

# Newsletter

Christmas 2024



## Introduction

As 2024 draws to a close, Sam has been hard at work decorating our new building for the festive season! If you haven't had the chance to visit us at Laughton yet, we're now the first building on the right as you come up the drive to the Large Animal Department- no longer just the equine clinic!

We'd like to thank everyone for your patience as we settled into the new space and navigated the transition to our updated computer system. This upgrade has brought us firmly into the 21st century, enabling the vets to use tablets on-farm, print drug labels, and send batch number documents by email.

Merry Christmas from all of us!

PS. Here's one to get you in the festive spirit:  
What do you call a cow that works for Santa?  
A Ho-ho-holstein.



## Dates for your diary



### Heptavac P + Days for Smallholders

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2025



Friday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025



### Mastering Medicine Course

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025



### Youngstock Programme – Dairy Clients

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Please call or email the office with any interest to our forthcoming events.

T: 01273 473232

E: [farmenquiries@cliffevets.co.uk](mailto:farmenquiries@cliffevets.co.uk)



# Housing beef cattle for winter

Most people will have their beef cattle housed now for winter. Below are some key areas to think about when housing beef cattle.

**Space:** Consider if your stocking density is adequate (see tables below) and that they have enough feed and water access. Allow for growth to ensure there is enough space for all the cattle based on their planned turnout weight. Water tanks should be serviced to ensure water is clean and the refill speed can cope with the demand (fact of the day - a 600kg beef cow can drink up to 90L/day!)

Space allowances for group housed calves on straw yards (lying and loafing)

Weight of calf (kg)	Approx. age (months)	Min area (m <sup>2</sup> /calf)	Recommended area (m <sup>2</sup> /calf)
45	0	1.5	2.0
46-99	0-2	1.5	3.0
100-149	3-5	1.5	4.0
150-199	5-7	2.0	5.0
>200	7+	3.0	6.0

Space allowances for group housed growing/finishing cattle on straw yards (lying and loafing)

Weight of animal	Recommended lying area (m <sup>2</sup> / animal)	Recommended Total area (m <sup>2</sup> / animal)
200	2.0	3
300	2.75	3.95
400	3.5	4.9
500	4.25	5.85
600	5.0	6.8

Summary of recommended feeding space per housed animal

Weight (kg)	Conc feeding space (mm/head)	Adlib feeding space (mm/head)
200	400	150
300	500	150
400	550	170
500	550	220
600	600	260
700	700	300
800	800	340



# Housing beef cattle for winter

## Feeding and Growth:

Forage analysis and ration planning alongside regular weighing of growing cattle can help to ensure target growth rates are achieved while housed. (We have weigh scales for hire, please contact the office if you are interested in hiring these).

## Minimising disease:

While cattle are housed the risk of many diseases increases due to the stocking rates. Disease and parasitism will decrease the feed efficiency of the animals and cost you money. Below are some things to bear in mind:

### 1. Pneumonia:

1. Clipping backs (see photo)
2. Reducing stress by avoiding mixing groups and rapid diet changes.
3. Ensure adequate ventilation
4. If rates are high speak to your vet regarding testing and potential vaccination programmes.

### 2. Roundworms:

1. Particularly relevant to first grazers, treatments should be guided by faecal worm egg counts.

### 3. Lungworm:

1. if you have had a problem this autumn and had to treat, speak to your vet regarding possible vaccination for next season.

### 4. Fluke:

1. Assess fluke exposure in first season grazing animals before treatment.
2. Ensure use of correct flukicide to treat the correct stage of the fluke at the right time.

### 5. Lice and Mites:

1. Lots of treatment options, use as needed if symptoms arise.
2. Ensure all in-contact animals are treated to prevent re-infection.



## | Youngstock

Over the Autumn calving season we had great uptake across our Dairy clients for our Youngstock Health Programme, which has involved us going onto farm and taking bloods from calves to check for Total Proteins (a marker of colostrum antibody transfer), measuring birth weights and returning at point of weaning to re-weigh the animals to calculate their Average Daily Gain (ADG).

Across the farms we visited we had a wide range of results – some truly excellent and some below target. With many of the total protein results that were below target - which would suggest inadequate colostrum intake, inadequate colostrum quality, or poor absorption of colostrum – we have seen concurrent low ADG, which has been shown to relate to reduced lifetime productivity. Some of the low total protein results had obvious reasons, such as sick dam at the end of pregnancy, or difficult birth, however, some results were seemingly unexplained due to apparent good colostrum intake. This highlights why monitoring blood samples is so important, allowing us to spot trends and perform further testing to find out why passive transfer of antibodies may not be as high as we are hoping or expecting. Obtaining results like these will hopefully allow our Programme members to be more selective in choosing their replacement heifers and have a more efficient herd in the future.

