



## August 2024

### Show season in full swing

So far this year we have been to both the Liskeard and Launceston shows – even putting in a performance at the tug-of-war! We'll also be at Okehampton and Holsworthy, so if you missed us, we hope to see you there.



### Upcoming Meetings

#### **Picking and checking your ram! Plus 'beyond teasers' - how to tighten up your lambing block**

Matt and Pip Smith are kindly hosting our flock club meeting on August 13<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am. They are well established Romney breeders and have also used hormonal synchronization to minimize lambing windows in the past. If you have no previous knowledge of synchronizing ewes, this meeting should be a good introduction to the process and potential benefits.



Vets Lucy and Tim will be discussing what to look for when selecting your rams, but also how to get the most out of your ewes' breeding window this year. We will also discuss advancement in sheep artificial insemination techniques and keep everyone up to date with new ways to improve your flock.

All welcome- whether you're looking to pick up a new ram this year, or just wish to reduce your lambing window! Our flock club members go free, outside of which there will be a £25/farm charge (bring along as many as you would like!). Lunch will be provided of course – please let us know you're planning to attend so we can get the catering right!

We look forward to seeing you there!

***Trefranck Farm, St Clether, Launceston PL15 8QN***

***(craftsmen.optomists.aboard)***

***Tuesday, August 13<sup>th</sup> 10.30am***

## Trouble with calf scours – vaccinate the dams!

Graham Perkins of Knowle Farm has kindly agreed to host our next Beef club meeting at 10.30am on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Vets Andy and Roger will be joined by vet Becca Cavill, who works with the company producing **Fencovis**. She has expert technical knowledge of how the vaccination works, and Graham has experience of the impact it has had on his beef herd.

Both pregnant cow and newborn management are crucial to getting the most out of your 2025 calf crop, and we know scour costs time, money and sometimes lives before it can be sorted out. Our vets will cover all the basics, but also what you can do on farm to maximize your chance of success!



**Knowle Farm, Coryton, Okehampton EX20 4PF**

*(immune.drums.correct)*

**Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> September 10.30am**

## The specialist government laboratory and post-mortem centre at Starcross opens its doors to Castle Clients

On September 25<sup>th</sup>, the APHA laboratory at Starcross will allow our clients access to their facilities. Everyone is welcome along at 11am for a tour of the lab, postmortem facilities, and details on how the scientists discover what might be making your animals sick! Vets Lucy, Andy and Roger will be attending, representing our flock and beef clubs, but anyone who is interested can come along. This is a really rare opportunity to meet and speak to specialist vets and technicians, who are key to both disease surveillance and diagnostics throughout the southwest. Please ring to book attendance, so the staff at APHA can make sure there's enough food for everyone.

**When?** September 25<sup>th</sup>, 11am-1pm

**Where?**

APHA Veterinary Investigation Centre  
Staplake Mount  
Starcross  
Exeter  
EX6 8PE





### **The Farm Net Zero Sheep Conference**

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> August, 10:30 – 16:00, Trefranck Farm, St Clether, Launceston. PL15 8QN  
(What3words///craftsmen.optimists.aboard)

The event will be hosted by FNZ Monitor Farmers, Matt and Pip Smith.

The day will cover a range of topics to increase the profitability and environmental sustainability of sheep production. These include:

- Herbal leys for sheep and how to graze them
- Breeding for resilience to parasitic worms
- The FNZ Innovative Farmers Field Lab on Diverse Covers for Weaned Lambs
- Soils and greenhouse gas emissions and the impact of changes in management



This is a Lottery-funded Farm Net Zero event  
(<https://farmcarbontoolkit.org.uk/farm-net-zero>).

To book your place and lunch (please advise of any dietary requirements), please contact Alex Bebbington ([alex.bebbington@duchy.ac.uk](mailto:alex.bebbington@duchy.ac.uk)) or Hannah Jones ([Hannah.jones@farmcarbontoolkit.org.uk](mailto:Hannah.jones@farmcarbontoolkit.org.uk)),

## Haemonchus – the blood sucking gut worm



Vet Tessa shares her thoughts on this growing issue:

“We’ve had a great uptake in applications for the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (which includes performing egg counts!) as well as many people submitting normal samples for egg counts recently. This has revealed some very high counts, which has surprised some people I’ve spoken to.”

