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Summer Newsletter

June 2026

FROM CRIA TO CATTLE: YOUR SUMMER ANIMAL HEALTH UPDATE

With summer well underway, we're pleased to bring you the latest seasonal updates, advice and veterinary insights for all our clients, from commercial livestock producers, to smallholders and pet keepers.

This edition places a particular focus on cattle health schemes and the important role they play in supporting herd health, productivity and long-term farm sustainability.

With alpaca birthing season in full swing, we also share practical guidance on caring for newborn cria and supporting dams through the critical early weeks. These early-life management tips can help give young animals the best possible start.

Parasite burdens remain a key concern throughout the summer grazing season, so we review the latest summer parasite forecasts and discuss how targeted monitoring and control can help protect animal health and performance.

Whether you manage a large commercial enterprise, keep a small number of animals at home, or care for much-loved pets, we hope you find this newsletter informative and useful. As always, our team is here to provide advice and support whenever you need us.

We wish you and your animals a healthy and productive summer.

The Livestock Clinic Team



Early management of neonates

Unpacking is upon us and it is important to plan thoroughly for the new arrivals.

Cria need sufficient maternal colostrum to give them the antibodies they need to fight off infection. Not getting enough quantity or quality of colostrum (and therefore antibodies/immunoglobulins) is known as failure of passive transfer (FPT).

Cria need to drink 5% of bodyweight in the first 6-8 hours of life (10-15% within the first 24 hours). The first 8-12 hours are critical, after which the gut wall closes to absorption of antibodies. Ensuring that cria are up and suckling quickly is vital. Cria should be suckling within 2-4 hours of birth but usually this is much sooner, within 1 hour. Cria that don't suckle by 4 hours are unlikely to ingest sufficient colostrum.

Colostrum substitutes can be given via bottle or stomach tube. Goat or cow colostrum can be used, ensuring that any colostrum comes from farms that are free of the main diseases eg BVD and Johnes. It is advisable to test the total solids of any colostrum sourced to check its quality. Any colostrum with total solids of less than 22% should be discarded.

Generic powdered colostrum is not a suitable alternative and should not be relied upon for passive transfer of antibodies. Immucol platinum is an example of a colostrum powder with sufficient IgG levels.

Weigh cria at birth and then daily for the first 14 days of life. Often the only early signs of disease are a slowing or plateauing of weight gain. This can occur a few days before other overt clinical signs become apparent and severe illness can be averted if they are seen at this early stage. Normal daily weight gain ranges from 200-500g.

Measuring Immunoglobulin at 24-72 hours old (optimum 36 hours) is the only way of confirming that the cria has adequate immunity for the first few weeks of life. This is done via blood test and should be considered for any cria where there is a question mark over colostrum intake.

A plasma transfusion is required for any cria with FPT. Transfusing cria as early as possible after FPT has been identified gives the cria the best chance of survival. If it is left until clinical signs of infection are present then prognosis is much poorer.

Plasma transfusions require an intravenous catheter to be placed and a slow transfusion of a weight based quantity of plasma - usually over 30-45 minutes.

Plasma transfusions can only happen if there is frozen plasma available on farm at the time. This takes time to process and requires blood donation from healthy adult alpacas prior to the unpacking season

As plasma can only be used on the farm of origin it is worth having a couple of bags available in the freezer (in emergencies plasma can be sourced from the dams farm of origin)



Improving Beef Fertility

We are now into the breeding season for spring calving suckler herds, this period will play a major role in determining next year's herd profitability. Suckler herd profitability is largely determined by the kilos of calf sold from the herd each year. Achieving high fertility rates is key to maximising calf output and improving overall profitability.

Increasing the fertility of a suckler herd will result in:

- Increased number of calves weaned
- Increased weight of those calves at a single weaning point
- Reduced length of calving period
- Reduced calving interval leading to more calves produced per year
- Heavier and more fertile heifers at mating

The target pregnancy rate is >95% over a nine-week breeding block, which will be influenced both by bull and cow fertility. When barren rates rise over 5% investigations should be carried out to determine the cause. Pregnancy scanning allows for early identification of empty cows to investigate possible causes and removal from the herd with the average full economic cost of production at over £900 / cow these extra animals can be costly (AHDB 2026)

Bulls: Although rarely completely infertile they are more commonly found to be subfertile with poorer sperm quality reducing the pregnancy rate and the number of calves born. The bull breeding soundness examination (BBSE), is a crucial tool to detect these sub-fertile animals, allowing action to be taken to prevent problems and poor performance. Proven bulls should be checked every year and not simply relied on to work because they have done in the past.

Cows: Nutrition is a major factor in cow fertility and cows should maintain a body condition score (BCS) of 2.5/5 to 3/5 for optimum fertility and milk production. Nutrition before calving will have a greater impact on time to first oestrus after calving than nutrition after calving. Copper, selenium, iodine and vitamin E are essential for optimising suckler cow fertility – blood analysis can identify and deficiencies.





