

APRIL 2025

FARM NEWSLETTER



YORK CELEBRATES 10 YEARS!

Bishopton has proudly maintained its independence since 1943, experiencing significant growth along the way. This year marks the 10th anniversary of our York Farm Office in Dunnington, with our team expanding to include Partner Mark, Senior Vet Ed, and new members Mary and Immy. To commemorate this milestone, we are hosting a charity tug of war competition with BBQ and family fun on Saturday 26th July. See inside for more details.

THIS MONTH:

Bovine Abortion

Johne's Disease: Launch of Phase 3 of NJMP

Practice News

Feeding Flock for Ultimate Performance

Summer
social dates
inside!



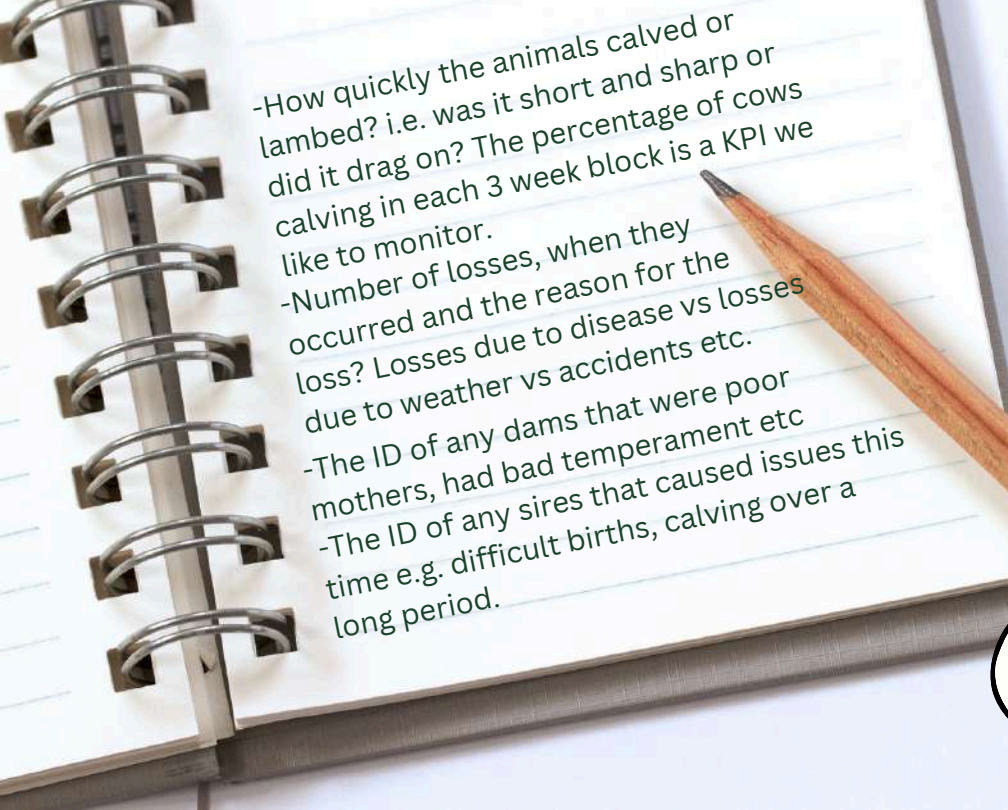
Trusted, Local & Independent since 1943

SPRING ROUND-UP

RECORD KEEPING

Spring naturally brings a focus on emerging new life and is inherently extremely busy. However, taking the time to document important information will prove invaluable when we evaluate the success of the lambing or calving season. While memories may fade, having them recorded on paper or electronically guarantees they will always be accessible for future reflection.

