

# Farm news

April 2026



## Keeping it cool Carolyn Baguley MRCVS

Applications for the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF) 2026 opened on 17<sup>th</sup> March and close on 28<sup>th</sup> April. The FETF grants help applicants to buy items that improve productivity, manage slurry and improve animal health and welfare.

The Animal Health and Welfare Grant is available to cattle, sheep, pig and poultry farmers. There are quite a few items on the list that I like the look of, but one that particularly caught my eye was the vaccine refrigerator:

### FETF279SH - Vaccine refrigerator with external monitor

Expected average cost of item (£): 559

Grant amount (based on a quantity of 1) (£): 279

Score: 1,690

Item must:

- be a medical grade fridge for the storage of vaccines and other types of medicines
- have a glass or solid door
- have a minimum internal capacity of 50L
- have an external digital control and temperature display
- have a temperature range from 2 to 8 degrees Celsius (°C)
- be lockable
- have a temperature alarm
- be made from material suitable for cleaning and disinfection

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-equipment-and-technology-fund-fetf-2026/animal-health-and-welfare-items-and-specifications-farming-equipment-and-technology-fund-fetf-2026>

Vaccines have revolutionised disease control, and they can offer a massive return on investment, whether you use them to help prevent calf pneumonia, to stop your lambs dying of clostridial disease, to help stop your ewes aborting, to protect your cattle from the devastation that a BVD or an IBR outbreak can bring, or to insure against the losses that Bluetongue-3 can cause.

Add up how much you spend on vaccines each year for your livestock. However much this is, it'll be less than the cost of the havoc that the diseases you vaccinate for can wreak. But what if you were wasting your money because your vaccines had been destroyed by fridge temperatures that were too high or too low? Vaccines are delicate little souls and need looking after. In most cases this includes storing and transporting at 2-8°C and not freezing.

Do you look after your vaccines? A study published in 2018 suggested that many UK farmers didn't. I think things have improved to some extent since then, but from some of the fridges I see on my travels I think we've still got a long way to go.

Here's a brief summary of the study:

#### Background

As the quality of a vaccine can be impaired by storage at an incorrect temperature, the study aimed to evaluate the on-farm performance of farm fridges to maintain the correct storage temperature. From January to August 2014, temperature data loggers were placed in 20 farm fridges used to store livestock vaccines in South-West England.

#### Results

Temperature recording data was available from 17 of the 20 farms. Fifty-nine percent of farm fridges had at least one temperature recording above 8 °C, 53% had at least one recording below 2 °C and 41% at or below 0 °C. Internal fridge temperatures attained 24 °C and dropped to - 12 °C as an absolute maximum and minimum respectively. Fridges tested spent an average of 16% of the total time recorded above 8 °C. Time of the year significantly influenced the percentage of time above 8 °C... Statistically significant differences in internal and external temperatures were found between March and August.

#### Conclusions

The majority of fridges in this study would have failed to keep any stored livestock vaccines within the recommended storage temperature range. If livestock vaccines are going to be stored on-farm prior to use, then urgent improvements in this part of the cold-chain are required in order to ensure vaccine efficacy is not compromised.

*On-farm storage of livestock vaccines may be a risk to vaccine efficacy: a study of the performance of on-farm refrigerators to maintain the correct storage temperature. Williams PD, Paixão G. BMC Vet Res 2018 Apr 19;14(1):136*

'The majority of fridges in this study would have failed to keep any stored livestock vaccines within the recommended storage temperature range.'

Ouch. That's sobering reading.

So what about you? Do you monitor your fridge's temperature? If not, how do you know that the vaccine you've spent your hard-earned money on is going to be effective and do the job you ask of it?

Have a good think about buying a vaccine fridge if you haven't already got one – they're a good investment.

And it's not just the fridge – also think about transport temperatures, whether that's from the clinic to your fridge, or from your fridge to your livestock. Is your vaccine cooking in the sunshine on your front seat? Freezing solid in the back of your truck in the snow? Or is it safe inside a chilled bag at the correct temperature?

There are some things that are worth spending money on and some that are not, but a good vaccine fridge, a cool box and some ice packs are definitely on my 'worth it' list!