In the New Year we will be doing a Round Up meeting to discuss all the results obtained this season, followed by a talk on feeding calves by Feed for Growth and more information on the new Cryptosporidium Vaccine by MSD. So, make sure you keep an eye on your emails for your invitation to the Dairy Youngstock Talk.

We look forward to seeing how the Heifers progress over the coming year to hopefully reach service this time next year, and to hopefully having more of our Dairies join the Programme!

## | 'SELEKT RE-EWE-VENATE'

Nimrod Veterinary Products, well known for its fluid therapy equipment and products, has launched a new product ahead of lambing.

'RE-EWE-VENATE' is designed for recuperation of twin lamb disease. It contains propylene glycol, glycerol and calcium propionate to raise blood-glucose and reduce ketone levels. Twin lamb disease often goes hand in hand with hypocalcaemia. The calcium propionate will also elevate the calcium concentration within 30 minutes.

Other ingredients are magnesium to aid calcium absorption, potassium to increase potassium levels & biotin and vit B12 to aid the rumen flora.

The product is given orally like any other Twin lamb disease drench at 100mls and can be given every 12 hours.

Whilst we are all aware of the importance of fluid therapy in cattle, in sheep this is less commonly practised. Nimrod Veterinary Products have designed a drenching set specifically for the use in small ruminants. This 'mini drencher' allows us to give a dehydrated sheep/goat several litres of fluids orally in an easy and quick way.

Several conditions can cause dehydration, and with lambing on the horizon, it is at the top of the list. But also, hypocalcaemia, twin lamb disease, mastitis and anorexia are important causes.

If you consider 60% of the ewe's live weight is water and she needs to consume 3-4 litres of water (increasing to up to 7 litres when lactating) a day, then it becomes clear that when she becomes dehydrated you soon have to drench her with several litres of water. This is made a lot easier with the drenching system.

To improve the absorption of the fluids given there are several products we can use. One of these products is called RESTORE and can be used for use in fluids to drench, but also be put in the bucket of water given to a ewe. This product contains dextrose and makes it very palatable for the ewe and you often find it stimulates the ewe to drink on her own.

All in all, we are aiming to get the ewe back up and running so she can feed her lambs and give them a good start to life!

If you are interested in any of these products then please give us a ring to discuss.



# Blue Tongue Update- What is the risk for 2025?

In 2024 Blue Tongue Virus serotype 3 (BTV3) entered Britain in August via virus infected midges being blown over from The Netherlands then gradually spread west halfway across England until the cold weather in November prevented further spread.

## About the BTV 3 virus

BTV-3 is transmitted by Culicoides, the same midge that spreads Schmallenberg virus. Bluetongue virus DOES NOT spread directly from ruminants to other ruminants, this means that you are unlikely to see a “wave” of sheep and cows infected with BTV-3 (like you see with FMD for instance). Rather you will find a number of sheep or cows showing clinical signs for a few days, some dying and others recovering, however this pattern will persist right through the risk period. Cows appear to have been much more resilient to the effects of BTV-3 this autumn, and we are aware of positive herds that displayed no symptoms.

Midges acquire BTV3 by feeding on the blood of a cow (most common) or sheep that has the infection, ingesting the virus into its stomach. The virus then moves from the midges’ stomach to its salivary glands and begins to multiply.

**The ambient temperature determines the rate at which the virus multiplies inside the body of the midge, when temperatures are below 15C, the virus multiplies very slowly. A midge lives for about 30 days, at temperatures below 20C a midge infected with BTV3 virus may only have enough virus in its salivary glands to be infectious for the last 3 days of its life whereas when ambient temperatures are between 25-30 degrees a midge may be capable of spreading virus for 25 days of its 30-day lifespan.**

If a sheep or cow infected with BTV-3 recovers, it has life-long immunity. When midges carrying BTV-3 infect a herd or flock of non-vaccinated animals, approximately 30% of the animals are infected in the first year, 30% the following year and the majority of the remaining susceptible animals in the third year, till most of the population have either become immune or died. (The mortality of unvaccinated sheep infected with BTV-3 is in the order of 30-50%). BTV-3 then appears to “disappear from the group and very few cases are seen over the following 5-6 years until the level of flock/herd immunity wanes. The diagram below shows the different phases of infection- of which we are probably still in Phase 1-2.

When the majority of the herd/flock comprises of replacements and are no longer immune, if BTV3 is present in the locality, the whole cycle repeats itself.

