

## TB testing interval in the High-Risk Area (HRA)



The government announced a plan to change to six-monthly surveillance testing (instead of annual) for herds in the HRA of England back in 2018. Testing in Staffordshire and Shropshire changed in September 2020 and from 1st July 2021 the government will extend this change to the rest of the HRA. There will be exemption for those herds with low risk of a breakdown, but all others will be required to conduct whole-herd tests twice per year. Any affected farms will receive written notification from APHA in the next few weeks.

For more information about this and other TB related matters, the TB Hub website is well worth a visit: <https://tbhub.co.uk>

## SCOPS Nematodirus Forecast



The unusual weather this spring has made predicting the hatch of Nematodirus quite difficult, however luckily, we all have access to the Nematodirus forecast provided by SCOPS (Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep). We have two recording stations in our practice area – Rostherne (Knutsford) and Leek. The Rostherne station is probably quite representative of the farms in the western half of the practice area, whilst leek should represent the areas to the North and East of Macclesfield and into Derbyshire. Both stations currently indicate a medium risk but for very different reasons.

Those on lower farms at similar altitude to Rostherne (10m above sea level) have likely already experienced the largest hatch of worms, with larvae on pasture starting to die off. There can be a lot of variation from farm to farm, so don't think the risk is over – being aware and planning is still vital to avoid losses due to Nematodirus.

Farms at higher altitude are at moderate risk with the hatch likely in the next 7-14 days, particularly as weather conditions are set to improve. You need to assess the risk of the pasture – high if grazed by lambs last year - and if lambs are at a susceptible age (over 6 weeks old). It's important to note that north facing pastures and higher altitudes experience a later hatch, so take care to avoid treating too early. It can also vary massively from field to field. Doing a risk assessment with one of the vets can help plan to avoid Nematodirus in your lambs.

You can view the forecast at:

<https://www.scops.org.uk/forecasts/nematodirus-forecast/>

and can discuss any questions you have with any of the vets.

## Moredun Roundworm Animation – Test Don't Guess

As we move into the main roundworm season, we'd like to draw your attention to a great video created by the Moredun Foundation, highlighting the need to test, not guess when it comes to parasite control in both cattle and sheep.

*It can be viewed on YouTube at:*

<https://youtu.be/GF-KxpitrS0> or by searching 'Test don't guess' on YouTube. We will also share the video on our social media pages for you to view that way.

There is a second video following soon with a focus on ectoparasites like sheep scab and lice so keep a look out for that one.



## Laura's Big Break!



Those of you who receive the British Dairying magazine will have seen Laura featuring in an article about Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) and how they have helped with the provision of TB testing on farm. Bridget also gives her thoughts on the benefits to the practice of employing an ATT and we hope you'll agree that Laura does a great job.



## MAKING THE MOST OF NATURAL SERVICE

Whether your herd is dairy or beef a stock bull can form an important part of fertility management on your farm. However, it is not uncommon for natural service to achieve poor results. This article focuses on our top tips for getting the best from your bulls.

### Choose Wisely

Careful sire selection is essential. Consider what the purpose is of the bull you are buying and then look for bulls with appropriate Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) for that purpose. For example if you are buying a bull to use on heifers then selection for calving ease is key.

Ideally buy a bull directly from the farm rather than from market, this will hopefully allow you to choose from several bulls as well as assessing their temperament. It is also useful to see what the breeder has actually been feeding them- be wary of bulls fed large amounts of concentrates or cereals as these can predispose them to liver or feet issues.

It is also worth taking the time to have a look at the scrotum of the bull- scrotal circumference is directly correlated with fertility of the bull as well as having an influence on the fertility of his daughters.

Take time to question the breeder carefully regarding their health status- always buy from a herd with equal or better health status than your own. Remember that bulls purchased from accredited herds have very often not been vaccinated against BVD, Leptospirosis or IBR. This means that they are at high risk of developing disease if they come into contact with any of these diseases when moving to your farm. Bulls should be vaccinated prior to purchase if at all possible and quarantined for 4 weeks following arrival on your farm.

### Bull Breeding Soundness Examination



All bulls should have a bull breeding soundness examination carried out prior to purchase, or if this is not possible then within a month of purchase. This should be repeated prior to each breeding season as just because a bull has worked well in the past does not guarantee that he will work well again in the future. One in three bulls in the UK are estimated to be sub-fertile, meaning that whilst they will get cows in calf it will take them longer to do it resulting in an increase in calving to conception. In a beef herd this leads to an extended calving period making

management of both calves & cows more challenging and reducing profitability of the herd. In the dairy herd the increase in days open leads to a reduction in milk produced per cow per year, which again impacts on profitability.

The bull breeding soundness examination also includes palpation of the scrotum and testicles to detect any issues with these and measurement of scrotal circumference. Finally, semen is collected to assess sperm quality and motility.

**For all you spring calving herds, the time for semen testing your bulls is now! Give Hollie (07733 121545) or Helen (07733 121536) a ring, or either of the office numbers to get booked in ASAP!**

### Lameness

All bulls must be regularly mobility scored to ensure that they are not lame. Lameness is a very common cause of poor fertility as bulls with painful legs or backs won't want to serve cows. Lameness must be treated promptly and the bull allowed a rest period to recover before being expected to work again.

## Health Management

Bulls must be included in all routine herd health programmes such as vaccination and parasite treatments. Parasite management is particularly critical in young bulls who often won't have had a full season at grass before being brought onto your farm. This means that they are at high risk of gutworms, lungworm and liver fluke.

Remember that sperm production takes a full 60 days and is dependant on a stable body temperature. Any infection that results in a bull running a high temperature will impact on fertility, potentially for the following two months.

### Condition Scoring

The body condition score of stock bulls should be maintained at 2.5-3. A higher or lower BCS is likely to result in reduced semen production and poor libido.

Maintaining body condition is particularly important in young bulls who will often lose condition in their first season. Young bulls should be allowed to acclimatise to herd life before they are expected to work. They should then enter the breeding season on a rising plane of nutrition.

Any loss of condition should be investigated promptly. It could have a range of causes including parasite burden, disease or teeth issues.

### Breeding Observation

Regular monitoring and condition scoring of stock bulls throughout the breeding season is essential to achieving good results. Key points include:

- Observe mating to monitor libido and check for physical problems such as injuries to the penis.
- Record matings to give an indicator of potential returns-to-service or calving dates.
- Ensure that bulls are not expected to serve too many cows at any one time. It is recommended that bulls under 30 months of age should be put with one cow for every one month of age that they have.

AGE OF BULL	ADVISED COW NUMBERS
Under 2 years	15-20
2-3 years	20-30
Over 3 years	30-40

- Monitor bull mobility to detect lameness
- Monitor bull body condition and act promptly in cases of condition loss

### FARM OFFICES

#### Lower Withington

The Barn, Holly Tree Farm, Holmes Chapel Road,  
Lower Withington, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 9DT  
Tel: 01477 571000 Email: [hollytree@wmvets.co.uk](mailto:hollytree@wmvets.co.uk)

#### Whaley Bridge Farm Branch

Block B, Ringstones Industrial Estate,  
Whaley Bridge, High Peak, Derbyshire, SK23 7PD  
Tel: 01663 732564

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