Daleside
Veterinary Group

FARM NEWSLETTER

October 2025

Happy Birthday!

This month we're celebrating a milestone birthday as Lauren turns the big 3-0!

From all of us at the practice, we hope you have a fantastic day!

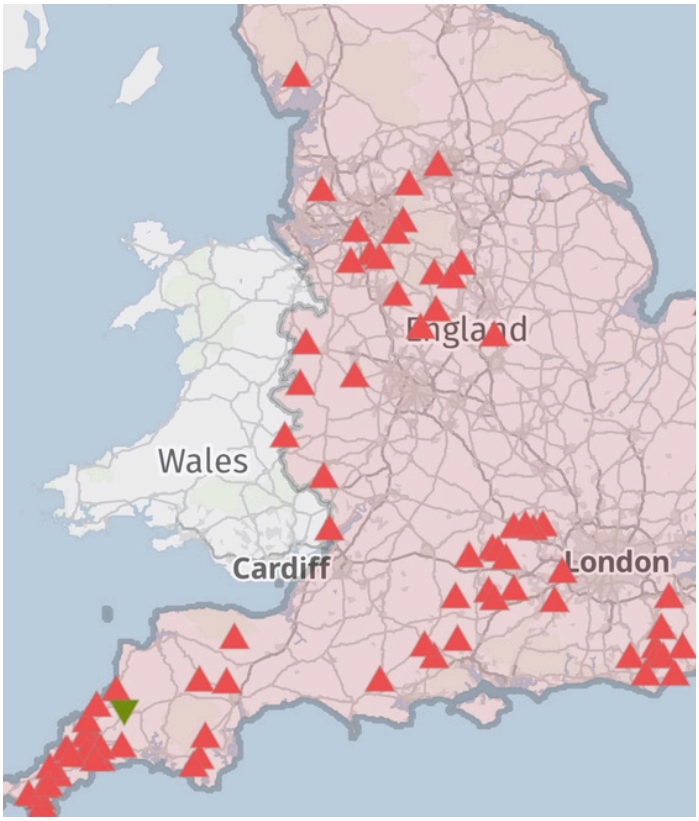
Latest on Bluetongue Virus in the UK

The last couple of weeks of September have seen a significant spike in bluetongue cases across the UK, marking a concerning development as the disease reaches new territories. For the first time, bluetongue has been officially confirmed in Wales.

The two Welsh cases, highlights the varied presentations of Bluetongue virus. The first involved a suckler cow displaying clinical signs of bluetongue, which can include fever, excessive salivation, nasal discharge, swelling of the head and neck, and lameness. The second case was identified through routine surveillance when a cow failed a mandatory post-movement test.

With the UK total now standing at 80 confirmed cases, the outbreak shows no signs of slowing. We remain firmly within the high-risk period for bluetongue transmission, which typically extends through late autumn while midge vectors remain active. Warmer temperatures and favourable conditions for midges mean we should anticipate further cases in the coming weeks, potentially across an even wider geographical area.

Vaccination remains the single most effective tool for protecting your livestock against bluetongue. Vaccinated animals are far less likely to develop clinical disease and, crucially, are less likely to spread the virus to other susceptible animals in your herd or flock. Call us on 01978 311444 to discuss vaccination protocols with one of our vets and safeguard your stock against Bluetongue.



Cryptosporidium in Calves: Understanding and Managment

Cryptosporidium remains one of the most significant causes of diarrhoea in young calves, posing challenges for calf health and welfare. This microscopic parasite can cause severe scouring, particularly in calves during their first month of life, making early recognition and management critical for any livestock operation.
Cryptosporidium is a single-celled parasite that infects the intestinal tract of calves. The parasite attaches to the lining of the small intestine, damaging the cells responsible for nutrient absorption and causing the characteristic profuse, watery diarrhoea.
Calves are most susceptible to infection between 5 and 35 days of age, with peak infection typically occurring around 2-3 weeks. The parasite spreads through the faecal-oral route, meaning calves become infected by ingesting oocysts from contaminated surfaces, bedding, water, or milk feeding equipment.

Cryptosporidiosis typically presents as:

- Profuse, yellow-white watery diarrhoea
- Dehydration, often severe
- Lethargy and weakness
- Continued appetite in mild cases, though severely affected calves may stop feeding
- Weight loss or poor growth rates

The diarrhoea can persist for several days to two weeks, and even after recovery, calves may experience reduced growth rates that can impact their long-term productivity.