Calving difficulties: Calvings that require assistance greatly increase the risk of reproductive problems in the following breeding season and reduce calf survival.

Health Status: All illness can impact the fertility of cows with some of the leading causes including:

- Internal Parasites
- Lameness
- BVD, IBR, Neospora, and Leptospira hardjo - some of the major infectious causes of abortion in cattle, can be identified and managed through regular blood testing. Establishing a known herd health status helps reduce the risk of disease-related losses later in the year.
- Up to 2% of animals will abort because of non-infectious causes. However, it can be difficult to detect all abortions until the end of calving. Therefore, rather than waiting for the abortion rate to exceed 2% before initiating investigation it is recommended that all abortions are investigated. Keep any aborted foetal and placental tissue in cases of abortion to allow for sampling. Other major causes of abortion in beef cows; Bacillus licheniformis, Salmonella, Trueperella pyogenes, Listeria, Campylobacter.

Ref: Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) (2026) Beef cost of production: Suckler herds. Available at: <https://ahdb.org.uk/beef-cost-of-production-benchmarks/suckler-herds>



THE LIVESTOCK CLINIC

WHY??


- Achieve a healthier herd
- Better disease control
- Save money on lab testing
- Increased sale options
- Premium sale prices

WHAT??

Membership to a cattle health scheme provides a cost-effective framework for establishing disease status of a herd with the aim of achieving certification of freedom from disease.

Don't wait for a problem! ACT NOW

- Annual membership subscription to your chosen scheme provider
- Discounted testing rates
- Annual visit for blood testing
- Utilise the AHWP grant to get money towards health planning




WHICH DISEASES??

- BVD
- IBR
- Johnes
- Leptospiriosis
- Neospora

MAKE A START...

- Register with a cattle health scheme
 - SRUC: one of the largest licensed schemes <https://www.sruc.ac.uk/business-services/veterinary-laboratory-services/premium-cattle-health-scheme/thinking-of-joining-pchs/>
- Give us a ring to discuss and book a visit



Parasite forecast

Blowfly/Fly Strike:

Very high risk throughout the UK this summer, particularly in lambs and unshorn ewes.

Prevention relies on a combination of rigorous fleece management (shearing, dagging/crutching) to keep the wool clean and dry, effective worm control to prevent scouring (diarrhoea), and the scheduled application of preventative pour-on insecticides or dips.

1. Chemical Preventative Treatments

Applying long-acting chemical formulations prior to the high-risk fly season is a core preventative measure. Always strictly adhere to the manufacturer's withdrawal periods for meat and milk.

- Insect Growth Regulators (IGRs): Products like CLiK Pour On disrupt the moulting of fly larvae, providing long-term prevention for up to 16 weeks.
- Synthetic Pyrethroids: Products like Crovect Pour-On or Ectofly treat and control blowflies, lice, and ticks for 8 to 10 weeks.

