

## Winter is coming...

Winter dysentery is a viral disease affecting cattle, causing foul smelling, dark brown diarrhoea, sometimes containing blood. Milk yields will drop and affected animals may show signs of respiratory distress, but deaths are rare and most recover with time and symptomatic treatment. It is caused by bovine coronavirus and is transmitted by contact with infected faeces and respiratory secretions. It is commonly seen at housing, due to animals being in close proximity and a change in diet. Additionally, the risk is increased with cold conditions and when there are low levels of UV light.

Diagnosis is usually made on clinical examination and symptoms; however faecal samples can be tested for bovine coronavirus PCR – up to 3 samples from animals over 6 weeks old can be pooled and tested. The symptoms can be confused with other infectious and non-infectious causes. Salmonellosis can cause similar symptoms but can cause further losses including abortion, and is zoonotic so getting a diagnosis is key to ensure appropriate treatment is given. BVD, Johnes disease and liver fluke can also cause diarrhoea in adult cattle and all warrant different treatment. Non-infectious causes could be dietary related, and care must be taken to avoid rapid changes in diet.

Treatment for winter dysentery is generally supportive – anti-inflammatories and fluids if necessary, along with rumen support products. Maintaining the patient's hydration status and rumen function is vital in recovery. The virus is likely to spread rapidly in an outbreak and whilst prevention of spread will be difficult once it is in the herd, maintaining good biosecurity is always key to minimising disease transmission. This includes good cleansing and disinfection of footwear and clothing and restricting access of non-essential personnel. Ensure good slurry management so that faeces from affected animals will not come into contact with youngstock and naive animals. Antibiotics are not required as they are not effective against viral infections.

If you are concerned you may be seeing winter dysentery in your herd, please speak to a member of our veterinary team.

With the recent drop in temperatures, it is important to remember to look after your calves, as they are very susceptible to cold stress due to their inability to regulate their body temperature. If left unattended, growth rates will drop and calves will be more susceptible to pneumonia and other diseases. Taking the time for winter care of your calves will lead to more productive and efficient herds in the long term.

The lower critical temperature (LCT) is the temperature at which a calf needs extra energy to stay warm – the image below shows these temperatures; be aware these differ with the age of your calves.

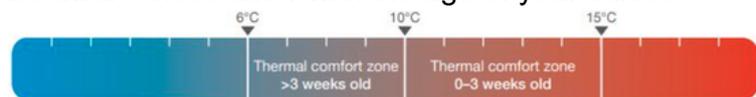


Image taken from AHDB 2025 'Calves in cold weather'

Calves less than 3 weeks of age and 35kg or under are the most susceptible and their LCT is between 10-15°C depending on airspeed. Calves over 3 weeks of age have an LCT of between 5-10°C but this is again dependant on airspeed.

For every 5°C drop in temperature below the LCT feed an extra 50g/day of milk replacer or 0.33l/day of whole milk. The extra nutrition provides extra energy, which is used to maintain body temperature, growth and remain healthy. Below the LCT, nutrition and energy are directed away from growth and the immune system and directed towards maintaining warmth.

Calf jackets play an important part in helping maintaining body temperatures. Choose a breathable fabric that is waterproof and machine washable. They should fit calves snugly but allow them to move about freely and have adjustable straps so they can be re-sized as the calf grows. Also ensure calves are completely dry before placing a jacket on them. Soiled jackets should be removed and hosed off before cleaning according to the manufacturer's instructions however be aware that cryptosporidia oocysts can be harboured on jackets. Cryptosporidia oocysts are destroyed at temperatures above 60°C and with a licensed cryptosporidia disinfectant.

Housing and ventilation also factor in maintaining health calves. Maximum and minimum temperatures of the calf housing area should be recorded at calf-height for monitoring purposes to know when to make adjustments. Straw bedding should be plentiful and dry and reduce damp by maximising drainage. Ventilation and fresh air is required but draughts should be avoided at calf level. Temporary housing adaptations such as windbreakers can be used to help protect calves. Stale air needs to be avoided as this increases bacterial survival and therefore pneumonia infections. Please speak to us if you would like any further information on calf housing and ventilation.



**GLENTHORNE**

*Farm Vets*

WARMLY INVITE YOU TO OUR

# CHRISTMAS PARTY

FRIDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER  
7:30PM

HOG ROAST - LICENSED BAR - MINCE PIES  
- CHRISTMAS CHEER -

Hanbury Memorial Hall,  
Anslow Road, Hanbury  
DE13 8TJ

Please RSVP to the Farm Office  
on 01889 567200

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Sign up to pay by direct debit and automate your payment process – saving you time, effort and money. You have freedom to choose your payment date for total control.

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**10% NSAIDs (Metacam, Ketofen)**

**10% BVD, Lepto, IBR vaccines**

**10% Respiratory Vaccines**

**10% Orbeseal**

For more information please speak to Grace in the Farm Office on 01889 567200.  
Terms and conditions apply



# FCN

**THE FARMING  
COMMUNITY  
NETWORK**



The Staffordshire branch of FCN recently hosted a special event: the Farmers Ball - a celebration of three decades of FCN's service '30 years of Walking with Farmers'.

Thanks to generous sponsorship, auction and raffle donations, and the support of attendees, the Ball raised a remarkable **£25,000** for FCN. It was a great opportunity for our team to ditch their waterproofs and don their finest outfits for an evening of fun!

FCN is a UK-wide charity and voluntary organisation dedicated to supporting farmers, farming families, and people in rural communities through difficult times and periods of change.

Recognising the isolation many in agriculture can experience, FCN maintains a network of over 400 volunteers across England and Wales. These volunteers - many of them from farming backgrounds or closely connected to agriculture - provide free, confidential, pastoral support, whether the issues are business or personally-related.

To reach those who need help, FCN runs a national helpline (phone: 03000 111 999) and an e-helpline (email: [help@fcn.org.uk](mailto:help@fcn.org.uk)), available every day of the year from 7 am to 11 pm.