms. Each enrolled farm will receive a detailed diagnostic report from the samples collected, free of charge. Please feel free to email Laura Taylor at [L.Taylor11@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:L.Taylor11@liverpool.ac.uk) for further information.

#### Nematodirus (Maarten)

With the rise in temperatures **Nematodirus** eggs excreted last year are hatching and posing a threat to grazing lambs from 4-6 weeks of age. As damage is done by the immature stages losses can be seen before eggs can be picked up with worm egg counting. Symptoms seen in young lambs vary from profuse watery scour to death due to dehydration. As lambs develop an age related immunity symptoms are rarely seen in lambs older than 3 months of age apart from rare outbreaks in the autumn.

Prevention is based on avoiding to graze young lambs on pasture grazed by young lambs the year before. As this is not always feasible prompt treatment with a White Drench (Benzimidazole) of lambs >4 weeks of age around now will help to minimize losses (poor growth/deaths) and pasture contamination. As animals are immune after their first grazing season ewes should not be included in this treatment.

Symptoms of Nematodirus should be differentiated to those of **coccidiosis** as the treatment is different. Coccidiosis is normally seen in slightly younger animals and is often associated with creep feeding and/or intensive conditions.

I have already seen lamb losses due to heavy **tick** infestations. Following a hot summer last year we have not had any frost this winter enough to kill off ticks. In particular on Downs grazing I have seen young lambs with in excess of 30 ticks on them. Although ticks can be vectors of other pathogens these current losses are down to blood loss. People should be very vigilant this year and keep up the ecto-parasite control. With this comes the **Blowfly** control. Early start of control before the fly population is established is key to avoid "chasing your tail" later in the season. A useful link is:

<https://www.scops.org.uk/workspace/pdfs/blowfly-product-options-table.pdf>



## Farming Community Network Support for Farmers and Farming Community

Mentioned last month but we think it is important to mention again that there is help out there if you need it. Although farm and market visits are off the cards, the FCN are continuing local support over the telephone via the helpline and have recruited additional helpline volunteers.

Please ask for help if you are struggling. Other charities include RABI and a full list is available on the AHDB website.

**Helpline: 03000 111 999 e-Helpline: [help@fcn.org.uk](mailto:help@fcn.org.uk)**

**Twitter: @FCNcharity Facebook: TheFarmingCommunityNetwork**

### Upcoming Events...

Our year planner is still slightly up in the air due to the current situation. We shall keep you informed with new dates as we can confirm them.

In the meantime if you have any subjects that you would like us to cover 'webinar' style for small groups, then please let us know.

- 'Where lesions come from' - Lameness with Nick Bell & AHDB (*cattle*) — **Postponed until end of June**
- MilkSure—(*dairy*) **Please let us know if you are interested in a virtual MilkSure course**
- Grasslands meeting—(*beef*) - Hampshire—**Postponed—Autumn**
- Full Artificial Insemination Course - (*cattle*) - **Postponed**
- Cow Signals (*cattle*)—Tuesday May 19th 10am—2pm— Webinar **TBC**
- Summer Sheep event (*sheep*)— June/July TBC
- Cattle genetics & Fertility basics— July 20—Hampshire

### Payments (Emily)

We would be very grateful if payments are done via bank transfer rather than cheque this month. Banks are providing online support to get online banking accounts set up to ensure we can carry on banking whilst social distancing /isolating. Thank you

### Pelvic measuring (Claire)

Pelvic measuring in heifers is a simple process where the height and width of the pelvis are recorded before pregnancy and this data is used to improve breeding practices. This is done using a Rice pelvimeter and the figure is compared against a known minimum normal internal area for either native or continental breeds of a certain age. It is known that pelvic area grows at a fairly constant rate from 9-24 months. Native breeds grow at about 8cm<sup>2</sup> per month and continentals at around 10cm<sup>2</sup> and a pelvic area of less than 140cm<sup>2</sup> at 13 months constitutes small.



Calf mortality is affected by calving and so anything that can be done to make the process as simple as possible should be. As well as pelvic measurements, calving ease can be improved by genetics of the bull, and age and body condition score of the heifer.

Calving problems cost money both directly in vet bills, labour, dead calves and injured cows, and also indirectly by reduced fertility, increased culling rate and cows that calve later in the calving pattern the following year.

Please get in contact if you'd like to chat about measuring your heifers.

### Fly Control (Anna)

With the good weather there has been an increase in the number of flies around, with some of you already having cases of fly strike. Flies are not only an annoyance to livestock but can also be vectors for transmitting diseases such as New Forest eye and Summer mastitis.

As the winter has been fairly mild and the warm weather starting early it is likely that we will see a long fly season, therefore it is important to implement fly control early to reduce the peak fly population further on in the season. It is therefore advised to have a fly control plan in place to ensure this.

The most crucial aspect in fly control is the environment and how it is managed. Flies are attracted to warm, moist organic matter, in these conditions eggs and larvae thrive – for example muck heaps, the edges of silage pits and calf housing. Reducing the presence of these sorts of areas by frequent cleaning, ensuring adequate drainage or possibly physically moving them away from livestock can help reduce the number of flies present.

Alongside good sanitation there are 4 further areas that can also be targeted to prevent fly nuisance, minimise transmission of disease and control the fly population:

1. Fly control treatments applied to the animal- for example using pour on insecticides, fly control ear tags and chemical misting sprays.
2. Disruption of the fly breeding cycle- larval growth regulator products can be applied to fly breeding sites to reduce the number of larvae present
3. Environmental fly contact killing products- these are products applied to fly resting areas, for examples on the walls of a livestock shed
4. Parasitic wasps—set up to feed on the fly larvae