Things that we like to measure to help improve performance next year:

- 
- How quickly the animals calved or lambed? i.e. was it short and sharp or did it drag on? The percentage of cows calving in each 3 week block is a KPI we like to monitor.
 - Number of losses, when they occurred and the reason for the loss? Losses due to disease vs losses due to weather vs accidents etc.
 - The ID of any dams that were poor mothers, had bad temperament etc
 - The ID of any sires that caused issues this time e.g. difficult births, calving over a long period.



with Mark Spilman, Partner

BVSc MVM MRCVS

Mark's main interests lie in herd health and cattle reproduction. He is advanced breeding director for RAFT Solutions Ltd, performing embryo work, bull fertility assessments and semen collections. He leads the SemenRate laboratory at RAFT, and was awarded a Master in Veterinary Medicine (MVM) for work looking at AI in cattle and objective semen analysis.

We like to hear from you throughout the calving/lambing season, hopefully with good news, but equally when things aren't going so well! We're always here to help. Here are some recent messages from clients that have brought a smile to our faces:

Last cow calved this morning, all done in 6 weeks!

Only 30 ewes left, teasers did a phenomenal job!

Are your thoughts turning to AI for next year? From SheepPro advanced flock breeding to our DIY AI Cattle courses - you can find solutions on our website. Just scan the QR Code.



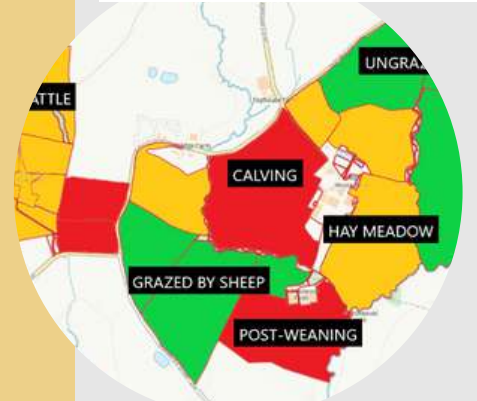
TURN-OUT PREPERATION

Spring Round-up Continued



Parasite Control

With parasite control there is rarely a one size fits all approach that works and ticks all the boxes regarding sustainability etc. We can help tailor the approach on your farm using the various tools available, including regular testing, follow-up testing post treatment, parasite risk mapping of the farms grazing platform, and surveillance for liver fluke. But the best starting point is a conversation with your own herd or flock vet.



We can provide mapping of your farm for parasite-control. Speak to your vet for further information.

Bluetongue Vaccination

We had an informative Blue Tongue farmer meeting recently, and we have had a number of conversations on the back of it.

We anticipate the Bluetongue virus challenge to be greater this year, and likely to be an earlier season too, particularly in the eastern area of the practice. We have had reports of significant issues being attributed to Bluetongue in southeastern counties e.g Norfolk and Suffolk this calving time, which we need to try and avoid next year. Therefore we are advising that **vaccination be seriously considered**, particularly for breeding stock and high value stock. For sheep it is fairly simple, as only a single dose is required and this can likely be done at the first Ovivac P handling. However cattle require 2 doses 3 weeks apart and therefore this needs a bit more planning. **This would ideally be completed a month prior to the breeding season.** The vaccine is not licensed for use in breeding males, however the potential negative impact of Bluetongue infection on male fertility is likely worse than a temporary impact as a result of vaccination. Please get in touch to discuss this further.

Animal Health & Welfare Pathway

The AHWP now allows for **more than one species to be applied for**, not just a single species as previously.

These reviews can potentially be done on the same visits, and therefore also unlocks funding for follow up visits too. For cattle doing some blood sampling for BVD pre - turnout as part of it makes sense, so get in touch to book in. Once lambs are hitting the deck and we get into the worm season, then the faecal testing for sheep can start.



Bull Testing

Our minds are already turning towards the next cattle breeding season, and making sure our bull teams are up to scratch is a crucial part of that. **Every year we find roughly 1 in 5 bulls are considered unsuitable for breeding**, so let's not leave it to chance - give us a call to get booked in!



