



# WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER

## Abortion in Cattle

Abortion in cattle can be a significant concern, leading to economic losses and herd health challenges. Identifying the cause is essential to managing and preventing further cases. In this newsletter we outline the common causes of abortion in cattle and what steps you can take to mitigate risks.

### Infectious Causes

#### *Neospora caninum*

One of the most common infectious causes of abortion and lowered fertility levels in cattle.

**Transmission:** Mainly via dogs and foxes shedding oocysts (eggs) in faeces, which contaminate feed and water. **Control:** Reduce dog access to feed/fields, remove aborted material quickly (so that it cannot be eaten by dogs or foxes) and consider culling persistently infected cows.

#### *Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD)*

Can cause early embryonic death and abortions. **Transmission:** Spread via persistently infected (PI) animals.

**Control:** Vaccination, regular herd screening/testing, and removal of PI animals.

#### *Leptospirosis*

Causes abortion storms, infertility, and reduced milk yields. **Transmission:** Contact with infected urine, contaminated water, or wildlife (particularly rats). **Control:** Vaccination, maintaining clean water sources, rodent control and minimising contact with wildlife.

#### *Brucellosis*

A notifiable disease in the UK, Brucellosis is the reason that all abortions should be reported to APHA as it could be responsible and holds public/human health risks. **Transmission:** Direct contact with infected animals or contaminated materials. **Control:** Testing and reporting suspected cases to APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency).



## Smallholders' Club

Our Smallholder's Club Quiz Night was a great success! The evening was well attended and pizzas were enjoyed alongside a demonstration of some exciting new technology in worm egg counting.



## Toxins

Mycotoxins from mouldy feed and poisonous plants (e.g., hemlock, bracken) can lead to abortion. **Control:** Monitor feed quality and pasture for toxic plants.

## Trauma & Stress

Rough handling, overcrowding, transport, or extreme weather can cause pregnancy loss. **Control:** Handle cattle calmly and provide adequate shelter and space.

# What to do if you suspect an Abortion Issue?

1. Report any abortions to us as your vet and to the APHA
2. Record detailed records of all abortions, including dates and affected animals
3. Isolate the affected animal to prevent potential disease spread
4. Keep aborted material for testing (ideally the same day), we will work with you to send any foetuses, placentas and samples collected for diagnostics at the appropriate laboratory.
5. Review biosecurity measures
6. Discuss vaccination & prevention strategies with us as part of your herd health planning.

By understanding and addressing the causes of abortion in cattle we can work together to improve herd health and productivity. If you have any concerns or require further advice, don't hesitate to contact us on 01328 964444



## Salmonella Dublin

Can cause late-term abortion, weak calves, and diarrhoea. **Transmission:** Faecal-oral route, infected carrier animals. **Control:** Biosecurity, vaccination, and limiting wildlife access to feed and water.

## E. coli

Can cause sporadic abortions, particularly in late gestation. **Transmission:** Contaminated water, feed, or poor hygiene in calving areas. **Control:** Maintain strict hygiene, ensure clean water sources, and implement good calving management practices.

## Bluetongue Virus (BTV)

Can cause abortion, congenital defects, and reduced fertility. **Transmission:** Spread by biting midges (Culicoides species). **Control:** Monitor for outbreaks, implement vector control measures, and vaccinate for BTV to reduce transmission, contraction and clinical effects of the disease..

# Non-Infectious Causes

## Nutritional Deficiencies

Deficiencies in selenium, iodine, vitamin A, and energy imbalance can contribute to early pregnancy loss or reduced fertility but are unlikely to cause abortion later in gestation. **Control:** Balanced diet with mineral supplementation as needed.