## The effect of BTV-3 in non-vaccinated cattle

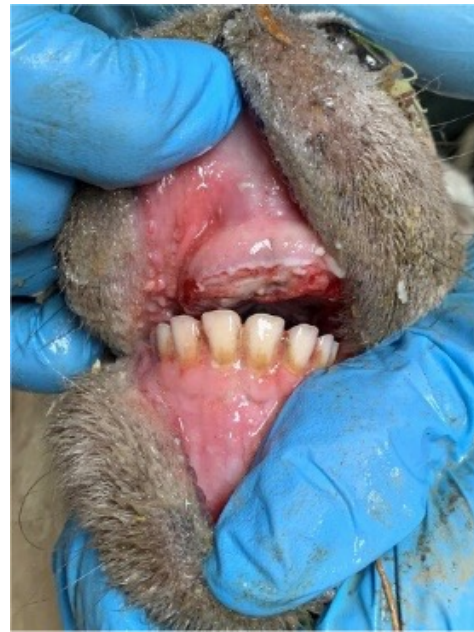
Similar numbers of sheep and cattle were infected with BTV-3 in the Netherlands, however cattle were less likely to show clinical signs even with high levels of virus, but almost every cow experienced significantly reduced milk production.

## The effect of BTV-3 on non-vaccinated sheep

The effects in sheep are much more marked, and signs seen include an initial malaise, dramatic weight loss and lameness. Puffy swollen heads and oral ulceration are common.

Non vaccinated rams infected with BTV-3 that survive the infection often suffer a prolonged period of infertility lasting up to 3-4 months.

Non vaccinated ewes infected with BTV-3 that survive the infection can suffer reproductive failure including increased barren rate and abortions.

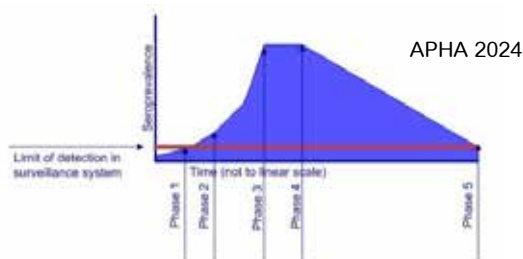


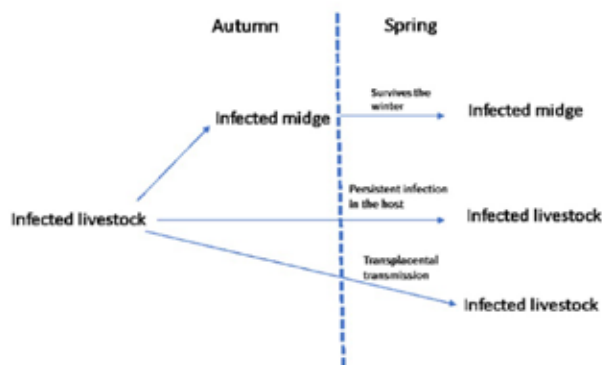
Vet Record 2024 van den Brink et al.

## Will disease reemerge?

This is the “million dollar question”, but if disease re-emerges in Spring 2025, the disease will be much more widespread and much more severe, due to midges being infected before the warmer environmental temperatures seen in June, July and August- as explained above.

The mechanisms of overwintering are shown below. It is understood that the disease does successfully survive, probably via a combination of mechanisms. We don't think the midges pass it down via their eggs. Infected midges could persist over winter in cattle sheds, cows can harbour it for up to 9 weeks before clearing it from their system, or it can be passed vertically from cow to foetus.





It will only take a small number of animals to be BTV-3 positive early in the year to reinfest the new midge population, and to see an explosion in virus through the warmer summer months.

## Vaccination

The vaccines available in Britain are killed vaccine meaning that no live virus is present (unlike Scabivax or Toxovax). We are recommending use of Bultavo-3 (Boehringer Ingelheim)

One single dose injected under the skin results in full immunity 3 weeks after vaccination which is then maintained for at least 1 year. In cattle, 2 doses 3-6 weeks apart are required.

In the Netherlands, there were initially concerns that sheep might need two injections, but two million animals were vaccinated with Bultavo-3 vaccine and only 36 cases of "lack of efficacy".

## Vaccine reactions

While a slight rise in body temperature does occur in some sheep for 2-3 days following vaccination, there have been no reports of vaccine induced ram infertility or vaccine induced ewe reproductive failure provided correct animal handling practices were observed during the vaccination procedure.

If concerned, use of an anti inflammatory injection to given to rams at the time of injection may reduce any associated hyperthermia.