To discuss any of these issues, call the Farm Desk on 01765 602396





BOVINE ABORTION

Abortion causes significant financial losses, not only with the death of the calf, but also costs associated with extended calving intervals and feeding pregnant cows that don't carry their pregnancy to term. In dairy cows the cost of each abortion is estimated to be £630, though losses are likely to be higher in suckler herds.

The definitions of abortion vs stillbirth are as follows:

Abortion – loss of a calf before 271 days gestation in a naturally bred/artificially inseminated cow or before 265 days gestation after ET implantation.

Stillbirth – a dead calf born after 271 days gestation.



If foetal loss is above 2%, discuss with your vet

Some level of foetal loss can be expected on every farm, but if levels start to increase to above 2% of confirmed in-calf cows, then that can be a cause for concern and should be discussed with your vet.

CAUSES OF ABORTION

There are many possible causes of abortion which can be classed as infectious or non-infectious. Non-infectious causes tend to cause sporadic abortions, whereas infectious agents can lead to 'abortion storms' within a herd. There are a wide variety of infectious agents that cause abortion, some of which specifically target the reproductive system to cause pregnancy loss and others that cause abortion secondary to pyrexia (fever) and systemic infection. Some common causes of abortion in cattle are listed in the table to the right.

Currently topical for our area, another important cause of abortion in cattle is Bluetongue Virus (BTV). BTV can cause issues with reduced fertility, abortions, stillbirth and calves sborn with neurological prolems. Please speak to your vet if you have concerns about any of these issues.

Non-infectious	Infectious
Genetic defects	Neospora
Stress ie handling	Bovine Viral Diarrhoea BVD
Environmental (i.e. heat stress)	Schmallenberg Virus
Trauma	Leptospirosis
Nutritional (i.e. mycotoxins)	Salmonella
Drug induced (i.e. prostaglandin)	Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis

BOVINE ABORTION

CONTINUED

Another cause of abortion in cattle and one that is zoonotic in nature meaning it can pass from animals to humans, is Brucellosis. Brucellosis (or 'Bang's Disease') is a highly contagious bacterial disease in cattle caused by *Brucella abortus*, leading to abortion in the second half of pregnancy, often around 7 months, and can also cause infertility and reduced milk yield.

WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF AN ABORTION

→ Isolate the affected cow(s) from the rest of the in-calf cows (to prevent the potential spread of infection).

→ Gather the aborted foetus and placenta (cleansing) and ensure it cannot be scavenged by dogs/wildlife.

→ Report the abortion(s) to APHA on 03000 200301.

→ Phone your vet to discuss whether further investigations are necessary.

→ Ensure you have excellent hygiene when handling aborted cattle and material - some infectious causes of abortion can be zoonotic (passed onto humans) so extra care must be taken if there are pregnant women/those trying to conceive on farm/at home.

It is a LEGAL requirement to report any bovine abortions to APHA within 24 hours.

This is to allow surveillance for Brucellosis. The duty vet will ask questions about the affected cow(s) and the farm to establish if a Brucellosis investigation is required. Brucella testing authorised by Defra is free of charge, including the visit. Other samples for further investigation into the causes of the abortion can be taken at the same time but lab charges will apply



Phone
APHA:
03000
200301

PREVENTING ABORTION

As there are many potential causes of abortion, there is no 'one thing fixes all' silver bullet. Prevention focuses on herd health management and good biosecurity.

You should:

Isolate any aborting cows and the aborted material.

Maintain a closed herd where possible.

Quarantine any bought in stock, ideally for 3-4 weeks.

If buying in animals, source them from high health status accredited herds - particularly bulls.

For some infectious causes of abortion, there may be vaccines available.

Ensure pregnant cows are fed good quality feed - spoiled/mouldy feed should not be given to in-calf cows.

If you are concerned about abortion in your herd, please contact your vet.



Written by Mary Hill, BSc BVetMed MRCVS

New to Bishopton this year, Mary qualified from the Royal Veterinary College in 2019.

She has worked in mixed practice on the English/Welsh border before deciding to specialise in Farm, working out of our York Office.

