



Sustainable farming – how dung beetles help your farm + what are the benefits of parasitic wasps?

Having attended and presented at the recent national Dung Beetle conference, Tim was keen to 'spread the word' about sustainable farming.

Vet Rob Howe is a recognized expert in the area and has agreed to discuss its benefits at a joint meeting between Castle Vets and NorthPark vets, near Lewdown this September. There are small steps most farmers can take to improve biodiversity of their land and soil, to benefit dung beetles, beasts and humans alike!

We will also have a representative from the company that produce *Biowasp* (Koppert) speaking about the use and reasoning behind this non-chemical intervention method. This will be a very practical afternoon of farm walks and discussion – so please come with your wellies (and maybe a rain jacket!).

When? 19th September 11am-3pm

Where? Wonnacott Farm, Lewdown, Okehampton EX20 4QU///hexes.viewer.deck

Lunch will, of course, be provided. This meeting is free to all club members, and £25/farm otherwise. Please let us know if you would like to attend, so we can get enough food!

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 16th. 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, 16th September 10.30am

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

On September 25th, 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 25th, 11am-1pm

Where?

APHA Veterinary Investigation Centre
Staplake Mount
Starcross
Exeter
EX6 8PE



Latest on Farming Grants - only six months left of consultancy funding

Castle Vets are again teaming up with Business Information Point consultancy to let our farmers know how best to access the Sustainable Farming Initiative Funding. This funding includes the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway - having your herd/flock health plan paid for, alongside testing for certain diseases.

These two workshops will provide the very latest information as the government funding for farm consultancy draws to a close. They will be one of the last chances for farmers to have this info contextualised and presented by local experts who can answer questions specific to farmers of the SW. These experts can then provide free one-to-one advice on your farm, to help you get to grips with the new grant systems, what to claim for and how, and the single farm payment is phased out.

Please register with Business Information Point via these links (if you are unable to, then please call the practice and we can do this for you). Both meetings are 7-10pm, free to attend, with food provided.



15th October @ Lifton Community Centre, PL16

0LA: <https://businessinfopoint.co.uk/workshops/the-latest-farm-grants-update-29/>

27th November @ Callington Town Hall, PL17 7BD

<https://businessinfopoint.co.uk/workshops/the-latest-farm-grants-update-23/>

Blue Tongue Virus

Cases of Bluetongue (BTV-3), a new strain of a notifiable disease which has been circulating in Europe this year, have been confirmed in farms in Suffolk and Norfolk. The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) identified the disease through Great Britain's annual bluetongue surveillance programme.

The affected ram was culled to reduce the risk of onward disease transmission and a temporary control zone was set up around the affected farm, which restricts the movement of cattle, sheep, camelids and other ruminants. This is a rapidly changing situation, and unfortunately further cases have been identified leading to the conclusion that **local transmission** is occurring. This has upgraded the controls to put a **Restricted Zone** in place around Norfolk and Suffolk



The virus does not affect people or food safety. BTV is transmitted by midge bites and affects cows, goats, sheep, camelids and other ruminants. The midges are most active between April and November. Another possible reason for disease spread can be through an infected imported animal.

Sheep are more likely to show obvious clinical signs of Bluetongue than cattle. Signs include:

- Ulcers in mouth / nose and consequent discharges and drooling.
- Swelling of lips/ tongue / coronary band (where the leg skin meets the hoof) leading to lameness.
- The BTV-3 strain has unfortunately caused severe disease in sheep on the continent.

Lambs and calves can become infected with the virus before they are born, resulting in them being born small, weak, deformed or being born dead (still births).

The situation is concerning, it shows that routine veterinary surveillance to identify potential disease risks is working and appropriate action has been taken to try and safeguard animals in the area.

With cattle acting as midge magnets (large and smelly animals) their relative

robustness to infection and lack of obvious signs can lead to a false sense of security in areas where the much more vulnerable sheep are uncommon. The risk is that cattle in East Anglia may be attracting and infecting midges that then blow across to the rest of the country on easterly winds. Hence the restriction zone and the surveillance efforts now in place across the country. We clearly cannot control wind direction or midge movements. So, our best protection in the medium to long term is through vaccination, which worked so effectively in 2008 with BTV-8. Although a vaccine for this strain of BTV-3 has been produced and used on the continent, its supply is severely limited there, and it is currently not licensed or available in the UK.

We should avoid bringing in stock from the East of the country. We can try putting vulnerable animals in our most exposed windiest fields. We should look out for signs of bluetongue in our stock and report them if we are suspicious.



