



# WENSUM VALLEY VETS NEWSLETTER

## New Ovacyte Worm Egg Counting Machine

The practice has invested in a state-of-the-art worm egg counting machine which can identify all relevant species of worm present in sheep and cattle in the UK. This will allow us to target our treatment to groups most at risk of disease and diagnose the cause of problems such as diarrhoea, poor weight gain, weight loss and listlessness. This automated process is significantly more precise than the previous method of manually counting and is available for one-off worm egg counts or as part of **our Smallholders Club**.



Worm egg counting is recommended and now common practice for most keepers of livestock instead of 'blanket worming' or worming



## Johnes Disease

### *What is Johnes Disease?*

Johnes (AKA paratuberculosis) is a chronic (long term), contagious, bacterial disease of ruminants. It is caused by *Mycobacterium avium*, a resistant bacterial organism which is able to survive for long periods in the environment. The disease affects the intestinal tract of infected animals causing weight loss (wasting) and chronic, severe diarrhoea. However, Johnes Disease has a very long incubation period, meaning that these signs may not occur until 3-5 years after the initial infection. Young animals are most susceptible to infection, which can occur by ingestion of bacteria through colostrum or the faeces of infected animals. Less commonly, transmission can occur through the uterus during pregnancy.



periodically. It often results in financial benefits, as money is saved by not using wormers, as well as the long term benefits of not causing wormer resistance problems.

## Fluke Testing:

The Ovacyte machine can also identify fluke eggs!

SCOPS/COWS recommend Faecal testing in Winter, Spring and Late Summer, during the chronic disease risk period every 4-8 weeks.

However a more achievable approach would be to conduct Faecal Testing at housing, followed by a Faecal Egg Count Reduction Test (FECRT) if positive results are detected, and then to test again 2 months following turn out to look for reinfection from the pasture.



## The signs:

- Severe, long term diarrhoea
- Weight loss
- Usually seen in adult/older cattle

In sheep:

- Weight loss
- Diarrhoea is less common in sheep

## Diagnosis and Herd Testing

Differentiating Johnes from other wasting diseases such as parasitic gastroenteritis based on clinical signs alone is not possible so testing is recommended. Blood and faecal samples can be taken on farm.

## Why test?

In infected herds, the yearly culling/mortality rate can be greater than 5%! More subtle signs such as lowered fertility and growth rates are also factors in the annual cost of Johnes disease. One study found that in a 100 cow sucker herd, the average annual loss due to Johnes is £4532! This cost was due to the presence of disease causing 5% less calves to be produced per year and another 5% of those calves having reduced growth rates in the run up to weaning, as well as culling and replacement cows.

An American study on dairy herds found that cows infected with Johnes gave on average 4000kg less milk over their lifetime and were twice as likely to develop mastitis.

If your farm has no history of Johnes it is essential that prevention measures are in place to stop the introduction of infection. Following infection, eradication of Johnes Disease can take many years and become very costly.

## Management

Sadly there is not a vaccine or treatment for Johnes, and control can be very difficult. Good biosecurity and stringent hygiene measures are necessary to minimise risk of faecal contamination, especially in newborn calves. Snatch calving (removing calves immediately after birth) can be used to lessen the risk, however faecal contamination and infection across the uterus are still possibilities. Therefore regular testing and rapid culling of any infected animals is recommended.