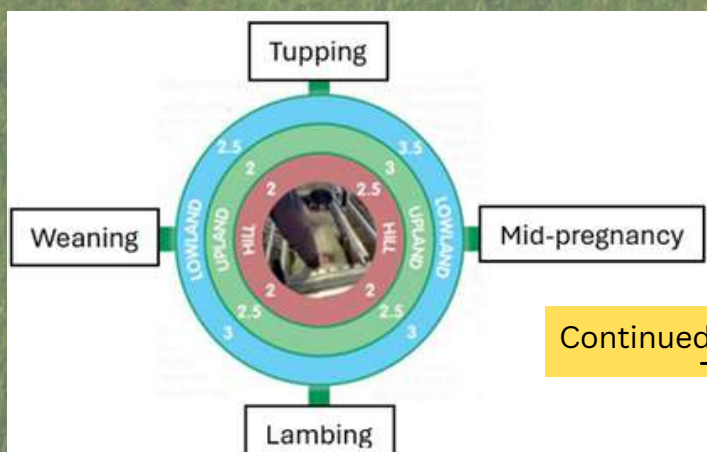


Feeding the Flock for Ultimate Performance

Feeding ewes correctly to meet their nutritional demands at varying stages of the production cycle can be a difficult juggling act, but will go a long way in preventing many of the common disease issues we see each year. Many flocks have reported lower body condition scores in the lead up to lambing this year, likely a result of the challenging grazing and wet weather conditions of last Winter and Spring and ewes failing to regain that condition before going into the tugging season. We look at some strategies below that can help us monitor ewe condition and performance, and some factors to consider when making a nutrition plan for the flock.

Assessing body condition and nutritional status

Body condition scoring is an incredibly useful and practical way of monitoring the flock's performance on their recent plain of nutrition, and would ideally be assessed every time the sheep are handled to allow early detection of condition loss and prompt nutritional alterations to be made. Ewes are scored out of 5, and this diagram demonstrates the condition score they should be at varying times over the production cycle. Lowland ewes should be 3.5/5 at tugging, 3/5 at lambing, and 2.5/5 at weaning.



Flock Health Scheme

Committed to long term partnerships supporting British livestock farming



The Flock Health Scheme is a package of tools to help sheep farmers plan for the health of their flock. The scheme is designed to promote the best ways to keep livestock healthy and focuses on the areas that will provide the greatest economic return.

The scheme covers the following:

- Annual health plan covering farm assurance requirements
- Targeted flock health visits at strategic times of the year: pre-lambing, post-lambing and pre-tugging
- Support with monitoring key performance indicators
- Tap fertility examinations
- Discounted worm egg counts
- Preferential medicine band
- 25% off FarmSkills training courses
- Discussion group membership
- Out of hours visits at discounted rates
- 20% off all pet bills
- Scheme available on monthly terms

All health visits are tailored to your requirements but may include:

- Body condition scoring
- Lambing performance review
- Barren ewe sampling
- Breeding policy
- Parasite control
- Lameness
- Trace element sampling
- Forage and feed analysis
- Lamb thrift discussion



