

APRIL 2024

# NEWSLETTER



**Black Sheep Farm Health**  
Dedicated farm vets

## Ensure BVD Check Test Done Pre-Turnout!

Turnout will not be far away, make sure that we have been out to do your BVD check test on 2023 born calves!

## Freeze Branding

Freeze branding is used widely for beef cattle in America and Australasia, as well as for the British dairy herd.

Freeze brands are easily read from a distance, and provide an insurance against tags falling out. Cattle can be freeze branded as adults or when selecting replacement heifers to join the breeding herd.

Cattle with thick coats can still be freeze branded – for best effect the brand can simply be clipped before calving to aid identification.

The position of the brand can be tailored to how the cattle are kept. If housed loosely or calved at grass, a brand on the side of the thigh may be best while for cattle kept tighter or frequently run through races, a higher brand may be more appropriate.

Cattle should also be branded in good time as it can take up to 3 months for brands to grow out with white hair.



To discuss freeze branding and pricing, please speak to Kaz.

## Coccidiosis

Coccidiosis is a disease which generally affects calves between 6-12 weeks of age.

Coccidia are a type of protozoal parasite, which can cause significant damage to the cells which make up the walls of the intestines.

Acutely affected animals typically present with scour with blood or mucus, abdominal pain, straining, gaunt appearance and a poor appetite, but can also present as mild, pasty scour and a dull coat in suckled beef calves at grass.

Diagnosis is based on the age of animals and their clinical signs. Faecal samples can be taken to look for eggs of the Eimeria, however many Eimeria species are non harmful and clinical signs can be seen prior to egg production so interpretation can be difficult.

Treatment of clinical cases involves giving 'coccidiostats' to treat the coccidiosis along with fluids and other symptomatic treatment. At risk calves can be dosed preventatively with coccidiostat oral drenches.

## Synchronising Late Calvers

It is easy for late calvers to slip further outside of the herd's calving pattern.

Synchronising these late calvers to resume cyclicity earlier in the breeding season provides an opportunity to get these cows to fall into line with the rest of the herd, shortening the calving period and resulting in a more uniform batch of calves.

Please get in touch with Jack if you'd like to discuss synchronising late calvers.

## Bull Testing in Good Time

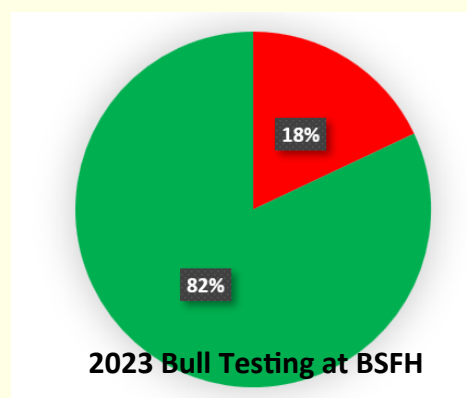
Calving may still be ongoing but it will not be long before the bulls go back out for spring-calving herds. It takes about two months for semen quality of a bull to recover after an insult, so it is important that pre-breeding soundness examinations are carried out sooner rather than later!

**Of all the bull testing carried out at BSFH in 2023, 18% of bulls failed.**

Previous performance is no guarantee of future success and it is important that bulls are semen tested annually!

In addition to semen evaluation, all bulls should be sound in the fundamentals:

- Body Condition: Target 3.0-3.5.
- Locomotion: should be able to move freely, ensure feet are trimmed in good time for bulling to avoid 'new shoe syndrome'.
- Libido
- Routine treatments: Do not forget bulls need routine treatment just as the cows do, including wormers, flukicides, vaccinations and trace element supplementation.



## Ticks & Tick Borne Diseases

Ticks, and the diseases they carry, have the potential to cause significant problems at this time of year, particularly as tick activity increases with the mild, wet weather and with the presence of naive animals. Tick borne diseases include:

- Tickborne Fever (TBF): Tick borne fever is a bacterial infection caused by *Anaplasma phagocytophilum* and suppresses the immune system of naive animals by destroying neutrophils, a type of white blood cell. Infected individuals will have a sustained high temperature, anorexia and depression and naive in-lamb ewes are likely to abort. The immunosuppressive effect of TBF can also leave an animal vulnerable to other infections, including pneumonia, septicaemia, louping ill or tick pyaemia.
- Tick pyaemia: Tick pyaemia is bacterial infection caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* and may present as either a septicaemia or localised abscess formation. It is typically seen in young lambs, up to 12 weeks old. Presentation of affected lambs varies from dull and ill thrifty, to 'crippled' lambs with severe lameness or paralysis of the hind legs.
- Also Louping ill and Babesia but they are less commonly seen in our area.

Control of tick borne disease is dependent on reducing exposure to ticks during risk periods, and managing sheep to ensure they have been exposed before pregnancy in order to avoid TBF abortions. Particular care is required when new sheep are brought onto a farm with tick areas from a farm or area that is 'tick-free'. Even adult sheep are at risk in these circumstances so they must be introduced well ahead of the breeding season and protected from ticks using an acaricide product.

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