

A few dates for the diary

Bank holiday weekend

We have two Bank Holidays fast approaching – Monday 6th May and Monday 27th May. Whilst we will have vets available 24/7 for emergencies on these dates the offices at Holly Tree and Whaley Bridge will be shut. It is worth looking in medicines cupboards in advance of these dates to check if you require any top ups and if you are due your TB tests or require pre-movement testing please let us know as far in advance as possible. We are offering TB testing on the Monday/Thursday of these weeks so if this does work best for you ring us soon to book your slot.



Summer shows

We will be attending various shows and events throughout the summer months so keep an eye out for us and come over to say hello and have a brew if you see us around!

- **Cheshire Show – Tuesday 18th & Wednesday 19th June**
- **Leek Show – Saturday 27th July**
- **Macclesfield Sheepdog Trials – Friday 2nd & Saturday 3rd August (including the infamous tug of war!)**
- **Ploughing Match – Wednesday 25th September**

Medicines updates – Synulox

Synulox and the alternatives are all on short supply currently due to a production issue. The pharmaceutical companies currently predict this will last until early 2025. We are exploring alternative options from around the world but please be aware we may have brand name changes if we do need to import. Vets may well have more detailed discussions with you regarding Synulox use during this period of short supply to ensure the best antibiotics are being used for the conditions you are treating.

Suspicion of TB in deer

More and more we are hearing reports of large herds of deer around farms. Deer are unable to sustain infection within their own population in the absence of infected cattle/wildlife reservoir however, in this area this will almost always be present. There is evidence that wild deer can transmit TB to other deer and to cattle although not many cases of TB in deer are reported to APHA yearly. Higher population densities always increase the risk of disease transmission and therefore with increasing deer numbers we may see more frequent problems. Deer are not a protected species, so if evidence emerges that wild deer are involved in the spread of TB in a particular location, measures could be taken to control the population. If TB is suspected in a wild deer carcass then it must be reported to the Animal & Plant Health Agency. In the High Risk and Edge Areas of England, confirmation of disease can be valuable information used to guide herd management and biosecurity decisions by local cattle keepers. Confirmation of TB in wild animals can lead to TB testing changes for neighbouring cattle herds in the Low Risk Area of England only.

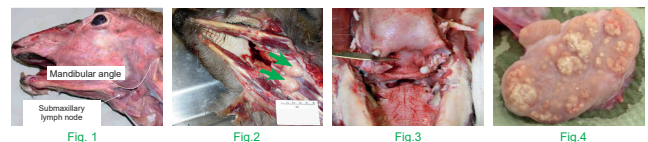
If you or anyone you know partakes in the culling of wild deer it is worthwhile knowing the signs to look out for when gralloching/butchering and ensure any concerns are raised with APHA. Please remember that health & safety is paramount when handling deer carcasses as TB can easily spread to people when in very close proximity.

The most common signs of TB are abnormal retropharyngeal or mediastinal lymph nodes (enlarged, deformed or ruptured) containing thick creamy yellow/green pus. Initial infection in lymph nodes of the head and lungs may spread to liver, spleen, diaphragm and under the skin –

leading to abscesses, lesions or nodules. This will cause animals to lose condition, ultimately leading to emaciation.

The medial retropharyngeal lymph nodes (x 2) are located deep in the throat behind the pharynx above the opening to the brain and spinal cord. Fig.3 below is turned round with mouth opening towards the camera. Fig.4 shows inside a TB affected lymph node.

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Chest Lymph Nodes

Bronchial lymph nodes - on either side of windpipe close to the top of the lungs.

Mediastinal lymph nodes - on top side of lungs close to the main blood vessels running between the lungs.



More information can be found on the TB Hub website and this includes some extra biosecurity measures if you are worried about deer. Our TB Advisory Service trained vets will also be happy to discuss any issues with you.

Staggers warning



Lack of rain has certainly not been an issue this year but as we edge closer to summer we are certainly hoping to see some sun! It will be lovely to

see more cows out grazing but with the sun will also come a flush of grass and the risk of staggers! It is worth thinking about your magnesium supplementation for cattle at grass.

Early signs of grass staggers include excitability with high head carriage, muscle tremors and a loss of coordination. These rapidly progress to seizures with frenzied paddling of the limbs. Death can be rapid meaning that prompt treatment of affected cows is essential. It is always worth keeping a bottle of 25% magnesium sulphate in stock – giving this under the skin whilst you're waiting for a vet to arrive could be a life saver! Remember that magnesium sulphate should never be given into the vein as it could cause a fatal heart arrhythmia.