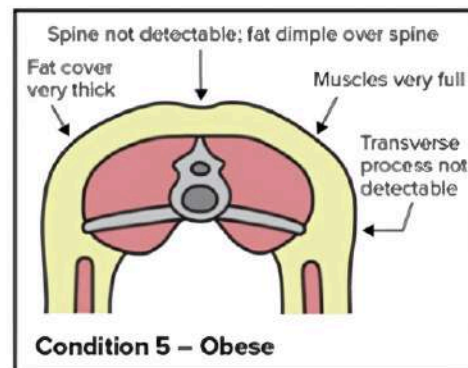
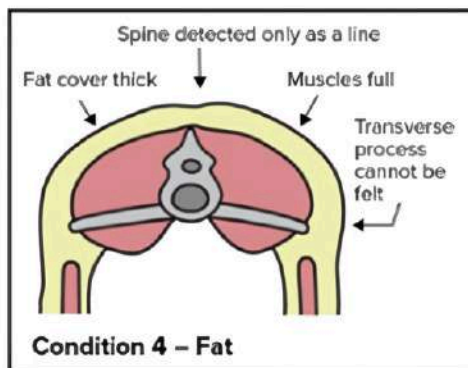
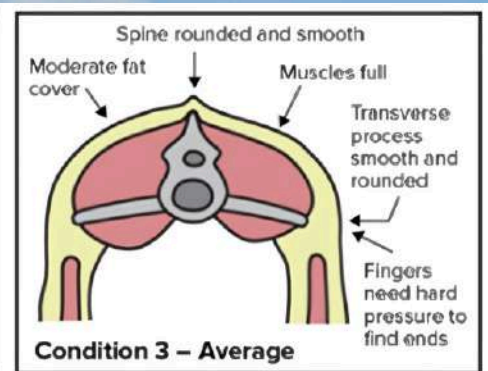
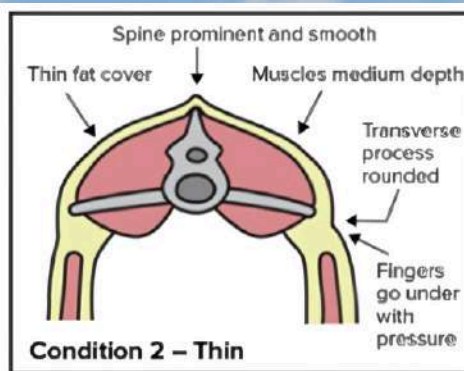
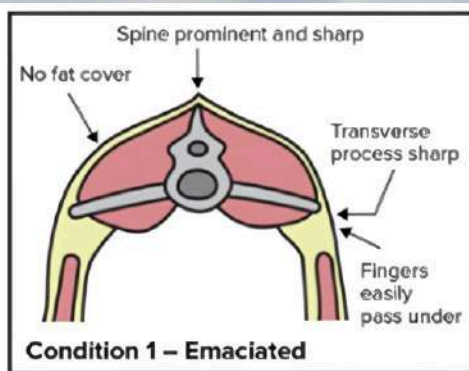
For optimum flock performance, have you considered joining our Flock Health Scheme? For further information talk to your vet or call 01765 602396.



Feeding the Flock for Ultimate Performance

Continued

We are aiming to see 90% of the flock hitting these target scores. Any deviations away from this can indicate that nutrition has been inadequate and excess body reserves have been mobilised to meet demands, or that we have supplied surplus nutrition to requirements adding unnecessary costs to the system. Splitting ewes into different groups at weaning based on body condition can be helpful to allow targeted feeding of the leaner group and restricted grazing for any over-conditioned ewes, ensuring we have the majority of the flock at the target score pre-tupping.



Metabolic blood profiles are a great way to objectively measure the ewes nutritional status, particularly in the pre-lambing period when metabolic demands are high. Blood testing six ewes (ideally three twins and three triplets) at approximately 3-4 weeks before lambing will help to identify any early signs that energy and protein demands are not being met, and allow you enough time to make changes to the feed ration before issues such as pregnancy toxæmia begin to occur.

What should we consider for a pre-lambing ration?

Energy and protein demands increase dramatically in late pregnancy with 75% of foetal growth occurring during the last eight weeks.

A lack of energy and protein during this time can lead to body condition loss, poor colostrum development and milk yield, and the birth of small weak lambs. As ewes get closer to lambing, their rumen capacity reduces due to limited space in the abdomen, (see fig 3 overleaf) so supplying high quality forage is essential to reduce the reliance on concentrate feed. Analysing the forage is a useful tool allowing us to calculate the energy and protein available and how much concentrate feed will be required to meet their demands, which will also depend on body condition score and the number of lambs they are carrying. Silage typically provides a higher crude protein (CP) and metabolisable energy (ME) content than hay so can be a useful option, but it must be well ensiled and not contain any spoilage to avoid issues such as Listeriosis.