## Managing Orf in Your Flock: Practical Support with Ambugreen During an Outbreak

Orf is a familiar challenge on many sheep farms. This contagious viral condition typically shows up as scabby lesions around lambs' mouths and nostrils and can spread to the teats of ewes through suckling. The virus is easily transmitted through direct contact and from infected scabs in the environment, which can remain infectious for months. Small abrasions to the skin, often caused by rough forage, allow infection to take hold.

Although most cases resolve within six to eight weeks, outbreaks can move quickly through a susceptible flock. The impact goes beyond the visible lesions. Reduced lamb growth rates, secondary bacterial infections, and mastitis in ewes can all affect performance. Across the UK sheep sector, orf is estimated to cost over £14 million annually, with the financial impact on individual farms varying depending on outbreak severity and flock size. Even when cases are considered "mild", lost growth and extra labour can quietly erode margins.

Orf is also zoonotic, meaning it can cause painful lesions in people handling affected sheep, so good hygiene and glove use remain important.



### A Barrier-Based Option to Support Lesions

Although there is a vaccine for orf, which can also help to reduce the severity of signs in the face of an outbreak, there are currently no UK-licensed treatments. Management is generally supportive, with antibiotics reserved for cases where secondary bacterial infection develops.

We now stock Ambugreen, a hydrophobic gel barrier designed to form a protective physical layer over damaged skin. Recent work presented at the International Sheep Veterinary Conference and reported in the veterinary press explored the use of gel barriers during orf outbreaks.

In those reports, applying a layer of hydrophobic gel over lesions was associated with drier, more stable scabs and fewer secondary infections. On farms involved in the project, this

supported lesion management during outbreaks without the need for antibiotics in the reported cases.

In one flock with a high level of infection in ewes pre-lambing, most lesions settled after application, with more severe cases receiving a second application a week later. Lambs were reported to appear more comfortable, allowing them to suck and maintain feed intake during the outbreak.

Ambugreen is applied with a gloved finger to create a 2-3 mm layer over the lesion. The gel forms a durable, waterproof barrier that helps provide a protective layer between the ewe's teat and the lamb's mouth during suckling. It naturally flakes away over a few days and can be reapplied if needed. It is antibiotic-free, does not require a prescription, and has no withdrawal period.

Barrier approaches should sit alongside good flock management, including isolating affected groups where practical, maintaining hygiene around feeding equipment and housing, and reviewing vaccination protocols with your vet.

If you would like to discuss practical options for managing orf in your flock, please speak to the practice team. Also remember that Ambugreen isn't just for orf – it can also help with Udder Cleft Dermatitis, Digital Dermatitis, wound management... ask your vet to discuss it with you if you're interested!

## BATTLE BLUETONGUE

### BTV INFECTION IN CALVES

Fertility issues or 'dummy' calves may be the first obvious signs of BTV infection in your herd

#### Speak to your vet if you see these signs:

- Blindness
- Circling
- Seizures
- Weakness
- Difficulty standing
- Wide-based gait
- Passive demeanour
- Head pressing
- Poor or absent suck reflex
- Stargazing



Watch our webinar - 'The impact of BTV-3 on calves and reproductive performance'

### BLUETONGUE IS A NOTIFIABLE DISEASE

If you suspect it, you must report it immediately by calling:

0300 020 0301 in England

0300 303 8268 in Wales

Your local Field Services Office in Scotland



For more information, see the Battle Bluetongue Virus Hub on the Ruminant Health & Welfare website [ruminanthw.org.uk/bluetongue-virus-hub](http://ruminanthw.org.uk/bluetongue-virus-hub) or the AHDB Bluetongue latest page [ahdb.org.uk/bluetongue](http://ahdb.org.uk/bluetongue)



### Farm and Equine Centre

Markeaton Lane, Markeaton, Derby DE22 4NH  
01332 294929

Alfreton  
01773 304900

Pride Veterinary Centre  
01332 678333

Allestree  
01332 554422

Shelton Lock  
01332 700321

Hilton  
01283 732999

Stapenhill  
01283 568162

Langley Mill  
01773 304914

Stretton  
01283 565333

Mickleover  
01332 518585

Oakwood  
01332 666500

**Scarsdale Vets**  
Pets Farm Equine

**IVC EVIDENSIA**



The University of Nottingham