

DECEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER



Christmas Drinks

We'll be headed for a Christmas drink or two at the Turks Head in Rothbury on Friday 15th December.

Please feel free to drop in and join us for a festive catch up!



BLUETONGUE ALERT

Multiple cases of bluetongue have been confirmed in Kent. Bluetongue is a notifiable disease, spread by midges that can affect sheep and cattle, amongst other ruminants.

As transmitted by midges, the spread is somewhat weather and environmental condition dependent. Due to the current cold conditions, it is likely that the disease will not be transmitted over the winter, but the risk may increase as the weather warms in the spring.

Regardless, please remain vigilant for the signs of bluetongue:

Sheep are more likely than cattle to show obvious signs, These include:

- Ulcers in mouth or on nose
- Discharge from eyes/nose
- Drooling from mouth
- Swelling of lips, tongue, head, neck and coronary band
- Death

Cattle show less obvious clinical signs but these signs are similar to sheep and may include crusting around mouth and nose, redness of eyes, nose, mouth and skin above hoof, nasal discharge and teat lesions.

Please get in touch with any concerns.

When were your farm dogs last wormed?

Red Tractor require farm dogs to be wormed regularly to minimise disease risks to live-stock. The dog tapeworm can cause lesions in sheep, which can lead to partial or complete carcass rejection at slaughter. Rejection as a result of *C. ovis* costs the English sheep industry upwards of £2million each year.

It is important that worming farm dogs is recorded in your medicine book in order to comply with Farm Assurance standards.



Christmas Opening Hours

Please make sure you are aware of our Christmas office opening hours:

Friday 22nd December – 8:30am-4pm

Monday 25th December – Closed

Tuesday 26th December – Closed

Wednesday 27th - Friday 29th December – Open as normal

Monday 1st January – Closed

As always, while the office is closed, vets will remain on call for emergencies.

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Feeding The Beast: Working Dog Nutrition

We often refer to the 'three-legged stool' of beef and sheep production – the legs being health, genetics and nutrition. For best results, all three ought to be optimised. Likewise, any of the three can be the limiting factor. You can have a well-bred racehorse in great health, but feed her straw and she's not going to win many races. The same applies to working dogs. They are the athletes of the canine world – and yet we often give little thought to their nutrition. In the absence of other criteria, it often comes down to cost. And why not?

The 'optimum' diet

- **High fat: low carbohydrate:** increasing fat can train the muscles to store and use more fat as a fuel source, which in turn increases the ' VO_{2max} ' (a measure of endurance – i.e. how long until exhaustion is reached).
- **High protein:** Low protein diets can also reduce VO_{2max} , perhaps because counts of red blood cells (which carry oxygen in the blood) are higher on high protein diets. Low protein increases the rate of soft tissue injuries– sled dogs fed an 18% protein diet (compared to a 23% protein diet) were eight times more likely to sustain a soft tissue injury.
- **High moisture**
- **Fed shortly after exercise:** muscle proteins damaged during exercise are replenished more completely and rapidly when fed within two hours of exercising. Avoid working for eight hours after a small meal, or sixteen hours after a large meal – this is especially important for deep-chested dogs such as Huntaways. Dogs should be fed at least daily.
- **An adequate amount:** the 'ideal' body fat % is considered 17-20%, whereas the average from a NZ study was 15.2%. Lower than 'ideal' body fat is probably also correlated with lower bone density, suggesting these dogs are also at higher risk of orthopaedic – i.e bones and joints - injury.

Young working dogs might perform well on whatever you feed them – but their ability and longevity may be limited and they will likely be more injury-prone. We're looking into a cost-effective working dog feed, but in the meantime if you are unsure about what you are feeding them, give us a call and we can investigate.

CHANGES FROM 13th DECEMBER

As of 13th December 2023, changes in EU legislation will mean that all producers selling livestock for slaughter must have had an annual on farm veterinary visit to allow export outside of the UK.

The annual visit will be verified by a veterinary attestation and sellers will have to provide auctioneers with a unique 'veterinary attestation number' (VAN). This visit can coincide with any other on-farm vet visit or animal health and welfare pathway (AHWP) review.

Farm assured farms do not require an attestation. Please get in touch if you are not Red Tractor assured and we can arrange the attestation for you or assist with Animal Health and Welfare Pathway applications.

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