Feeding the Flock for Ultimate Performance

Continued

Forage palatability and access are both essential to ensure maximum intakes are achieved, so ensure ewes have at least 15cm of feed space for forage and that it is provided ad-lib to avoid competition.

Concentrate feeds are an effective way to fill the nutritional deficit and help ewes avoid body condition loss in late pregnancy. Selecting feeds with a high ME value (ideally 12.5 or above) and crude protein content of 16-18% can ensure ewes meet their demands without having to consume excess quantities. Over feeding ewes in late pregnancy can lead to several issues including rumen acidosis, metabolic/calcium disorders, and an increased likelihood of prolapses. To reduce this risk, avoid feeding ewes more than 500g of concentrate at once by dividing their ration into two or three feeds per day based on the volumes required.

Nutritional demands remain high from lambing right through to peak lactation when lambs are around 4-6 weeks of age. Spring grass can provide a great energy and protein source for ewes in lactation, however many earlier lambing flocks will struggle to achieve grass covers above 4cm so ensure adequate dry matter intakes, and so concentrate feeding after lambing may be required (see the image for an example of concentrate requirements of ewes rearing twins on different grass covers).

Feeding concentrate or providing high energy buckets after lambing can have several benefits, including a reduced risk of hypomagnesaemia due to supplementary magnesium in the feed, and fewer cases of mastitis as lambs cause less udder trauma when milk yields are higher.

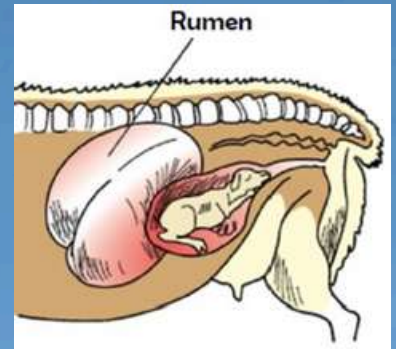
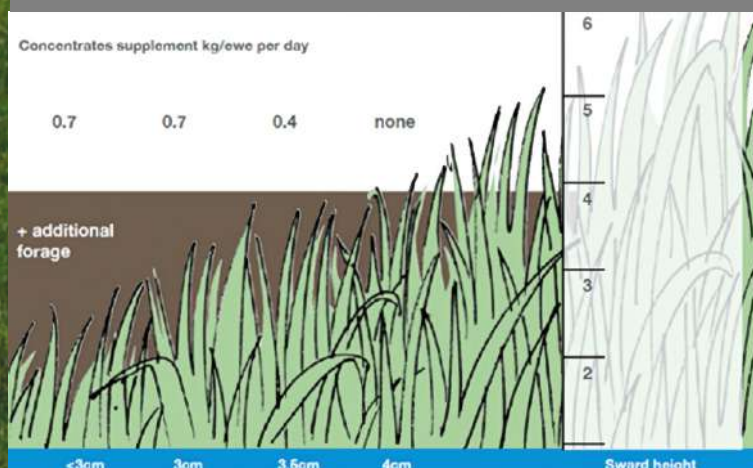


Fig 3. As ewes get closer to lambing, their rumen capacity reduces due to limited space in the abdomen

The rumen is a sensitive environment and takes 2-3 weeks to adapt to different feeds, so changes in the type of forage and the volume of concentrate should be made gradually where possible to maintain optimum rumen function. Housing ewes close to lambing can be a dramatic change and trigger issues such as hypocalcaemia, so starting ewes on concentrate feed and supplementary forage before they are housed will help to minimise this stress and allow a stable transition.



Fig 4. Earlier lambing flocks will struggle to achieve grass covers above 4cm, so ensure adequate dry matter intakes.

If you would like to discuss the body condition and performance of your flock, or for any further information on nutrition planning, please get in touch with your flock vet or contact the office.

