

Merry Christmas from all of us at Farm Team!

We have had a great year working with you all and look forward to the fun and challenges the animals will bring in the next year! We are excited to continue furthering the services we offer to you and strengthening the existing relationships. As always we welcome all of your feedback and suggestions for what you would like to see in the future.



Wright & Morten Farm Festive Opening Hours

We will of course continue to provide an emergency service right through the festive period but will be running reduced hours at Holly Tree/Whaley Bridge as detailed below.

Tuesday 24th December	Holly Tree 8am-3pm/Whaley Bridge 9:30am-3pm
Christmas Day (Wednesday)	Closed
Boxing Day (Thursday)	Closed
Friday 27th December	Both sites open as usual
Saturday 28th December	Holly Tree open as usual (9am-12pm)
Sunday 29th December	Closed
Monday 30th December	Both sites open as usual
New Year's Eve (Tuesday)	Holly Tree 8am-3pm/Whaley Bridge 9:30am-3pm
New Year's Day (Wednesday)	Closed
Thursday 2nd January	Back to normal hours

TB testing over the festive period

This year we have got quite lucky with only one TB testing date being affected by bank holidays. However, it is quite often a popular time of year to test as many farms have access to additional staff members. We are quickly booking up so if you are looking for testing on specific dates please ring us soon to get booked in.

Veterinary Medicines Regulations updates

There have been some recent updates to the Veterinary Medicines Regulations which are the rules we, as vets, have to follow to prescribe medicines. Whilst the rules have not changed much they have become slightly more stringent. We are already following up on medicines requests and discussing husbandry improvements where necessary but don't be surprised if we are asking a few more questions. The information we generally look for is condition treated, species treated and volume of medicine recently requested. As always we will try to work with you as much as possible to improve health and welfare of your animals.

Planning before TB testing

Most clients are very good about having a good plan in place before TB testing but each time it is worth thinking about which animals you are due to sell, if you need to buy more animals and what the plan is if the worst happens and you are shut down. Multiple clients split tests into parts in order to sell animals or send finishing animals to slaughter prior to the main test. If new animals need to be bought in consider doing this prior to your TB test to ensure you are not struggling for numbers. Part tests do carry a visit charge on each additional visit, however, we try to keep this to a minimum. Please give us a call if you want to discuss options.

A word of caution about Bird Flu

Unfortunately it seems to be one notifiable disease just leads straight into the next these days. The snow and frost has hopefully brought to an end the 2024 season of Bluetongue but with the bird migrations arrives Bird Flu. Cases have already been confirmed in Yorkshire and Cornwall so whilst they are not yet close it is worth remaining vigilant. From this year all birds have to be registered with DEFRA meaning it should be easier to monitor and contain outbreaks.



The key signs to look out for are detailed below. We are always available to discuss any concerns you do have but will usually refer you to speak to APHA as all suspicions of cases should be reported. They are best placed to decide whether testing is required or the case followed up. The number to reach them on is 03000 200301.

- Sudden death
- Swollen head with closed and runny eyes
- Lethargy and depression
- Head and body shaking
- Drooping of the wings and dragging of legs
- Swelling and blue discolouration of comb and wattles
- Breathing difficulties such as gaping (mouth breathing), nasal snicking (coughing sound), sneezing, gurgling or rattling

Biosecurity measures can greatly decrease your risk of bringing bird flu into your flock. Keeping food and water away from wild birds where possible, removing faeces/feathers of wild birds and avoiding direct contact with wild birds. Keeping fresh sets of clothing for dealing with your own flock is especially important if you also have contact with other birds.

If you have not yet registered your poultry please do so at this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-as-a-keeper-of-less-than-50-poultry-or-other-captive-birds#:~:text=If%20you%20need%20help%20registering,5%3A00pm%20Monday%20to%20Friday>

VAN renewals

Many of you had your Veterinary Attestation Numbers completed in late 2023 and early 2024 meaning they are now due for renewal. It is worth double checking the dates on the forms and letting us know if you need them refreshing now or if you have a visit due in the next few weeks let us know and we can do it then. As a reminder the VAN forms require us to ensure your herd/flock are free from disease, have good welfare and that your biosecurity protocols are acceptable. Given the recent Bluetongue outbreak most of us are much more aware of biosecurity requirements. In order to satisfy the requirements of the form we do need to see the majority of your animals and all species that the VAN is covering. If you have multiple holding numbers you will need a separate VAN for each holding. Just give us a call if you have any questions.

