December 2026

NEWSLETTER

Black Sheep Farm Health
Dedicated farm vets

Christmas Opening Hours

Please make sure you are aware of our office opening hours through the festive period:

Wednesday 23rd December– 8:30am – 5:30pm

Thursday 24th December– 8:30am - 4pm

Friday 25th December– Closed

Saturday 26th December– Closed

Sunday 27th December- Closed

Monday 28th December- 8:30am – 5:30pm

Tuesday 29th December- 8:30am – 5:30pm

Wednesday 30th December- 8:30am – 5:30pm

Thursday 31st December– 8:30am - 4pm

Friday 1st January– Closed

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

Please join us for Christmas Drinks

***** FRIDAY 11th DECEMBER *****

We will be headed to the Turks Head in Rothbury for some Christmas drinks on Friday 11th December. First drink on us, hope to see you there!

Bird Flu Biosecurity

With winter comes bird flu season. A housing order is already in place for any keepers with more than 50 birds in England.

It is important to practice good biosecurity to protect your birds; most important is to prevent contact with wild birds, by housing and ensuring feed and water in enclosed areas. A disinfectant foot dip or boot wash used before entering your bird housing may also help reduce risk.

Bluetongue Vaccination This Winter

Northumberland appears to be the only part of England that has yet to see a significant number of BTV cases. The map shows 2026 cases, and much of the southeast was badly affected the year before.

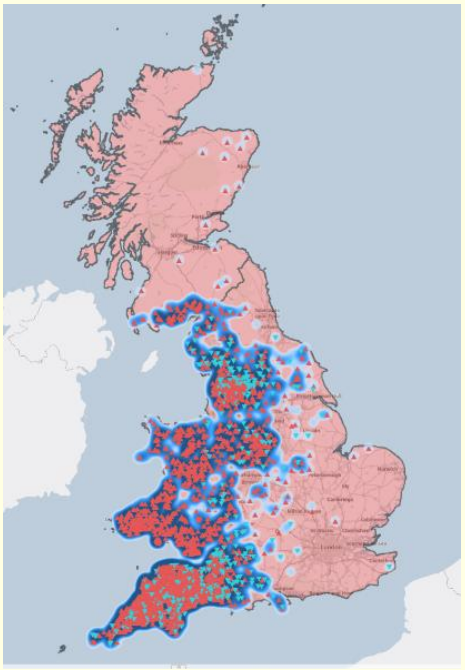
We now have time to act and vaccinate more stock before the high-risk midge season begins again, and BTV carries on from where it left off.

Now most cattle are housed, this is a convenient time to vaccinate. BTV infection in cattle is associated with poor fertility, abortions and deformed or dummy calves.

Scanning may be a convenient time to vaccinate ewes.

Don’t forget to ensure breeding males are vaccinated too.

Please have a chat with one of the vets to discuss further!



Don’t Forget About Routine Treatments for Farm Dogs

Farm dogs are one of the most useful tools on farm, so it is important that they are kept up to date with routine treatments.

Vaccinations

Leptospirosis, often referred to as lepto, is a serious and potentially fatal disease in dogs. Like other farm animals, dogs are infected by contact with infected animal urine. Working dogs have contact with livestock, waterways and rodents, and so are at higher risk of leptospirosis than most pet dogs. Vaccination provides protection against most strains of leptospirosis. It is important that after an initial vaccine course of two doses 4 weeks apart, that dogs receive annual boosters.

Distemper, Hepatitis and Parvovirus are diseases passed from dog to dog that are routinely vaccinated against in dogs. These are serious diseases that can prove fatal in dogs. After an initial course of two doses 4 weeks apart, dogs should receive a booster every 3 years.

Kennel cough vaccination is important if your dogs spend a lot of time with other dogs, e.g. shooting. It is an ‘up-the-nose’ vaccine, and protection lasts a year.

Worming

Red Tractor require farm dogs to be wormed every 3 months to minimise disease risks to livestock. The dog tapeworm can cause lesions in sheep, which can lead to partial or complete carcase 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.

Keeping Ewe Lambs Growing

Ewe lambs can struggle through the winter; some are expected to maintain pregnancies while continuing their own growth. Tupped ewe lambs that gained 10-25% BW between mating and scanning were more likely to be in lamb.

There are a few key considerations to ensure ewe lambs continue to grow through the winter months:

- **Parasite burden**; have they carried parasites through from the autumn? Worm Egg Counts (WECs) can be useful to monitor burden.
- **Vitamin B12**; many ‘lamb’ treatments will have run out by now. Consider long-acting B12 supplementation like boluses or long-acting injectables to allow lambs to get the most energy out of their food.
- **Feed**; is feed of sufficient quality and quantity for growth? Remember that gradual diet changes are easier to cope with and benefit health and growth greatly.

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