Written by Ed Noblett,
BVSc MRCVS

Having grown up on a sheep farm in Pembrokeshire, Ed's particular interest is in flock health and medicine.



April 2025, York 10-year Special

SOCIAL EVENTS

Summer is always a busy time for social events here at Bishopton, but this year, to celebrate York's 10th Anniversary, we're throwing a few more events into the mix! Keep an eye on our social media and emails for further updates.



Tug of War & Family BBQ

Mixed teams of up to eight are encouraged to compete against one another in this classic display of strength. Ladies and juniors encouraged (minimum age 12).

BBQ, bar and bouncy castle. All proceeds to Farmer Community Network (FCN) & Yorkshire Air Ambulance

**Dunnington Sports Centre
Saturday 26th July 2025
2pm - 5pm**

5-A-SIDE FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT



Friday 6th June, Carperby
6pm until we finish

Your annual chance to thrash our vets at football. Beers & BBQ Included.



The York vs Ripon Match

Forget The Ashes, if you want to see the most competitive game of cricket of the summer, head to Helperby to watch Mark's York team go head to head with Neil's Ripon team. It will be tense. There may be strawberries...

Date TBC



SHOWS

This year to celebrate our York office's 10 year anniversary, we're adding two more dates to our season - Ryedale on Tues 29th July and Malton on Sunday 29th June. As ever we'll have a fully stocked bar, soft drinks and some baitboxes to keep you going while you hit the shows. Drop in and say hi!



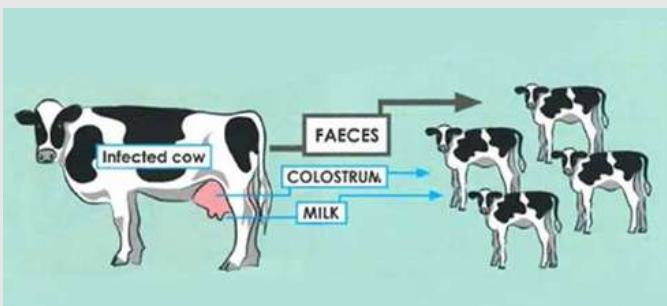
DAIRY

Johne's Disease: An Overview

Johne's disease is a chronic, contagious disease of the small intestine, caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium avium* subs. *paratuberculosis* (MAP). After infection with MAP, cattle enter a long incubation period, followed by the subclinical and clinical stages of infection. Whilst in the silent, subclinical stage, animals can be shedding billions of bacteria into the environment in their faeces, milk or colostrum. 10-15% of these animals will eventually enter the clinical stage, showing clinical signs of profuse watery diarrhoea, weight loss and reduced milk yields. Due to this, only 1-5% of infected animals in a herd will show clinical signs of the disease; one clinically sick animal indicates a much wider problem within the herd.

What is the impact of Johne's disease?

In 2024, the estimated prevalence of Johne's disease in the UK herd was 68%. The financial impacts of this are huge, as Johnes positive animals are five times more likely to be lame, twice as likely to develop mastitis/ high cell counts and give on average 4000kg less milk in their lifetimes. On top of this, they tend towards poorer fertility and have difficulty maintaining body condition. For these reasons, minimising and preventing transmission of the disease is essential to improve profitability and maintain a high standard of animal welfare.



be infected across the placenta – daughters from positive cows are at much higher risk of testing positive in later life. Transmission between adult cows in situations with very high percentages of positive animals has been demonstrated – but new infections due to poor calf management is by far the biggest risk factor. Unfortunately, identification of affected animals is complicated by the low sensitivity of diagnostic testing and long incubation period of the condition - clinical signs are rarely seen



Getting it under control:

Understanding the process of disease transmission is essential to controlling Johne's. 80% of infections are picked up in the first month of life, though calves can be infected up to 12 months of age. Infection usually occurs when calves ingest milk, colostrum or faeces from an infected dam, though they can also

in animals less than 2 years of age, most commonly arising in animals between 4-7 years old. Hence, dedication to a strict control plan is required over time in order to see a reduction in disease prevalence.