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Guide to Ectoparasites

Livestock in the UK can fall victim to a variety of ectoparasites throughout the year. You may notice signs such as irritation, itching, hair loss, or a drop in productivity (to name a few), but what is to blame? Most species of livestock share similar ectoparasites so below is an overview of them all with special references to any differences. Symptoms

are often very similar regardless of which ectoparasite is involved so whilst we will always try to give advice over the phone we may have to visit to determine the best treatment regime.

Mites

Mites are responsible for causing mange, which is characterised by irritation, thickened scaly skin, hair loss, and/or hide damage. This tends to be a problem in autumn, winter, and early spring. They can affect most species including cattle, sheep, goats and alpacas with only some minor differences. Depending on the type of mite, the appearance and location of lesions varies:

- **Chorioptic mange** - caused by a surface mite that feeds on skin secretions and debris. Lesions are characterized by exudate and thickened skin and self-inflicted trauma is often seen in goats. It is typically seen on the feet, legs, tail base, or the udder. These may resolve naturally once at pasture in the but pour-on treatment can be used.
- **Sarcoptic mange** - caused by burrowing mites that cause intense irritation, resulting in thickened and crusted skin. Affected areas are typically on the neck, head, and tail base. The itching can become so bothersome that feeding patterns are disrupted, leading to weight loss. Itchiness can continue after treatment due to parasite antigens on the skin surface.
- **Psoroptic mange** - typically affects the back, shoulders, and tail head with scabs and intense itching. Hair loss may occur along with secondary infection that can lead to bleeding and crusty skin. In goats these mites are typically confined to ear canals and often show no major issues.

Scab (*Psoroptes ovis*) special mention!



Sheep scab mites (*psoroptes ovis*) drop faeces which cause an allergic reaction. They are spread through direct contact between sheep, contaminated trailers, wool tags, and shared equipment. The population can double every 6 days and survive in the environment over

two weeks. Most cases are seen September to April but they can occur any time. Affected sheep can appear restless, kick at their flanks, and have moist & yellow stained wool. Lesions are most often seen on flanks and over the back but can extend further in extreme cases.

A skin scrape can be taken to identify the species of mite and a blood test is also available to detect scab antibodies in sheep within two weeks of infection. Clinical signs may improve even when live mites are present, so a second scrape can be done to check efficacy of treatment. Available licensed treatments include pour-ons and injections and we often treat whole affected groups of sheep with scab using dips.

Lice

Biting and sucking lice are the two main culprits in livestock, particularly among those kept indoors over winter. They both spread by direct contact but vary in their impact:



- **Sucking lice** tend to be found around the head, neck, and eyes. They pierce the skin and suck the blood, causing anaemia and sometimes even death. Heavy infestations may indicate another underlying condition as poorly animals may not groom themselves.
- **Biting lice** are similarly found on the neck, in addition to the shoulders, back, and rump. These species feed on skin debris, blood, and scabs.

Individual immunity, breed and coat/fleece length all influence how much of an impact lice can have. Heavy burdens can cause anaemia and increase susceptibility to other diseases. Diagnosis requires microscopic examination of a hair sample by your veterinarian. All animals in direct contact should be treated. Pour-on and injectable preparations are available and often repeat treatments are required.



Blowflies (fly strike)

Female flies are attracted by the odour of wounds, soiled fleece, or dead animals. They mostly affect sheep, alpacas and goats although very occasionally cattle can be affected. After twelve hours, eggs hatch and larvae mature while feeding on the tissue of the sheep. Initial signs include agitation and a patch of discoloured wool, but can progress quickly and lead to death. Sheep in lowland areas are most at risk from March through December. Control options include preventative pour-on application, minimizing backend soiling (dagging, crutching, shearing), treatment of lame sheep, and the use of fly traps.

Ticks

Ticks can be a concern in all animals discussed, especially for their role in disease transmission, but they may also cause anaemia, secondary infection, and production loss. Individual ticks can be removed, but heavy infestations can be controlled by sprays, dips, or pour-on products.



Lambing period review

Lambing 2024 is slowly coming to an end and we have certainly shared the many ups and downs all of our client's have gone through this year. We are keeping all of our fingers crossed for some better weather to get the lambs growing as they should and prepare the ewes for the next breeding season! With next year in mind now is a great time to review your data from this year and establish where the pinch points were and whether anything can be done to improve your chances of success in 2025. If you would like any help reviewing your figures or if you haven't got figures but want to discuss the challenges you faced just give us a call on 01477 571000 and we can set up a vet review meeting.

As part of our sheep services we are pleased to announce that Matt will be returning for the first of his sheep consultancy visits on the 20th and 21st of May. Please contact us if you would like to book a sheep visit in with Matt.

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