

Acorn Poisoning



2025 is shaping up to be a 'mast year' for oak trees, meaning the trees produce a significantly higher number of seeds/nuts than they usually do. With certain areas still experiencing a lack of grass, the risk of acorn toxicity is heightened further. Mastings normally occurs every 5-10 years however the weather also has an impact on when this will occur.

Acorns and oak leaves contain phenols and tannins, such as gallic acid and pyrogallol, which when ingested in excess can cause renal failure. Green acorns and younger leaves are known to be more toxic and are a particular risk when large numbers are blown from the trees after bad weather, leading to more poisoning cases. Some animals appear to develop a taste for the acorns and ingest larger amounts.

Previous years have shown there appear to be fewer problems after a few hard frosts, however freezing does not reduce the level of tannins found in acorns so the theory is that the acorns become less palatable.

Clinical signs generally start as gastrointestinal (GI) disruption, with constipation and straining leading to black/bloody diarrhoea. Other symptoms include dullness, anorexia, abdominal pain, ventral subcutaneous oedema and then symptoms associated with renal failure such as drinking and urinating more. Blood samples from affected animals would show high levels of renal markers (urea and creatinine) due to severe renal damage.



The prognosis is generally poor and post-mortem examination may show acorns or oak leaves in the rumen in acute cases, along with evidence of bleeding in the GI tract, ulceration due to high urea and renal haemorrhages. Fluid from the eye can be sampled for urea and a conclusive diagnosis can be gained by sending off kidney for histopathology.

Treatment can be attempted however there is no specific antidote for acorn poisoning, so treatment is administered symptomatically. This includes activated charcoal to try and absorb toxins, oral fluids to rehydrate, pain relief and possibly antibiotics to cover for secondary infection.

As treatment is often unsuccessful and the prognosis is poor, preventative measures should be taken. This involves fencing off areas around oak trees and offering supplementary feed if grass is in short supply.

Take extra precautions following windy and stormy weather.

CLINICAL SIGNS:

- CONSTIPATION FOLLOWED BY DIARRHOEA
- LOSS OF APPETITE AND DEPRESSION
- EXCESSIVE DRINKING AND URINATION
- ABDOMINAL PAIN
- SWELLING IN THE LOWER PARTS OF THE BODY - LEGS, CHEST & VENTRAL ABDOMEN

BLUETONGUE VACCINATION

With increasing cases of bluetongue being diagnosed in Staffordshire and Derbyshire, and as the risk of BTV-3 increases throughout the Autumn there is still time to vaccinate and protect your livestock.

The Battle Bluetongue campaign launched earlier this year is available to help assist farmers in protecting their livestock. There are cost calculators and decision-making tools all available online at <https://ruminanthw.org.uk/bluetongue-virus-hub>

The key parts of the campaign are as follows:

1. **Assess your risk** - work together with your vet to evaluate the risk to BTV-3 on your farm
2. **Protect your business** - safeguard businesses from restrictions by managing all identified risks that can be controlled on livestock holdings
3. **Defend your stock** - vaccinate the right animals for BTV-3 to reduce transmission and stop the spread

Remember – bluetongue is transmitted by midges so all stock are susceptible and it is a notifiable disease so suspicion of the disease should be reported to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) on 03000 200 301.

There are currently two vaccines available to use on your stock in the UK – Bultavo 3 and Syvazul BTV 3. Vaccination will not stop infection but will reduce the symptoms and spreading of the virus.

All animals receiving the vaccination must have their details digitally recorded no later than 48 hours after the time vaccination takes place. Also, to prevent potential spread from sub-clinically affected animals it is recommended that a fresh needle be used per animal.

Infertility can be a symptom in both cattle and sheep so consider getting the vaccine in before autumn services. The main areas BTV-3 can affect your farm with regards to infertility will be poor conception rates, increased early embryonic death, abortions and stillbirths. The vaccines can be used in pregnancy, but the efficacy has not been established in breeding males. However it is known that BTV can reside in sperm in the testicles for a long time so vaccination is strongly recommended.

Depending on which vaccine is used it takes 3-4 weeks for the onset of immunity to establish. Animals vaccinated in England can now be sold to Wales and Scotland without a pre-movement test under the conditions of the general license. Non-vaccinated animals must apply for a specific movement license and comply with the regulations of their intended destination.

If you would like further information or to discuss the use of the vaccine on your farm, please call the Farm Office on 01889 567200.



Friendly farm kittens looking for a new home

Neutered and ready to start work

Contact Helen at the Cats Protection League on 01283 732228 for more information



Thank you!

We'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who came to see us at Brailsford Ploughing Match. We all had a great day and it was lovely to see so many of you there - your support means the world to our team.

Our next event is the English Winter Fair taking place on 15th & 16th November at Bingley Hall, Staffordshire County Showground. We look forward to seeing there!

