

Treat your loved one to a bull breeding soundness exam this Valentine's day!

A bull's fertility should be checked regularly to ensure they are working to the best of their abilities. You don't want to find out there is an issue only at pregnancy diagnosis time! Ring the office on 01477 571000 to get a breeding soundness exam sorted with Hollie, Helen W, Matt or Vicki R.



It's time to think about Lungworm again

Unbelievably it is already the time of year to start thinking about turning your heifers out! Huskvac should be given twice four weeks apart and must be given at least 2 weeks before turnout. However you can start much earlier to ensure everything is sorted at a time that is convenient to you and to avoid any risk of stock issues. Huskvac will once again be available this year in 12 dose boxes only. We are unable to split these packs unless we have other people wanting the rest of the box at the same time. The earlier your orders come in the more likely we are to be able to link up orders to save you some money! Please ring the office to speak to Katie to give us numbers as early as possible.



Schmallenberg warning

Already in our early lambing flocks we have had several suspected and confirmed Schmallenberg cases. Schmallenberg tends to come in cycles of large outbreaks every 3-5 years in the UK. Whilst it is still a relatively new virus in Europe and the UK it has been circulating for much longer in Asia. Most

commonly we see the effects of Schmallenberg in calves and lambs although adult cattle can show vague illness signs such as reduced milk yield, fever, inappetance, loss of condition & scours. Calves and lambs are often born with deformities if the dam is infected with Schmallenberg during the most susceptible stage of pregnancy – in cattle this is 62-180 days and in sheep this is 25-50 days. Although outside of this period offspring can still be infected and may be aborted or show nervous signs.

If you see any of the signs below in your herds and flocks please give us a call and we can arrange free testing via APHA who also offer a free collection service. Whilst there are no prevention tactics it is important to know whether you are dealing with Schmallenberg or whether another disease process is occurring.

Signs to be aware of:

- Higher number of abortions or low scanning percentages
- Bent limbs
- Fixed joints (can include spine)
- Nervous signs such as 'dummy' appearance – blindness, ataxia, lack of ability to suck
- It is possible that only one lamb or calf is affected in twin/triplet situations

As we start the lambing and calving season it is even more important this year to avoid excessive force and ring us if unsure of a presentation. It can be extremely tricky to work out positioning with deformed animals and caesareans may be required more frequently due to these deformities. If you have any concerns or want to discuss things further please ring one of the vets.



Plea for Tug of War training gear

We are aiming to enter a tug of war team to the Macclesfield Sheepdog Trials and the Leek show this year. As some of you may have witnessed our attempt last year ended in glorious defeat! We are increasing our training this year and could really do with some kit to help us out. If anyone has any old tug of war boots that they aren't using for this season we would be very grateful if you would let us borrow them. Any sizes will do as we can always wear thick socks!



Lambing course

Don't forget our lambing course that is running this month. The course will prepare you for lambing difficulties (including practical demonstrations), newborn care and basic nutrition and you will leave with much greater confidence in approaching the upcoming lambing season! The course will be held at our Holly Tree office on Wednesday 21st February 10:30-13:30 with lunch included. £90pp.

To register your interest please ring the office on: 01477 571000 or email Yasmine at: yasminecooper@wmvets.co.uk

AI course waiting list

Last month we ran a hugely successful DIY AI course and as part of it we have trained up one of our own vets Helen Lyons to run the course in the future. We already have a few people on a waiting list for another one so we are hoping to be able to run it again soon. If you are interested please let us know and we will add your name to the list and contact you once we have details finalised.

Foot trimming course

Our next LANTRA approved foot trimming course run in conjunction with Embryonics will be on Monday 18th to Wednesday 20th March.

Please ring the office on 01477 571000 if interested and we will add your name to the list.

Rescheduled TB meeting

We have managed to reschedule the TB meeting from last month after one of the speakers unfortunately had to pull out. Join us at Lower Withington Village Hall on Wednesday 28th February at 7pm for a discussion about all things TB. With the cull period coming to an end there is a lot of discussion about what will happen next and how best to approach the reduction of TB in the area. Join the WM team and guest speakers including farmer insights on what we can expect next. The meeting will be free with food provided.

Small Animal Accounts

Our small animal department are having a new computer system at the end of February. Whilst this will be good for them, the functionality isn't really suitable for the farm department, so we are pleased to be sticking with the system we already have in place. The downside is that the two systems will not talk to each other, so we will no longer be able to view records for any small animals from Holly Tree or Whaley Bridge. What this means in practical terms is that if you currently have dogs, cats or other small animals on your farm account, they will now need a separate account with our small animal department too. If that account is set up in your farm business name you will still be able to get VAT receipts for your accounts for any working dogs, cats for vermin control etc. We are hoping this shouldn't cause too many problems, but if you have any questions or concerns please do get in touch. This will be new for us too so any feedback will be very welcome. You can either contact Helen Worth on 07733 121536 (Tues-Thurs) or call the office any time.