Johne's Disease: An Overview

Continued

As part of a national push to reduce the prevalence of the condition, membership of the National Johne's Management Plan has been a red tractor requirement since October 2019.



The main control measures fall under the following five categories:

1. Regular testing

This may comprise of an annual random cow screen or whole herd testing through individual milk samples. This allows cows to be assigned a Johne's status of J1-5, and a farm-specific control plan to be put in place based on risk/ prevalence.

2. Cow management

Dependent on test status, some animals will be listed as priority culls. Positive animals should be marked visually e.g. with a red ear tag.

3. Calf management

It is advisable to have a separate calving yard for test positive cows and to engage in snatch calving – removal of calves immediately from the dam. Strict hygiene measures should be adhered to with pens and feeding equipment. Pasteurisation of milk and colostrum at 60°C for 60 minutes is ideal before feeding.

4. Replacement management

Breeding choices should be made according to Johne's status- replacements should be bred from test negative animals, positives should only be bred to beef sires. In some cases, daughter lines from positive animals should also be served to beef.

5. Environmental management

MAP can survive for 55 weeks on pasture, 48 weeks in water and sediment and over 6 months in slurry – it is essential to provide clean water and avoid spreading slurry on youngstock pastures.

Cont'...



RAFT Solutions Ltd offer advanced breeding services, either on-farm or at their bespoke on-site facility. They provide reliable semen quality analysis for bovine, porcine and equine along with:



Embryo collection & transfer

Semen & embryo storage

Ovum pick-up & in-vitro fertilisation

Semen collection

Call 01765 645893 for more information.



Johne's Disease: An Overview

Continued

J ACTION JOHNE'S

Created in 2015, the NJMP has a goal of controlling and reducing the incidence of Johne's disease in the UK. Membership in the scheme involves the following steps:

1

Assess the level of biosecurity and disease risk on farm. Areas of risk include buying in cattle, importing slurry/ manure, shared waterways, wildlife (e.g. sheep, rabbits, deer) and the purchase of milk/ colostrum from other farms.

2

Define the disease status of the herd
Milk or blood testing is carried out to assess herd prevalence.

3

Create an action plan for control. ie control strategies are available to suit different herds, ranging from biosecurity measures to keep a negative herd clean, to more stringent measures for those with high levels of infection. These focus on reducing risk of spread by implementing strict protocols around calving, milk and colostrum feeding, youngstock management, record keeping, testing of adult cattle, breeding decision making and culling. These are described in more detail on the previous page.

4

Monitor progress
The programme requires a minimum of yearly screening to assess whether disease prevalence is being reduced.

So, what's new?

- As of the 31st March 2025, Phase III of the NJMP is being launched. This will require all member herds to obtain an 'average test value', which will allow the herd level of disease to be monitored and tracked over time. The minimum requirement to generate at ATV will be a 60 cow random screen – the 30 cow targeted screen will no longer be accepted for those on an Improved Farm Management and Strategic Testing strategy. The goal is to reach a national average test value of 5.5 in the national herd by 2030.
- If you have any concerns about Johnes in your herd or would like some advice, please talk to your vet or call Farm Desk on 01765 602396.

Written by Immy Allen

BSc(Hons) BVSc MRCVS

Newest member of the team, Immy's interests are mainly focussed around dairy fertility work, but she loves a good calving/caesarean... and can't resist the weird and wonderful - especially deer work.



A free AHDB webinar will be given for farmers on the 31st March outlining these new requirements.

DIY AI TRAINING
23rd - 25th April & 19th - 21st May

Are you increasing your farm's self-sufficiency, or simply looking to boost your herdsman CV? Our 3-day, vet-led, practical course will give you the knowledge, skills and confidence to tighten your breeding program & reach your specific herd goals. Call 01765 602396 or visit our website.

