

## Sheep Scab Blood Test

The sheep scab mite (*Psoroptes ovis*) is very common in the UK, probably due to the high level of transport and mixing of the sheep population.

You will all be aware of the signs of a clinically affected sheep with scab - intense itching, wool loss, particularly over the shoulder and the dark-staining of wool.

What if you were able to screen your flock to assess whether the mite is present or not?

When an animal becomes infected with the scab mite, the body then produces **antibodies** to try to combat the infestation. These antibodies can now be detected on a **blood sample**. It takes approximately 3 weeks after infection, for antibodies to be produced (and therefore detected). But even after these 3 weeks, the sheep is likely to not be showing ANY outward sign of disease. So the blood test will pick up infection **earlier**.

This test has a **number of different uses**:

- To screen bought in animals whilst quarantined from the flock
- To monitor the response to treatment
- To monitor the status of your flock

It costs approx £8.50 per animal and it is recommended that a representative number of samples is taken i.e. 4-10 (depending on flock size).

## Sycamore Seed Poisoning

The autumn season is most definitely here and with higher winds and seeds falling, we must be conscious of sycamore seeds falling on our horse pastures.

As I am sure you are aware, sycamore seeds can cause a disease called **Atypical Myopathy**.

This disease is very serious and quite often fatal but doesn't always present in a usual manner. The typical presentation is a horse which is **sweating, reluctant to move, anorexic, has dark urine**. But even some horses can be affected by the toxin and have only **colic** as the presenting sign. It is possible to test the toxin level of seeds and leaves of the sycamore tree. This provides a quantitative measure of the toxin in the plant material and therefore risk level to your horse (s). Do ask more about this disease and ways to minimise the risk.



## Care of the Geriatric Horse

The older horse is one not to be forgotten about. The winter will be closing in soon and the geriatric horse needs a lot of care and attention at this time of year.

There are a few areas to consider:

- **Teeth**. Older horses do start to eventually lose some of their pre-molars and molars at the back of the mouth. This makes efficiently chewing their food difficult, especially if they have loose teeth still attached causing some pain. Regular dental checks are very important to keep on top of any dental issues. Soaking hay improves palatability and ease of chewing.
- **Feet** - Unbalanced hooves can put extra stress and strain on joints which may already have pre-existing degenerative conditions such as osteoarthritis.
- **Pre-existing disease?** - older horses are much more likely to have diseases such as PPID (previously Cushing's) and so being aware of signs and symptoms is important. Any systemic disease will make maintenance of weight and health more difficult.
- **Feed** - The best quality forage should be provided so that the older horse's reduced metabolism can get the most out of the feedstuff. There are many commercially available hard feeds available which are highly digestible and nutrient dense.



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# *Bishops Castle Vets*

## Autumn Newsletter 2018

### An Update on Alabama Rot

We do already know that this disease seems to have a seasonal pattern with **November - June** being the biggest risk period. Research is ongoing and almost 80 dogs have been involved in studies, where a fish vet has potentially made a link between this disease and a similar disease in amphibians called **red leg syndrome**. An organism called *Aeromonas hydrophilia* is being investigated as a potential cause. There do appear to be certain geographical 'hot spots' of where disease can occur, but advice still remains the same; try to **avoid very muddy areas** and think about **washing** excess mud off of dogs when they return from a walk.



### Lumps and Bumps

At the practice, a number of our consultations are due to the complaint of a 'lump' or 'growth'.

The appearance of a lesion or lump on a pet can be quite **worrying** for owners but there are many different causes of a lump with **varying implications**.

The list of possible causes of a growth is quite extensive; abscess, tumour (benign or malignant), cyst, inflammatory.

Things to think about when assessing a lump:

- Does it **appear** angry, red or sore?
- Is the animal paying the lump a lot of attention or seem **aggravated** by it?
- Is it **growing** very quickly or not changed at all in the last few years?
  - **Where** is it on the body?

The answers to these questions are important things to note. Please get in touch if you are concerned about a growth on your pet.

## Lungworm in Dogs

The number of diagnosed cases of lungworm in dogs is on the **rise**. The reason for this is not completely known, but likely due to changes in the environment of the slugs/snails and probably due to the fact that diagnostic tests are used more readily in practice.

