



Farm news

April 2024

Schmallenberg Virus: Lambing Season Survey



The research team at Nottingham University have asked sheep farmers to fill in a survey about their experiences of Schmallenberg Virus (SBV) this lambing season.

This season has seen an increase in cases of fetal deformities typical of SBV. To better prepare farmers for future years, the researchers would like to gain an idea of the impact of the virus and the scale of the outbreak this year to better understand the cyclical pattern of SBV in the UK.

Both SBV and bluetongue virus (BTV) are spread by the same *Culicoides* species biting midges. Holdings in areas that have seen SBV cases are likely to be vulnerable to BTV-3 in the coming year if it re-emerges in Europe as expected during the summer when midge numbers are high.

Some strains of BTV can also cause fetal deformities, although we don't yet know if this is the case for the current BTV-3 strain. It is not possible to distinguish SBV- and BTV-induced deformities just by looking, or from gross pathology. There are also a number of other potential causes of the typical deformities, and a combination of PCR and serological testing of both fetus and dam is needed to find out the cause. Testing of suspect SBV cases is currently being offered free of charge by APHA.

While lambs born in the 2023/24 lambing season in the UK are unlikely to be BTV-affected, this may change as the year progresses and the survey also includes a number of questions about BTV.

Phone conversations that are doomed to fail!

(Carolyn Baguley and Sue Ivings)

It's 3pm on a rainy Monday afternoon. Last Minute Larry rings the clinic and presses 3 to book his TB test....

Last Minute Larry: "Hi. I want to book my TB test."

TB Admin Team: "Of course! When would you like it, and how many animals?"

Last Minute Larry: "950 animals. And I need it tomorrow."

TB Admin Team: "Tomorrow? I'm sorry, but we're busy tomorrow as it is. We've got a large number of TB tests and routine visits booked in already, and we need to make sure we have capacity for emergencies too."

Last Minute Larry: "That won't do. I need it tomorrow or I'll be put under restriction for being overdue. Oh, and the vet needs to be there at 5am because I've booked a lorry for Friday lunchtime to take away the cows I've already sold."

TB Admin Team: "Larry, you should have received a letter from Defra months ago saying your test was due. Why didn't you ring and book back then?"

Last Minute Larry: "I don't open any letters from Defra. I don't trust them."

TB Admin Team: "We also called you several times, left voicemails and texted you to remind you to book your test in. Didn't you get those messages?"

Last Minute Larry: "I don't listen to my voicemail and I don't know how to open text messages. I just need my TB test tomorrow. 5am. 950 animals."

TB Admin Team: "Oh, Larry. There's no way we can fit you in tomorrow..."

TBAS – have you had your visit yet?

Carolyn Baguley MA VetMB CertAVP (Cattle) MRCVS RCVS



The current round of TBAS funding is due to come to an end this year, and we don't yet know if it will be continued or not, so if you haven't yet signed up for a visit, don't miss out!

TBAS visits are fully funded by Defra and involve a trained TBAS adviser spending 2-3 hours with you on your farm and focusing on what you can do to protect your herd (or flock). A revisit a few months later gives us a chance to assess progress.

Several of our vets are TBAS advisers and we would love the chance to work with you in a collaborative, non judgemental way to make sure your animals are as protected and as resilient as they can be, whether you've had TB on the farm before or not. Please do contact us at the clinic if you'd like to know more.

The survey can be accessed at <https://bitly.ws/3cDCd>

Put the kettle on and take 10 minutes to fill it in!



We try our hardest to provide the best TB testing service that we possibly can. Our vets and ATTs try to perform a good quality, accurate test while delivering a cheerful and professional service, and our TB admin team try to be accommodating and flexible.

We love to work with our clients in partnership, not against them. So here are a few key points to remember:

Please call us as soon as that letter arrives from APHA.

You don't have to wait until your window opens. Give us as much notice as possible, as we are much more likely to be able to make your booking on your requested date. This includes post and pre movement testing.