Higher worm burdens can lead to the development of parasitic gastroenteritis (PGE) which will be obvious in lambs as scouring or loose faeces, and a loss of condition or reduction in growth. We would recommend submitting samples every 4-6 weeks during the grazing season to monitor worm burdens as they begin to rise. Over time sheep build immunity to the worms they are exposed to and do not suffer from PGE, hence why we don’t advise blanket worming adult stock over summer!

*Haemonchus contortus*, however, does not follow this pattern. Commonly, sheep will present with weakness and anaemia and a general ill thrift, they may also be found dead. Unlike the other species of worms you will not see any scouring and ewes cannot gain solid immunity to the parasite.

*Haemonchus contortus* (also called ‘Barber pole’ due to its appearance - see above) lives mostly in the abomasum of sheep. It is most common between July and October but can be seen throughout the year. One adult female can lay 5000 – 15000 eggs per day, and a recent report from a government lab found over 800,000epg in a single sample taken at post mortem! *Haemonchus* feeds primarily on blood and ten worms can take 0.5ml of blood per day from a sheep, leading to anaemia, which makes the membranes of your sheep pale. The anaemia may also cause ‘bottle jaw’, like a fluke infection. Due to the relatively large amount of blood taken by these parasites and its short life cycle (~20 days), it can have a significant effect very quickly.

The southwest has the highest reports of *Haemonchus* in the UK, due to our warmer weather.

It is important to be vigilant and have a plan for control. This is made challenging by the reports of resistance of the worm to multiple anthelmintic classes, sometimes concurrently.

An assessment of anaemia is taken by pulling down the lower eyelid of the sheep and assessing the conjunctiva. The FAMACHA scoring system can then correlate the level of anemia with the number of worms in the sheep. This allows you to assess the severity of the problem on a group level but also in individuals when considering treatments. One



If an animal's mucous membrane is greater than a 3 on the FAMACHA score, it needs to be dewormed.



of the most important things you can do for your farm, if you have not had a problem before, is to **quarantine and treat in coming sheep** to help maintain strict biosecurity. Weighing ewes and lambs regularly can provide an early warning sign of a challenge also.

The first sign of a *Haemonchus* problem as mentioned above is a particularly high FEC, the eggs will not be able to be individually identified at Castle but a sample can be sent to an external lab for confirmation of *Haemonchus*. Currently the APHA are offering a discounted rate of £20 for this test.

If some lambs or ewes are unfortunately lost to this parasite, it is possible to identify them during a postmortem. Therefore, if you are losing lambs in mid-late season, please do let us know so we can have a look, take a dung sample, or send it to Starcross to identify the cause of death. Please be aware any sudden deaths without preceding signs of illness will require an anthrax investigation before a PM can be performed.

A vaccine called 'BaberVax' is licensed in Australia and South Africa and prevents the worms sucking blood and reduces egg shedding significantly. Several farms under Castle Vets' care have used this successfully over the past two years after *Haemonchus* has been identified. It requires up to three priming doses of vaccine followed by boosters throughout the summer, based on the farm's challenge. Make sure you are vigilant to this emerging threat, and contact us if you are at all concerned!



## Dairy Herdsperson Course

Keen to retain and train staff, or grow your own skill set?

Castle Vets has six upcoming sessions on Dairy cow and calf health - attend all six to gain your Herdsperson certification!

This course will be run in Autumn 2024, with sessions held 10:30am-2:30pm, at two weekly intervals. All sessions will be on local farms and made up of theory and practical components.



- Mastitis + milking off - Thurs 27<sup>th</sup> Aug
- Fertility and calving tips + tricks - Tue 10<sup>th</sup> Sept
- Calf management, husbandry + vaccines - Fri 27<sup>th</sup> Sept
- Cow nutrition + deficiencies - Weds 8<sup>th</sup> Oct
- Milking + preventing lameness - Tues 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct
- Irrigating + treating the sick cow - Weds 6<sup>th</sup> Nov



Sold Out!  
Please contact us to join our waiting list

Both clients and non-clients welcome!

£695/full course attendance + certification (ex VAT)

**50% reimbursement for Cornish YFC members, with funding also available for Devon YFC members, through the Dartington Cattle Breeding Trust.**

If you would like to attend the course, or an individual module(s) call:

**01566 772 371**

Each module will be delivered on a different farm by a core group of vets. This course is being designed, overseen and run by our vet Lucy, who holds a PG Cert (VetEd) in higher education. This small group experience, with on-farm assessments, will result in superior learning and certification.

