

May 2026

NEWSLETTER



Black Sheep Farm Health
Dedicated farm vets

Think Staggers!

As spring warms, and the grass grows, think staggers! Cows with calves at foot are at highest risk of staggers.

To prevent staggers cases:

- Provide access to magnesium
- Provide rock salt
- Provide source of fibre / maintain dry matter intake. Early grass growth is high in sugar and low in fibre, it passes through the rumen quickly. Additional fibre in the diet will slow down digestion which will allow for more magnesium absorption

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.

A client synched 5 later calvers last year, and this bought their calving date forward by between 30-35 days, bringing them more in synch with the rest of the herd. At 1kg/day DLWG, and £4/kg, that's £120-£140 greater value per calf!

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

Monitor for Nematodirus

Nematodiosis can cause diarrhoea, mortalities and stunted growth in lambs.

Nematodirus battus is very dependant on climatic conditions— a mass hatch occurs on the grass when a period of cold is followed by 10 days of temperatures above 10°C. When a mass hatch coincides with lambs beginning to eat significant amounts of grass, the results can be devastating. The damage can be caused by immature larvae, so no eggs are being produced at this stage. As such, worm egg counts alone are not a reliable indicator of risk and action must be taken based on estimated risk.

The following may be used to estimate nematodirus risk:

- SCOPS Nematodirus Forecast Map
- Has there been a cold snap recently followed by a period of warm weather?
- Are your lambs old enough to be eating significant amounts of grass? (>6 weeks)
- As the infection passes from one lamb crop to the next years crop, are this years lambs on the same fields as last years?
- Have you got lambs under other stresses? e.g. triplets, on young or old ewes.



When risk level rises, lambs will need to be treated for nematodirus. Unlike other times of year, when we aim to leave at least 10% untreated when worming, **ALL AT-RISK ANIMALS (THIS YEARS LAMBS) SHOULD BE TREATED FOR NEMATODIRUS.**

New Weighing and EID Service!

Earlier in the year, Kaz was successful in securing a capital grant for some new toys for the practice.

While we already had the cattle scales to be used on farm, we now are able to assist in the collection and analysis of a greater range of data on beef and sheep farms. This will include:

- A stick reader—for recording tags when sampling or PD'ing, for example.
- A weigh head—which can plug into our weigh scale or yours, and record additional data.
- Two “Optiweigh” devices—one for sheep and one for cattle. These devices allow remote weighing of a mob i.e. keep a track of weight gains without handling!



These new toys will provide us with performance data, a valuable diagnostic tool to provide early warning signs and ensure interventions are made as soon as possible. These electronic records will be transferable to both veterinary and herd management software, which will facilitate more informed health planning by reducing guesswork around key performance metrics.

Please speak to Kaz (07557 092760) to learn more about this service!

Matt Blyth Visit

On **Wednesday 6th May**, we have Matt Blyth along to help train the vets with some new EID equipment. Matt is a Nuffield Scholar and specialist in EID and weighing equipment. He helps farmers with both hardware and software challenges.

We'd like to make the trip up worthwhile for him, so if you have any questions or frustrations with your current gear, let us know and we will get him along.

Monitor for Coccidiosis in Calves

Coccidiosis is a disease caused by Eimeria parasites which generally affects calves between 3 and 12 weeks of age. Coccidiosis typically causes black/bloody scour, abdominal pain, straining, chronic wasting/gaunt appearance and a poor appetite. However, we often see coccidiosis present as a mild pasty scour and a dull coat in suckled beef calves at grass .

— If you have any concerns, please get in touch. —

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