How to get the most out of your calves in cold weather?

With the recent snow and cold snap in the weather it seemed a very appropriate time to discuss how to get the most out of your calves. Did you know that a newborn calf will feel cold, be more prone to disease and have decreased growth rates in anything under 9°C. This increases to 17°C if draughts over 2m/s are felt at calf level. So how can we stop calves feeling the cold?

Housing

Preventing draughts whilst still allowing for good air circulation can be extremely challenging on certain farms. Solid sections of the shed should come to 20cm above calf height in order to prevent too many draughts. It is always worth considering if certain sheds are more suited to different sizes of animals. Above this height more open sections allow for inlet of fresh air to help remove pathogens although it needs to be considered where this air can escape out. Calves don't create the same stack effect that older animals do so relying on high open ridges alone can prove problematic. If sheds are unable to be set up to prevent too much draught at calf level a good solution can be using straw bales to provide a warm place for calves to hide behind. Combining these with wooden planks at the wall just above calf level can create warmer spaces that calves can heat up with their own body heat.



Whilst the current cost of straw will mean many of you are trying to save money by bedding down less frequently or less deeply it is an area you don't want to cut back in cold weather. Dry and deep straw bedding greatly improves the warmth for calves. Nesting scores allow you to identify whether calves are likely to be warm enough and should be done frequently. Score 3 means calves should not have their legs visible when laid down. The kneel test can be performed at the same time – this involves kneeling in the pen for at least 30 seconds before checking if your knees are damp.

Temperature and humidity meters are perfect tools to put into calf

sheds. Often these have maximum and minimum readings and can be reset daily. It gives you a great idea of what is happening in the sheds when you are not there and overnight. High humidity levels suggest more frequent cleaning out and/or better draining are required. An increase in humidity often precedes outbreaks of disease such as pneumonia and will change the temperature calves feel cold at.

Feeding

Increasing feed during periods of cold weather can battle the effects of cold on growth rates. An extra 50g of milk replacer per day for calves under 3 weeks old is suggested for each drop of 5°C below 15°C. For calves over 3 weeks old an extra 50g of milk replacer per day should be fed for each drop of 5°C below 10°C. It is possible to feed calves 3 times per day in colder weather to ensure higher volumes are spread out as the mixing rates still need to stay consistent. Refreshing warm water multiple times per day will encourage calves to drink more as well.

To jacket or not to jacket?

Calf jackets can be a great resource to keep calves warm in colder weather and especially for younger calves can be an important extra source of warmth. They can be used when temperatures fall below 15°C however, they cannot be used to replace dry and warm bedding. Often signs of pneumonia can be missed when calves are wearing jackets and if temperature change calves can actually suffer from heat stress. It is important to monitor calves even more closely when using jackets. Cleanliness is also extremely important as dirty jackets can spread disease between groups of calves. Ensure the ones you buy are machine washable as this improves the chances of them being thoroughly cleaned between animals. If taking them off in the day before putting them on again at night it is worth trying to keep the same jackets for the same calves.

Our top tips for calf jackets use:

- Agree on a protocol with the farm team to include the temperature at which jackets will be used
- Prioritise calves under 3 weeks old if short on jackets
- Only put jackets on dry calves
- Only use dry and clean jackets
- Monitor jackets for cleanliness and replace a soiled or wet jacket with a clean, dry one
- Monitor calves closely for heat stress or signs of disease



Environmental temperature (°C)	Additional milk replacer (g/day)*		Additional whole milk (L/day)+	
	Birth to 3 weeks	3 weeks to weaning	Birth to 3 weeks	3 weeks to weaning
20	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0
10	50	0	0.33	0
5	100	50	0.67	0.33
0	150	100	1.00	0.67
-5	200	150	1.33	1.01
-10	250	200	1.67	1.33

*Based on a basic diet of 6 L (900 g) of milk replacer with 18% fat and 22% protein containing 18.5 MJ/kg of ME, mixed at a rate of 150 g made up to 1 L with water.

+Based on a basic diet of 6 L of whole milk containing 4.03% fat and 3.28% protein, 22.3 MJ/kg ME on a dry matter basis.

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