## Degree of protection

The vaccine manufacturers state that vaccination prevents clinical signs, prevents mortality, reduces viraemia, and minimizes the risk for vectors to contaminate and transmit the disease to other sheep and cattle.

## Decision to vaccinate

The decision whether or not to vaccinate will depend on whether BTV-3

- Does over winter and re-emerge June/July 2025- MODERATE TO HIGH RISK AND HIGH IMPACT
- Does NOT over winter but be introduced from Europe in August 2025- MODERATE RISK AND MODERATE IMPACT
- Does NOT over winter and IS NOT be introduced from Europe in 2025.

We are currently in a low infective period (average daily temperature below 13C) and this should remain until at least April, meaning that should BTV-3 over winter, no new BTV-3 cases should occur until at least May 2025 and more likely not occur before June/July 2025.

However, if it does reemerge in the southeast, we may not have time to react and vaccinate- as the onset of immunity is 3 weeks after one injection for sheep, and after 2 injections in cattle.

## Vaccinate dams late pregnancy?

Ewes and cows vaccinated in late pregnancy should provide passive immunity to their lambs and calves via antibodies in the colostrum. Those receiving sufficient colostrum should be immune to BTV-3 for 3 months or more. If ewes are vaccinated pre lambing, lambs should not be vaccinated until 3 months to avoid interference of immunity by maternally derived antibodies.

For late lambing flocks, vaccination around the time of Heptavac P Plus in March may provide protection to the lambs into high-risk period.

Ewes and cows should maintain protective levels of immunity for at least 12 months.

Rams should be vaccinated before the high-risk period in May.

## Vaccination after lambing/calving?

Ewes not vaccinated pre lambing could be vaccinated after lambing, at weaning for example., but this is likely to be after the start of the high-risk period. Slaughter lambs could be left unvaccinated if these lambs are likely to be slaughtered by the end of the summer. Lambs retained for breeding would need to be vaccinated.



Continued ➔

## Vaccination delayed until BTV3 cases are recorded in Britain?

If BTV-3 successfully overwinters cases are predicted to emerge in June/July. As the average daytime temperature is over 20C during June/July and August the virus is likely to spread throughout England, Wales and potentially southern Scotland by late September. The degree and rate of spread will depend on many factors, and flocks not vaccinated might suffer considerable mortality.

Unvaccinated rams infected but recover may have serious fertility problems for the 2025 breeding season.

Unvaccinated ewes infected but recovering may abort or be scanned barren.

Whole flock vaccination could be instituted immediately a case of BTV-3 is reported in Britain. Note that it takes 3 weeks for full immunity to develop, and longer in cattle as they need two injections.

We have been assured by Boehringer Ingelheim that there should not be a BTV-3 vaccine shortage in 2025.

## No Vaccination

There is a theory that a flock which has not suffered from Schmallenberg virus is not likely to suffer from BTV-3 as both viruses are spread by the same midge species. However, remember that in order for Schmallenberg virus to cause lamb deaths and deformities, the ewe needs to be infected between days 25 and 50 of pregnancy. If she is infected outside of this period, no Schmallenberg lambs will be seen, whereas a sheep may develop Bluetongue whenever it is bitten by a midge carrying the BTV-3 virus.

The decision to not vaccinate when BTV3 is circulating in Britain may be the correct decision to take if the virus is contained some distance from your farm as may have been the case in 2024. If BTV-3 does emerge early to mid-summer there is a real possibility that it will spread more quickly and much wider than in 2024 as the average daytime temperatures will be higher for longer, increasing the level of midge virus infectivity.

## How well does vaccination protect the fertility of rams and reproductive performance of ewes?

The three BTV-3 vaccines available have only been used in 2024 and many of the flocks in Europe where vaccination took place were also being infected with BTV-3 at or soon after vaccination took place.

Pharmaceutical companies that distribute BTV-3 vaccine state that the incidence of mortality, seriously illness, ram infertility and ewe reproductive failure has been significantly reduced in sheep that were vaccinated AND achieved full immunity BEFORE encountering BTV-3.

## Summary.

**The risk of reemergence at I write this appears to be fairly high, and if it does reemerge much more severe disease will be seen than this year.**

**All male breeding stock rams and bulls should be vaccinated in advance of the high-risk period ie complete the vaccination course by May.**

**Given the high morbidity of sheep, consideration should be given to vaccinating ewes prior to lambing (at scanning/ Heptavac) or in May. It may be easier to vaccinate cows whilst housed over winter and although the risk to cows is less their individual value is much greater.**

**Bultavo-3 is approximately £2.50-£2.75 per dose depending on volume purchased. Use of the vaccine must be reported to APHA.**



## | The animal health and welfare pathway – year 2

On the 19th of June 2024 Year 2 of the DEFRA Animal Health and Welfare Pathway for cattle, sheep and pig farmers was officially launched. Like last year there is funding available for a health review which includes testing for BVD (cattle) or Wormer efficacy (sheep). However the new round now includes a further grant. Applications are now open and can be found on: <https://apply-for-an-annual-health-and-welfare-review.defra.gov.uk/apply/endemics/start>

### For the Sheep scheme:

There are two parts to the follow up scheme: animal health and welfare review and endemic disease testing.

