

## Bluetongue vaccines

With bluetongue now very much on our doorstep we wanted to update everyone about the vaccination options. A few cases have been detected in Cheshire and whilst these have been in animals that have been moved into the county from now restricted zones it is important to note how easily the virus can spread. Since the 18th October the whole of England is now covered by a general licence for vaccinations meaning vaccinations can be ordered via the practice when needed.

### Key vaccine facts to be aware of:

- Unlike the authorised vaccines for other BTV serotypes, the BTV-3 vaccines claim to reduce viraemia rather than prevent it. This means **they may not prevent animals from being infected or infectious**, but (depending on the vaccine) their claims include reduction or prevention of clinical signs experienced or mortality.
- Keepers may administer vaccine to their own animals.
- As a condition of the licence, **all animals vaccinated must be identified in accordance with the legislation. (animals must be individually tagged if vaccine is used - all species – especially important for sheep as often these only have batch tags)**
- Any wasted vaccine **must be returned to the prescribing veterinary surgeon**.
- The cold chain must be preserved. All storage and handling information on the SPC must be observed.
- Animals should be gently and quietly handled during vaccination.
- The government authorities recommend that to prevent potential spread from subclinically infected animals **during vaccination that a fresh needle is used per animal - this is stipulated due to the fact BTV3 can be spread by infected blood**. As this is quite impractical our minimum recommendation is that spirit soaked swabs are used to disinfect needles between animals and if any blood contamination is noticed during vaccination the needle should be changed immediately.
- Pre- and post- movement testing is still required in vaccinated animals leaving the Restricted Zones (not currently applicable to Cheshire/Derbyshire/Staffordshire/Greater Manchester).
- These are relatively new vaccines so the full extent of potential side effects is not yet established. The vaccine we are using (Bultavo-3) is known to be safe in pregnancy but no data has been collected regarding safe use in lactation and in breeding males.
- We do not yet know how long the vaccines provide immunity for but initial courses are two doses (1ml) 3 weeks apart in cattle and a single dose (1ml) in sheep. It takes 3 weeks to establish immunity in sheep and it is unknown in cattle.

The vaccine will cost £2.50 (ex VAT) per dose and is only available in 50 dose bottles in the UK.

Please give us a ring to discuss any questions you may have regarding vaccination or bluetongue in general.



## H&S at TB testing

Unfortunately Tb testing can be a dangerous job so in order to keep all of our TB testers as safe as possible we have compiled our top tips for making TB testing as safe and efficient as it can be.



- A well-functioning crush/head yoke is a minimum for handling during TB testing
  - Ensure it is the right size for the cattle using it
  - Consider if the floor of the crush is in good condition as this will keep cattle moving in well and avoid injuries to the their feet/legs
  - Consider if all of the handles and moving parts are functioning smoothly
- Consider a safe working space for the TB tester
  - This should be cattle-free to ensure the testers can work uninterrupted and safely
  - Using some hurdles to block off an area or pulling the crush out from the wall to ensure the tester can stand the opposite side to the cattle both are ideal options
- Anchor the crush to stop it moving or tipping
- Consider where it best for you to stand – discuss with the tester whether they prefer cattle to stand back or forwards in the head yoke
- A race behind the crush can improve safety for people handling the cattle in the collecting pen and ensure cattle move forwards more easily
- If buying a new crush consider where panels or bars can be removed and how much space is available for reaching in to the animals
- Consider staffing options – familiar staff should be used to handle cattle and if extra manpower is needed consider getting them to operate the crush
- Ensure familiarity with the plan
  - Who is doing what role
  - Where the cattle are coming from and going to
  - How the equipment works

## British Farming Awards Congratulations!

We would like to extend our congratulations to Andy Goodwin of Dayhouse Green Farm who has won Grassland Farmer of the Year at the British Farming Awards. The judges were impressed with the commitment to sustainability by reducing carbon footprint, improving soil health and enhancing efficiency.



## Do you want to talk feet

**Save the date for a lameness meeting on the 27th November.** We will be starting at Holly Tree before moving to an on-farm element discussing housing with Jess and the Dutch 5 step method with Bryan. More details to come soon so keep an eye out for the invites in the post!

Following on from this we are gathering interest for a first aid foot trimming course in the New Year. If you think this is something you would be interested in then let us know and we will provide you with more details nearer the time.

