



## Christmas Party!

It's time to dust off those Christmas Jumpers, join us on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 7.30PM at Wrexham Rugby Club for a drink to see out 2025.

## Christmas opening hours

25<sup>th</sup> December - Office Closed - Emergency Service  
26<sup>th</sup> December - Office Closed - Emergency Service  
27<sup>th</sup> December - Saturday morning office hours 8.30-1pm  
29/30/31<sup>st</sup> December - Normal office hours  
1<sup>st</sup> January - Office closed - Emergency Service

Our medicine delivery service every Tuesday and Friday is largely unaffected by the holidays, but will not be running on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> December.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from all of the team!



## Q fever in Cattle

Q fever is caused by the bacteria *Coxiella burnetii*. It is shed in milk, urine, faeces, and in high concentration in placental tissues and birth fluid. The bacteria is very resistant in the environment and can remain in the environment for years.

Q fever has been a problem in large parts of Europe for decades with some studies showing that between 10-30% of the cattle population has been exposed to Q fever.

It is important to note that it is a zoonotic disease and so can be transmitted to humans. The main risk of transmission to humans and cattle occurs at birth by inhalation, or direct contact with birth fluids or placenta. High temperature pasteurisation effectively kills the organism in milk.

What are the clinical signs of Q fever and how can it be diagnosed?

While infection in cattle is frequently subclinical (no obvious sickness), when clinical signs do appear, they primarily revolve around reproductive failure and general ill-thrift.

### The Most Notable Clinical Signs

- Late Abortion
  - Abortion in the later stages of pregnancy, often leading to abortion outbreaks (abortion storms) in a newly infected herd.
  - A classic and highly visible sign. Animals shed extremely high loads of bacteria during this time.
  - Stillbirth/Weak Calves
- The birth of premature, stillborn, or extremely weak neonates that fail to thrive.
  - A common presentation alongside abortion, reflecting placental damage.

- Anorexia/Malaise
  - Loss of appetite and a general feeling of being unwell, which is part of the "sick cow" presentation recently reported.
  - Non-specific signs that can be confused with many other diseases.

#### Subtle Reproductive Indicators (The "Tip of the Iceberg")

These are often the most challenging signs to spot and may lead to a diagnosis of general infertility before Q fever is considered.

- Retained Fetal Membranes (Retained Placenta): Infected cows are statistically more likely to retain the placenta following calving.
- Uterine Infections: Herds with evidence of Q fever circulation are significantly more likely to have a high incidence of:
  - Metritis (acute inflammation of the uterus after calving).
  - Clinical Endometritis (chronic inflammation of the inner lining of the uterus).
- Infertility/Sub-fertility: Infection can severely impact fertility, resulting in:
  - Increased Calving to Conception Interval (it takes longer for the cow to get back in calf).
  - Increased Early Pregnancy Losses or embryonic loss.
  - Poor Conception Rate at first service.
- Subclinical Mastitis: Some studies have suggested a correlation between Q fever and an increased risk of developing subclinical mastitis.

Diagnosis relies on testing the bulk milk for antibodies, this is effectively looking for exposure within the herd.

#### How can Q fever be prevented?

It can be difficult to prevent animals from becoming infected, however, there is now a vaccination available for use in cattle – Coxevac. Vaccination has proven to be very effective in order to prevent abortion and reduce shedding, especially when administered before the first pregnancy.

In known infected herds, the period around calving represents a significant risk period for transmission because of the large amount of environmental contamination associated with abortion. Standard abortion control measures, including prompt removal of aborted materials, and diagnostic evaluation of abortions, are all warranted.

#### Protecting yourself from Q fever

- Wash hands thoroughly several times a day (especially if grossly contaminated) and always before eating, smoking and after finishing work for the day
- Wash skin wounds immediately with soap and running water and cover with a waterproof dressing
- Treat potentially infected animal tissues, such as afterbirths and aborted calves, with care and respect. Handle with waterproof gloves

For more information on Q fever please speak to one of the vets at your next visit or give the office a call on **01978 311444**

## Watery Mouth Questionnaire

Win a Shearwell EID prize bundle worth £775!

Researchers at the University of Bristol Veterinary School, as part of the Arwain DGC project, have launched an online survey for Welsh sheep farmers to share insight into the prevalence, treatment and prevention of Watery Mouth Disease in their flocks.

Follow the link below to fill in the questionnaire  
<https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/svs/watery-mouth-disease>