One of the most frustrating aspects of cryptosporidium is its remarkable resilience. The oocysts can survive in the environment for months and are resistant to many common disinfectants. This environmental persistence means that once cryptosporidium is present on a farm, complete elimination is nearly impossible.

Cryptosporidium meeting

Join us on the 13th November for a client meeting discussing cryptosporidium and calf scours.

Emilie Beck from MSD will be co-hosting, discussing the latest products they have to offer for preventative measures.

Location	**Wrexham Rugby Club LL13 9TY**
Date	**13/11/2025**
Time	**19:30**

Please RSVP by the end of October if you'd like to attend

While there's no silver bullet for cryptosporidium, a multi-faceted approach can significantly reduce its impact:

Vaccination - Cryptium is a vaccine designed to help prevent cryptosporidiosis in calves through maternal immunity. The vaccine is administered to pregnant cows or heifers in late gestation. This stimulates the dam to produce specific antibodies against Cryptosporidium parvum, which are then passed to the calf through colostrum. When calves consume this antibody-rich colostrum in their first hours of life, they receive passive immunity that can help protect them during their most vulnerable period.

Colostrum is Crucial: Ensuring calves receive adequate high-quality colostrum within the first few hours of life provides essential antibodies that help fight infection and reduce disease severity.

Hygiene and Isolation: Clean, dry bedding changed frequently helps minimize environmental contamination. Feeding equipment should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected between uses.

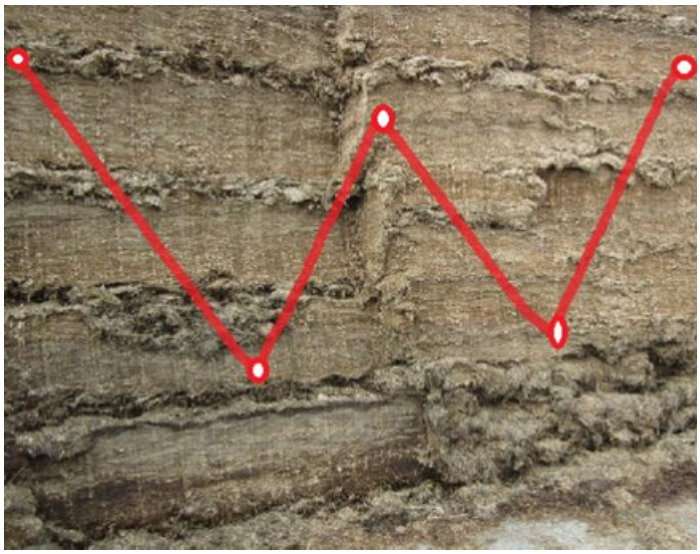
Environmental Management: While oocysts are resistant to many disinfectants, hydrogen peroxide-based products can be effective. Heat and desiccation also help reduce oocyst viability, so allowing pens to dry completely between groups is beneficial.

Supportive Care: Oral electrolyte therapy is essential to combat dehydration, and calves should continue receiving milk or milk replacer to maintain nutrition.

Preventive Products: Some products, such as halofuginone may be used prophylactically in young calves to reduce oocyst shedding and clinical signs when administered during the first days of life.

It's also worth noting that Cryptosporidium parvum is a zoonotic parasite, meaning it can infect humans. Farm staff, particularly those working closely with young calves, should practice good hygiene including thorough handwashing after handling animals or working in calf areas.

While cryptosporidium will likely remain a challenge in calf rearing, understanding the parasite's lifecycle and implementing consistent management practices can significantly reduce its impact on calf health and farm productivity.



Are you testing your silage?

Silage clamps should ideally be tested every four weeks over winter to maintain ration consistency for high-yielding herds. Even grass that is properly clamped averages 12% losses in dry matter over time, which affects intakes.

Maize, on the other hand, actually improves in starch digestibility. But, because it becomes more digestible, it is broken down faster in the rumen, which may overload it with starch, leading to acidosis and other associated problems. It means diets that are in balance now could get out of kilter over time.

Poor clamp management at feed-out leads to further deterioration in quality. Grabbing and lifting silage on the face, for instance, allows oxygen to penetrate the clamp. Sampling regularly over winter and using the analysis to rebalance the diet not only avoids digestive upsets, it can save money.

However, sampling must be done correctly, as a poor technique will only produce poor results. Samples should be taken about 25 cm back from the face to represent what is currently being fed. In total, take nine samples in a W shape. Mix well and evenly in a bucket, then tip onto a clean surface and divide evenly until you get a 0.5 kg sample size for bagging and sending to the lab.