

October 2026

# NEWSLETTER



## Alwinton Show

SATURDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2026

Please pop by our stand for a drink, slice of cake and a catch up!

## Autumn Meeting

We are still finalising the date, but our autumn meeting will be focused on **TICKS & TICK-BORNE DISEASES**, as well as a reminder about AHWP and a BTV update.

## Worms, Worms, Worms

It is important to keep monitoring for worms with worm egg counts and DLWG as we move into late autumn and early winter.

**We often see our highest worm egg counts during this period, particularly after the incredibly dry summer.**

Remember you can utilise AHWP funding for worm egg count reduction tests to test efficacy of wormers on your farm.

Please ask Claire or Emili for more information.

## Urolithiasis

We have recently seen a spate of blocked tups, or urolithiasis. Urolithiasis is the formation of 'stones' in the urinary tract, most common in male sheep and goats. These stones can block the urinary tract. This is a very painful condition that quickly becomes life threatening.

There are different types of urinary stones seen in ruminants. In the UK, we most commonly see phosphate stones. These are associated with high grain, low roughage diets, and so most often seen in tups and pet goats.

Normally, a ruminant will remove excess phosphorus from their body by excreting it into saliva. High grain, low roughage diets require less chewing, and so less saliva is produced. Excess phosphorus is instead removed from the blood by the kidneys and then excreted in the urine. When diets are too high in phosphorus, the urine phosphorus levels become excessively high, and the phosphorus settles and consolidates into 'stones' that can be too large to pass.

Prompt treatment is can be attempted but it is often too late, as irreversible kidney damage quickly results from the blockage causing excessive urinary back pressure.

As is often the case, **prevention is better than cure**:

- Only feed cake formulated for tups; these feeds have urine acidifiers, such as ammonium chloride, added to the ration, to help prevent stone formation.
- Offer supplementary salt to promote water intake.
- Provide adequate roughage to promote saliva production and water intake.
- Avoid early castration for goats wethers intended as pets.



## Are your calves prepared for winter?

Good preparation and readiness for winter is key to reducing variable costs and optimising output, allowing for efficient and profitable beef production.

- **Nutrition:** Stress reduces an animal's resistance to disease, and a change in nutrition can be a major stressor. It is important to make sure calves are on the same ration pre and post weaning; this ensures their gut has adjusted to the new ration and that they are familiar with the diet– eating silage is a learned behaviour! The withdrawal of milk, often coinciding with housing, can result in a massive change in a calf's diet, most notably in protein levels. This reduction in protein will reduce growth rates so it is important to consider ways to increase protein in the diet; turn out onto kale or grass, utilising legumes for silage or top dressing with soya or beans. **Testing silage is imperative to inform supplementary feeding.**
- **Trace Elements:** Trace elements play a vital role in all body functions. Correct trace element status is key for growth and immunity, so are vital in weaned calves. Supplementation can take many forms including boluses, long acting injectables and mineralised feed.
- **Pneumonia** causes significant financial losses as a result of mortality, labour and treatment costs. However, the greatest cost often goes unseen; weight loss and reduced weight gains leading to longer time to finish and therefore greater cost of production. Pneumonia is a multifactorial disease; improving air quality, limiting stress and maximising health are important alongside vaccination in pneumonia control. Calves should be vaccinated prior to housing. It is important to investigate any pneumonia outbreaks in order to prevent them in the future.
- **Housing & Ventilation:** Pneumonia vaccination cannot overcome poor ventilation. The shed environment should be dry and free of dust. Heat stress leads to reduced feed intake and therefore reduced growth rates. Clipping backs out helps to reduce heat stress in housed spring calves.
- **Worms & Fluke:** Any worm burden will reduce daily live weight gain and risks an outbreak of type two ostertagiosis, causing mortality and diarrhoea. Worm egg counts while grazing or pepsinogen testing at housing can be used to decide if treatment is required. The risk of fluke varies massively between farms and from one year to the next. First grazing season calves can be blood tested for fluke antibodies at least 2 weeks after housing to assess if they have been exposed to fluke and if treatment is required
- **Stress:** Weaning is a stressful experience for cow and calf, and can result in reduced liveweight gain due to increased physical activity (vocalising and pacing), which reduces time spent feeding. Stress at weaning also affects a calf's immune system for at least two weeks after; this can make calves more susceptible to disease and less able to respond to vaccinations. Steps to reduce stress at weaning; avoid other stressors (vaccination, dehorning, castration), avoid changes to housing, feed, water or social groups for two weeks after weaning, consider fence-line weaning, quiet wean nose flaps or Feraplease.

Black Sheep Farm Health, Unit 4a, Rothbury Industrial Estate, Coquet View, Rothbury,  
Northumberland, NE65 7RZ Phone: 01669 838 288 Email: [info@bsfh.co.uk](mailto:info@bsfh.co.uk)

Joe Henry 07502297044

Jenny Hull 07734432212

Jack Sheldrake 07793078949

Kaz Strycharczyk 07557092760 Claire Neillans 07717752034 Emili Canavan-Hicks 07778456969