Preparing for the breeding season

You may not have started calving yet but once you do it is already time to start thinking about the next breeding season. Which cows are suitable to put back in calf? Which heifers would make your best replacements? Is your bull working to the best of his ability? How tight do you want your next calving block and how can you achieve it?

Which cows to breed from can be affected by a whole host of factors, some of which will put them straight on the cull list and others which may affect your decision making in certain circumstances. Think about the cows that had difficult calvings/caesareans and how much assistance was required and what the recovery time was like. Any cows that really struggled may not be the best candidates going forward. Whilst your vet is doing a caesarean make sure to ask what the reason for the caesarean was – if the cow had a particularly small pelvis she is not one you want to breed from in the future. Cows that have had vaginal prolapses should never be retained for future breeding whereas cows with uterine prolapses may or may not be kept. Further considerations include age of the animal, any metabolic issues (ie low calcium) and feet or mastitis issues. Another big one to consider is temperament. A highly aggressive cow is dangerous for handling during TB testing, treatment of illness and calving so is she really worth keeping? Whilst none of these immediately preclude an animal from being bred again they may factor into decisions if multiple parameters are met.

Another major factor to consider with both cows and heifers is the Johnes status of individual animals and of your farm. If you haven't regularly tested for Johnes it is worthwhile doing some testing prior to breeding to identify highly infectious animals. Alongside your vet a plan can be drawn up for breeding both replacements, fattening



stock and where necessary animals not to serve. If Johnes results are available it is worth considering family history when making decisions regarding heifers.

Heifer selection can't solely be based on which are the best (or even favourite) cows in the herd. Growth rate is an especially important factor when trying to keep blocks tight as more issues will occur if heifers are not big enough when serving. Heifers should be at 60% of adult size by the time serving occurs – a really great way to make sure you achieve this is by marking up your crush with paint to ensure any heifers coming through reach this level. Pelvic measuring is a great way to decide whether heifers will be suitable for calving. To do this we need to have an idea of birthweight of your calves. This can be done by weigh tape to give a rough idea or if you have scales that's even better! We then take measures rectally using our pelvimeter and work out which animals are suitable for breeding for your system specifically. Another factor to consider with younger heifers is lung damage from pneumonia. We can scan lungs of these younger animals and check progression of damage after any bouts of pneumonia to help you to decide whether they are likely to grow into productive animals.



Your bull (if used) is as important as the cows when it comes to fertility and ensuring tight calving blocks. The bull's fertility is not the only factor when it comes to assessing ability to work. Lameness, body condition, previous rest time and willingness to work are all essential factors. This all forms part of the assessment of a bull breeding soundness exam and these can be invaluable prior to using the bull.

If calving this year was longer than you anticipated or wanted then it may be worth considering syncing heifers and/or cows for next year. There can be huge benefits to using sync protocols other than just tightening calving blocks. They can be used with fixed time AI and depending on when you start the sync protocol it allows you to plan AI timing when it suits you. This is especially important if you run on skeleton staff on certain days of the week or if your AI tech can only make it on specific days. Pre-breeding season you can try to identify any problem cows by watching for heats prior to the planned start of service. Any cows that don't show a heat can be presented to the vet for scanning to identify any issues and hopefully get them sorted in time for the start of service. Various options are available to us depending on whether you are focusing on beef, dairy, cows or heifers. Traditionally we will use some combination of estrumate, CIDRs and ovsynchs to advance cycling of cattle but we also have options for those animals which are not cycling. Different protocols require differing levels of input from farm staff and certain cows respond better to some protocols than others so these are both things to consider prior to deciding on how to approach your breeding season. It is also really important to keep good records to ensure plans can be tweaked in the future if required. Some of the systems can be suited to natural breeding as well as AI but it is important to speak to your vet about it in advance to ensure timings are correct for when the bulls go in.



FARM OFFICES

Lower Withington

The Barn, Holly Tree Farm, Holmes Chapel Road, Lower Withington, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 9DT

Tel: 01477 571900 Email: hollytree@wmvets.co.uk

Whaley Bridge Farm Branch

Block B, Ringstones Industrial Estate, Whaley Bridge, High Peak, Derbyshire, SK23 7PD

Tel: 01663 732564



Like us on Facebook for up-to-date news and the latest events! Search 'Wright & Morten Farm Animal Services'

wm
wright & morten
Veterinary Surgeons