

Vet's Viewpoint- Sara



Hi I'm Sara, the newest addition to the Farm Animal Vet team. I joined Larkmead on the Small Animal team in August 2023 and joined the (fun) farm side in September. I grew up on Dartmoor so I am much more in my comfort zone out and about in the elements! I am really enjoying the change to farm and meeting some of you already.

They say change is the only constant in life, which does not provide much comfort in light of the recent inheritance tax proposal which means from April 2026 inherited agricultural assets worth more than £1m will have to pay inheritance tax at 20%, where they were previously exempt. The treasury has anticipated the changes will affect 500 estates, whereas figures based on Defra's Farm Business Survey would suggest the real number is closer to 70,000 estates.

This provides a very real threat to our farming community and jeopardises the future of British farming. There was however an incredible turnout at the rally last week in London, with an attendance of more than 20,000 people (Jeremy Clarkson included). What's more incredible is during the rally, 6.6T of local produce was donated to the City Harvest Food Bank – enough to produce 15,400 meals across London. It has raised vital awareness and sparked conversation even throughout non-farming groups as to how essential you are to our community. As of writing this, there are currently 130,158 signatures on the petition to discuss the inheritance tax changes in parliament, exceeding the 100,000 threshold, so there could be further change ahead.

We are here to support you in any way we can through these changes, and I look forward to meeting more of you over the following months.

Sheep and Goats

Now is the time to take samples of your silage or hay for analysis. This is inexpensive, but allows much better planning of your pregnant ewe diet.

Body condition scoring ewes in mid-pregnancy (e.g. at scanning) is also important for planning ewe nutrition in late pregnancy well.

Please contact us if you want a ration plan for your ewes, or if you want to "sense check" your planned ration with us.

If your scanning results are disappointing, don't suffer in silence, tell us! In particular, don't cull out the barren ewes until we have had a chance to blood sample them- this can be very informative, and the lab testing is subsidised for flocks over a certain size.

Winter is a good time to screen for liver fluke. Only sheep grazing pastures with the mud snail which the fluke requires will be at risk. The mud snail likes very shallow, muddy puddles, rather than streams or rivers. Pastures where hoofprints fill with water are examples of the risk areas e.g. water meadows. Despite a lot of riverside grazing in the practice area, we see little fluke (it seems mainly to be confined to along the Lam, the Pang and the Loddon), but the warm, wet conditions over the summer will have favoured it. Rather than potentially wasting money by treating blindly, we can screen for it by testing faecal samples. Please send us 5-10 individual samples, as you would for a worm egg count, and we can send them off to the lab.



Bluetongue Awareness

In the last few days APHA have rolled out a programme of Bluetongue Surveillance testing in cattle. Premises will be picked at random by APHA. Our office will give you a call to book in the visit with a vet. They will need to collect blood samples from a maximum of 35 cattle and go through the APHA questionnaire with you. We appreciate this may cause some inconvenience to you should you be selected, however surveillance testing is designed to ensure that disease control measures are proportionate whilst enabling businesses within the zone to continue operating as close to normally as possible. APHA's aim is to keep Great Britain disease-free and where disease is present, limit its spread – they and we cannot do this without your help and cooperation.

Here's the latest info (as of 1/12/24):

- 171 confirmed cases in the UK.
- The RZ now includes: Bedfordshire, Berkshire (part), Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, City of Kingston upon Hull, City of York, East Riding of Yorkshire, East Sussex, Essex, Greater London, Hampshire (part), Hertfordshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Leicestershire (part), Lincolnshire, Norfolk, North Yorkshire (part), Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire (part), Suffolk, Surrey, Warwickshire (part), West Sussex and Wiltshire (part).
- Please visit the APHA bit.ly/bluetongue-map for further info.
- A general license for the BTV-3 vaccination can be used for all counties in England. The license can be found here: bit.ly/Bluetongue-3-vaccine

There is useful species relevant sources of information available:
bit.ly/ruminanthw-Bluetongue
bit.ly/Bluetongue-AHDB

If you are concerned, please give us a call.

Dairy Cattle / Beef Cattle



With many cattle now housed you may be considering treating for fluke. Most flukicides are only effective against fluke larvae that are 2-7 weeks old (depending on the product used) meaning that some people delay treatment for this period post housing. There is now a pen side test available made by Norbrook that can give a result within 10 minutes, so rather than blanket treating, on-farm testing can be used to determine whether treatment for fluke is required or not. The test is performed on blood – which is obtained via a pin prick meaning that farmers can perform the test without needing a vet to take the blood sample. Do contact the practice if this is of interest to you. More information is available here: bit.ly/Norbrook. Test kits are available for cattle and sheep.

We have been experiencing an increase in cases of pneumonia in calves and youngstock recently. Whilst the cause is often multi-factorial, treatment of affected animals is most successful when anti-inflammatories, such as Metacam, are used alongside appropriate antibiotics. If many animals within a group are affected do have a conversation with your vet about the most effective treatment strategy based on your circumstances. We mentioned preventative vaccines a few months ago, some of these may still be appropriate and very beneficial depending on the farming system. Nasal swabbing of affected animals and post mortem examination of any animals that die can also be extremely valuable diagnostic tools and can help to guide prevention strategies for the future.



Pigs



The onset of cooler temperatures, shorter temperatures and increased humidity during autumn has created an environment that is conducive to the growth and spread of respiratory pathogens, especially the common viral infections such as PRRS and Influenza A.

Common symptoms include coughing, nasal discharge, rapid or laboured breathing, lethargy, and reduced feed intake. In acute or untreated cases this can progress to death.

Here are some strategies that can help:

Ensure ventilation systems bring in fresh air (without creating draughts) to ensure that ammonia and humidity are removed from the environment.

Biosecurity is critical in preventing the spread of infection. Please contact us if you need any advice with this.

Ensure you are offering quality nutrition with sufficient vitamins and minerals (particularly Vitamin E and selenium) to maintain robust immune systems. Again, give us a call if you'd like some advice.

Reminder - Veterinary Attestations!

With the scheme running for a year now many veterinary attestations / VAN's will be expiring over the next month. Please get in contact with the practice if yours will need an update. A VAN is required for livestock going to slaughter as their animal by-products may be exported to the EU. If you are farm assured by one of the bit.ly/GOV-qualifying-schemes then your membership number will suffice. If you have an AHWP Vet Review in place then this will also count. Give us a call if you have any questions.



Medicine Updates

- Betamox RTU 100ml- Sporadic supply until 2025
- Cevac Chlamydia- Not due back this season
- Gletvax 20d- No date
- Heptavac 50ml- No date
- Heptavac 100ml- Sporadic supply
- Gletvax 10 dose - limited availability
- Heptavac 250ml- 25th January
- Heptavac 500ml- No date
- Spotinor 250ml- Not due back this season
- Synulox 100ml Inj- End of 2025
- Toxovax - contact the office to order



🎄 Christmas Quiz 🎄

Our annual Christmas Quiz will take place this year on the **11th of December** at the George Hotel in Wallingford starting at 7pm. This is a light hearted quiz evening hosted by us and we'd love you all to come along! Either make up your own team (6 is ideal) or just let us know you're on your own and we'll add you to a team. Buffet supper provided.

RSVP: Tel 01491 651479, Email farm@larkmead.co.uk or WhatsApp 07429 488124



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