- Animal Health and Welfare Pathway - annual health and performance review plus wormer treatment check (**funding available £436**)
- Endemic disease testing – carry out further assessment of diseases or conditions affecting your flock based on your animal health and welfare priorities.

The endemic disease testing for sheep is quite flexible and split up into disease packages. One package can be chosen as appropriate to the farm requirements and includes disease testing where appropriate. Options include: Investigation of ewe condition, poor reproductive performance, lamb performance, neonatal lamb survival, external parasites or lameness.

Funding available: **£639**

**This gives a total of £1075 funding per year available to sheep farmers**

### For the Beef Scheme:

- Animal Health and welfare pathway – annual health and performance review plus BVD youngstock screen (**funding £522**)
- Follow up disease testing or advice: BVD PI hunt if youngstock screen is positive (**funding £837**)

BVD biosecurity assessment if youngstock screen is negative (**funding £215**)

We encourage all our clients to take advantage of the funding opportunities available on the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway. These grants are also really beneficial when it comes to applying for other (often bigger) grants. Often the chances of getting these grants are increased (by up to 25%) if the health and welfare grant has been granted.

### Full guidance and eligibility:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/funding-to-improve-animal-health-and-welfare-guidance-for-farmers-and-vets>

### For more information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/funding-to-improve-animal-health-and-welfare-guidance-for-farmers-and-vets>

**Or speak to one of our vets.**

## Faecal Worm Egg Count Courses

Take control of parasite management on your farm with our Faecal Worm Egg Count (FWEC) Courses! These sessions are designed to teach you how to perform FWECs at home, giving you faster results and helping you make informed decisions about worming your livestock, alongside valuable background knowledge about the different internal parasites, their impact on livestock health, and appropriate use of wormers.

Our most recent course on 29th November was a great success, with an excellent turnout and plenty of hands-on learning. Attendees were left confident in their ability to analyse samples, identify parasite burdens, and use the results to plan appropriate treatment – saving time, money, and improving animal health.

### Interested in joining the next course?

Whilst we don't have a date set for our next session yet, we'd love to hear from you! Please call the office to register your interest, and we'll let you know as soon as the next course is scheduled. Lunch is included, which is always a bonus!

This course is perfect for anyone wanting to reduce unnecessary treatments, combat resistance, and improve their understanding of parasite control. Contact the office to secure your spot on the waiting list.





# Farm Dingbats

Answers

Straw bale  
TB  
Listeria  
Cliffe Farm

Harvest  
Johnes  
Bullock  
Milking

John Deere  
Faecal egg count

# AgDiversity

Positive growth toward a more inclusive sector



**AgDiversity is an online awareness course about diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), targeted at the UK agricultural and other land-based industries.**

Navaratnam Partheeban BVM&S BSc(Hons) PGC(DHH) R.Ani.Tech. PMIAgrM NSch FRASE MRCVS has launched AgDiversity, the UK's first bespoke DEI course for the UK agricultural sector. The course builds on his research through the Nuffield Farming Scholarship, where he explored barriers and opportunities for increasing representation of Black and People of Colour (BPOC) in agriculture.

AgDiversity is designed to break down barriers. This accessible online course offers practical insights into DEI with three short modules and includes a certificate upon completion. Participants can also join the AgDiversity Participant Database, signalling their commitment to diversity in agriculture.

This database can be accessed by any future employee and/or vet students to check if businesses are showing their commitment and give them confidence to apply for the place advertised.

The three modules of bespoke content cover:

- What is diversity, equity and inclusion, and why is it important to British agriculture?
- The mistakes and biases we all make/have and why they matter
- How to be an ally and practice inclusion in everyday life

The course is only £30 per person and it is highly recommended for every member of staff to enroll. We as a farm vet practice will also enrol all our staff. If you are interested then follow this link for more information and to enrol yourself: <https://www.nuffieldscholar.org/agdiversity>

If you have anymore questions please ask any of us.



T: 01273 473232 E: [farmenquiries@cliffevets.co.uk](mailto:farmenquiries@cliffevets.co.uk)

[www.cliffevets.co.uk](http://www.cliffevets.co.uk)