**How do dogs become infected?** The lungworm parasite can be found in **slugs/snails** and also the slime trail that these creatures leave behind. So normally dogs will ingest such things whilst in the garden and around water bowls outside - most often by accident! The lungworm adults then reproduce in the lungs and large blood vessels in the lungs where their new larvae are then coughed up and swallowed, passing out in the faeces of the dog. Therefore we start the cycle again because slugs/snails ingest larvae in the faeces.

### **What are the signs of lungworm?**

The symptoms of lungworm can often be quite vague, but typically dogs will experience;

- A cough
- Breathing difficulties
- Anorexia / poor appetite
- Abnormal blood clotting - may bleed excessively when cut
- Exercise intolerance
- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Behavioural changes e.g. Depression

### **How do we diagnose the condition?**

Diagnosis is quite difficult and sometimes is largely based upon clinical signs, although there are other conditions which can manifest in this way. Blood sampling, faecal testing and radiographs can be used to definitely diagnose the condition.

### **How do we treat/prevent lungworm?**

- Lungworm is **easily treatable and preventable**. Preventative worming is the mainstay of avoiding disease in dogs. There are a number of different wormers which can both prevent and treat lungworm.
- Pick up your dog's faeces at all times
- Try to avoid water bowls outside which reduces the risk of transmission from slugs/snails.

## Thermometers!

The majority of both cattle and sheep with an active infectious process, will have a raised temperature. A digital thermometer can be purchased from the internet for a very small amount and is an **excellent tool** for any stockman.

The normal temperature of an adult sheep is: **38.3 to 39.9** degrees centigrade.

The normal temperature of an adult cow is **37.0 to 39.1** degrees centigrade.

Any temperature higher than this indicates that there is some sort of **infection** - whether bacterial or viral.

This information is vital for any decision on treatments for individuals (or groups) and also as a way of monitoring the response to treatment.

Before going to the medicine cupboard (if you have one!), make sure you are using the appropriate drug for an appropriate reason. Different antibiotics have different uses and knowledge of this is key.



## Colostrum Quality

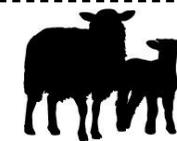
We all know the importance of the quality of colostrum in all species but particularly cattle and sheep. The first 24 hours of a ruminants life is vital to gain the necessary nutrients and antibodies to improve and provide immunity to disease. Two disease conditions that are the most common in the cattle industry are scour and pneumonia. Both of which rely on a holistic approach to their management, with one of the most important factors being colostrum.

A way to measure a cow or heifer's colostrum on farm is the use of a **brix refractometer**. Normally in the distilling industry, this simple and cheap (approx £14 off the internet) can provide a crude measure of the quality of colostrum. Provided the reading is over **22%** the colostrum should be of good quality for the newborn calf. Especially in heifers and older cows, their colostrum is sometimes lacking in quality so worth checking. Please enquire to find out more.

## Vaccination Orders

As of the 1st October 2018, our supplier of refrigerated medications ( i.e. Livestock vaccines ) has changed their policy on returns.

This means that if an item is ordered, it must therefore be **paid for and cannot be returned**.



## Worms and Liver Fluke

The SCOPS and COWS organisations are warning farmers not to forget about the threat of liver fluke.

It is assumed that liver fluke levels on pasture are going to be lower than previous years because of the significantly hot weather over the summer. However, experts are advising not to become complacent and **acute** liver fluke disease could occur more severely and **later** than normal.

We have seen a **huge rise in infestations** of roundworms in both sheep and cattle recently and of course, the clinical signs of this can be similar to fluke. If farms normally treat for both worms and fluke at this time of year and then not again until, e.g. January, there is a danger that you could be caught out by a later emergence of liver fluke.

We know that the drug Triclabendazole treats the most immature stages of liver fluke but there is some documented evidence of **resistance** to this drug and so it's use should be limited and justified.

There are many treatments of both roundworms and liver fluke, and depending on the individual circumstances on farm, different treatment protocols are adopted.

**Faecal** testing can be used to determine the presence of liver fluke eggs in the faeces (and therefore the presence of adult fluke in the animal)

**Blood ELISA** testing picks up antibodies produced by the animal in the presence of fluke - this is a good screen for first-season grazers and to check if there has been exposure despite the dry weather.

Please speak to us about the options for your stock.