Travelling distance, vet availability and emergency calls all have an impact on the working day and the amount of TB testing we can do.

Thank you! And thank you to all our clients who do ring up and book well in advance – it's much appreciated!



Mobility Scoring and 'EDPET'

Jessica Swinson, ATT, Vet Tech and RoMS-accredited scorer



Mobility scoring is a system whereby cows are scored on a scale of 0-3 based on their mobility, with 0/1 being good and 3 being a severely lame cow. This could be done by you or your staff on farm, but some milk contracts require it to be done "externally", making it essential to use a RoMS-accredited scorer.

As a RoMS scorer, we are expected to provide an accurate list of cows likely to benefit from examination and treatment to the farmer. We have several RoMS-accredited staff here, should you require this service, or any advice.

The key benefit to scoring regularly is that every cow is assessed for early signs of poor mobility. It also increases general foot health awareness and motivates staff to improve herd mobility and therefore overall herd health. This may encourage improved awareness of not only the cows' mobility, but more attention and closer inspection to standing/loafing areas, uneven surfaces/poor cow flow, more regular use of/choice of footbath additives, bedding and general cow comfort.

I personally feel there needs to be a shift from just using mobility scoring solely as an auditing tool and instead, using it to empower and educate producers to recognise early cases of lameness to maximise the long-term welfare of the cows and the farm's profitability and efficiency.

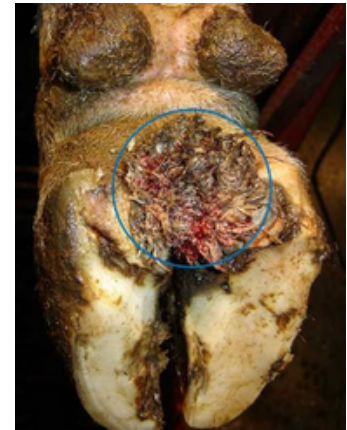
EDPET (Early Detection and Prompt Effective Treatment) aims to reduce lameness and improve mobility on farm.

Early detection: identifying those animals early. We can't treat them promptly if we haven't detected them early, and that's where mobility scoring comes in.

Prompt effective treatment: once lameness has been identified, the animal needs to be treated promptly. We know that early treatment of lame cows means they recover quicker, and they don't become as severely lame. Welfare is better, the chances of irreversible damage and culling are reduced, and money is saved.



Example of a Sole Ulcer
Sole Ulcer (U) (vetbooks.ir)







Example of Digital Dermatitis (the chronic 'hairy wart' form)
Digital Dermatitis (D) (vetbooks.ir)

HEALTHYFEET

Mobility Score Chart (AHDB/HealthyFeet)



Mobility score

Category of score	Score	Description of cow behaviour	Suggested actions
Good mobility			
	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walks with even weight-bearing and rhythm on all four feet, with a flat back Long, fluid strides possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action needed Routine (preventative) foot trimming when/if required Record mobility at next scoring session
Imperfect mobility			
	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steps uneven (rhythm or weight-bearing) or strides shortened; affected limb or limbs not immediately identifiable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could benefit from routine (preventative) foot trimming when/if required Further observation recommended
Impaired mobility			
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uneven weight-bearing on a limb that is immediately identifiable and/or obviously shortened strides (usually with an arch to the centre of the back) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lame and likely to benefit from treatment Foot should be lifted to establish the cause of lameness before treatment Should be attended to as soon as practically possible
Severely impaired mobility			
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to walk as fast as a brisk human pace (cannot keep up with the healthy herd) Lame leg easy to identify – limping; may barely stand on lame leg/s; back arched when standing and walking Very lame 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This cow is very lame and requires urgent attention, nursing and further professional advice Examine as soon as possible Cow will benefit from treatment Cow should not be made to walk far and kept on a straw yard or at grass In the most severe cases, culling may be the only possible solution

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