## Let's talk minerals

Unsure if your cattle are receiving suitable levels of trace elements? You aren't alone. Trace element deficiency most often presents as a general ill-thrift, which can be easy to overlook or even attribute to other causes. Requirements vary depending on the animal's stage of production, and farm conditions alter the individual element's levels and absorption (which can change year to year). To help tackle this topic, we've highlighted a few minerals that are often deficient in cattle in this area, as well as signs to look for and how we can be of assistance in identifying problems on-farm.



### What do these minerals do?

- **Cobalt** is used to synthesize Vitamin B12 which is essential for energy metabolism contributing to proper rumen function and growth, as well as the production of red blood cells.
- **Copper** is an essential element for a variety of metabolic processes, fertility, growth, and for carrying oxygen in the blood stream. Youngstock and in-calf heifers are most at risk for deficiency. Availability of copper can be limited by the presence of other elements like molybdenum, iron, and sulphur. Therefore, management can involve reducing the dietary level of these elements in addition to supplementing with long-acting rumen available sources of copper.
- **Iodine** is essential for proper thyroid gland function to regulate metabolism. Iodine is important for calf survival and vigor, as calves born to deficient dams can be stillborn, weak, or slow to suckle. Iodine content can be low in the soil, but dietary compounds in brassicas and legumes can also disrupt iodine metabolism contributing to deficiency.
- **Selenium** is necessary for immune response, reproductive performance, and protection of muscles from cellular damage. The congenital form of deficiency commonly presents as a weak calf, unable to suckle, that dies in the first few days. In older animals, a deficiency can be reflected by stiffness and inability to stand, but the impact on muscle can also have respiratory or cardiac implications leading to sudden death.

### How do I know when there is a problem?

Beyond general ill thrift, these minerals can have more specific signs, especially in advanced cases. Supplementation is all about careful balance. Over-supplementing will not only come with increased costs and labor, but it can also lead to toxic doses. The table below outlines some common presentations:

Trace Element	Signs of deficiency	Signs of toxicity
Cobalt	Ill thrift Inappetence Anemia	Low risk of toxicity
Copper	Ill thrift Rough, discolored coats "Spectacle" appearance around the eyes Hair loss around ears and muzzle Scour Reduced fertility	Weak animals Listlessness Jaundice Anorexia  *Toxicity is more likely in young calves given many milk replacers are high in copper

Iodine	Ill thrift Goitre (more obvious in new-born animals) Stillbirths Weak calves at birth Retained cleansings	Goitre Reduced appetite Reduced milk production Abortions
Selenium	Ill thrift White muscle disease Poor growth rates Reduced fertility	Stiffness, lameness Respiratory distress Poor coat Sloughing hooves Sudden death

### How do you assess trace element status?

#### Animal Status

The mineral status is primarily assessed by **blood samples** or **liver biopsies**. Blood sampling can be conducted for all the above mentioned minerals except for cobalt. Typically, a representative group sample is taken from 6-10 animals. (When testing for iodine, a pooled sample is preferred). Liver biopsies are more indicative of long-term trace element status and storage and are particularly useful for copper testing. Samples can be taken from live animals by your vet, during on-farm culls, or part of abattoir sampling.

#### Farm Status

Some deficiencies, particularly in grazing animals, can be caused by low levels of minerals on-farm and limited absorption by the animals. Trace element availability in both grass and forage is altered by lots of factors including soil type, pH, geology, drainage, plant type and weather, and therefore varies from farm to farm and within different cuts of silage. These can be investigated by utilising **forage**, **silage**, or **soil analysis** in-tandem with animal testing. Water can also be sampled (particularly if non-mains water is used) to test the quality and amount of sulfur and iron, which are known to limit copper absorption.

### Which supplement is right for me?

The choice of supplement will vary greatly depending on the farm, its management style, and the requirements of the group. We have included a few examples of common options, but this decision should be made in tandem with your veterinarian and nutritionist. It is possible to achieve toxic levels of these elements, and care should be taken to ensure proper balance.

#### Forms of supplementation

- In-Feed
- Mineral licks and blocks (intake is variable)
- Boluses
- Injectable
- Drench
- Water additives
- Topical

#### How to choose

The decision to supplement is multi-faceted, taking into consideration the current mineral level and availability, the requirements of the production group, as well as the overall farm management system. This can seem overwhelming, but we are here to help. Please give us a call to discuss potential trace element issues on your farm.

FARM OFFICES

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