2. Hygiene & Flock Management

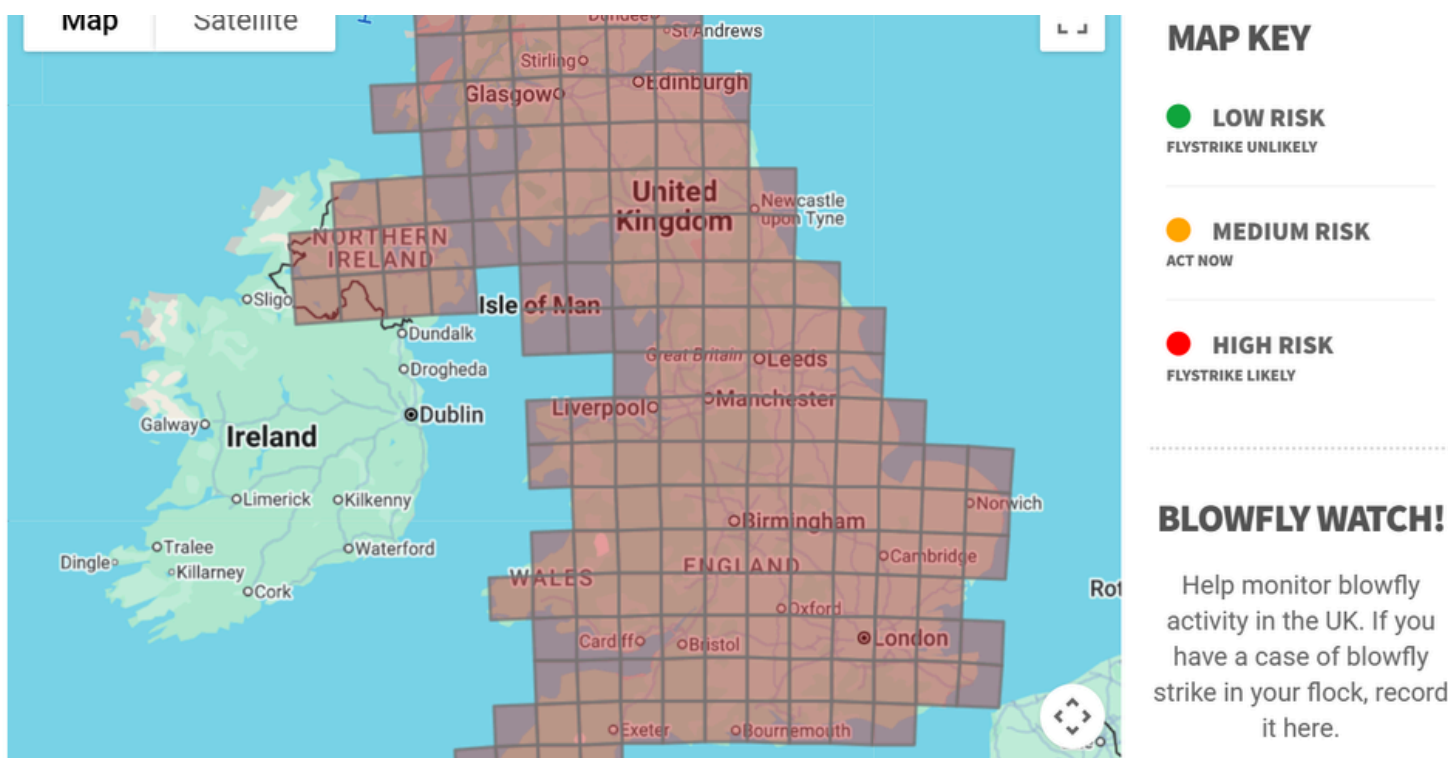
Maintaining a clean, dry fleece and environment is crucial, as damp, foul-smelling wool heavily attracts blowflies:

- Dagging and Crutching: Frequently trim soiled or wet wool from the rear and tail area where flies are most likely to strike.
- Shearing: Shearing ewes prior to the high-risk summer months ensures the fleece remains dry.
- Worm Control: Implement a robust parasite control program to avoid scours (diarrhoea). Soiled hindquarters (dags) are a primary magnet for flies.
- Wound Care: Treat any footrot lesions, skin abrasions, or docking wounds promptly, as infected areas emit odours that attract flies.
- Environmental Control: Promptly remove carcasses and avoid large, unmanaged manure piles, which are common breeding grounds for flies.

3. Monitoring

Check your flock frequently during warm and humid weather, particularly around the tail line and under the belly.

- NADIS Alerts: Monitor the SCOPS and NADIS forecasts to track regional blowfly risk warnings in the UK.



Sheep worms:

The July 2026 sheep worm risk across the UK is heightened due to a "perfect storm" of intermittent wet weather followed by warm spells, creating ideal conditions for larval survival and pasture movement. Closely monitor the flock for *Teladorsagia* (brown stomach worm), *Trichostrongylus* (black scour worm), and *Haemonchus contortus* (Barber's pole worm).

Gut Worms (*Teladorsagia* & *Trichostrongylus*): With grass conditions remaining continuously damp, larval burdens will rise. Heavy burdens will quickly lead to scouring and ill-thrift in growing lambs.

Barber's Pole Worm (*Haemonchus contortus*): With warm and wet weather patterns, the risk of this blood-sucking worm is high, especially in the southern regions of the UK. It can cause severe anaemia and rapid death.

Faecal Egg Counts (FEC): Do not rely on blanket treatments. Implement regular on-farm FEC testing to identify specific worm burdens before administering any anthelmintic (wormer).

Avoid Over-Grazing: Damp weather causes larvae to migrate higher up the grass stem. Avoid grazing lambs too tight to the ground where larval ingestion is highest.

Targeted Interventions: Use modern online tools to get specific regional insights. Check the SCOPS Website for live updates.

**ASSESS YOUR RISK
PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS
DEFEND YOUR STOCK**
#BattleBluetongue

BATTLE BLUETONGUE

THE LIVESTOCK CLINIC

The midges that spread Bluetongue are increasingly active in warm weather leading to increased replication and spreading of the virus to susceptible animals.

The APHA is urging livestock keepers in the UK to familiarise themselves with nation specific Bluetongue policies and movement requirements on the gov.uk website.

Vaccinating individuals is the best way to protect them. Get in touch with the office if you suspect Bluetongue or to request vaccination advice. Suspected cases must be reported to DEFRA immediately, even in vaccinated animals.

We hope you have a productive and successful season ahead. If you have any questions, concerns, or would like advice on herd health, cria management, or flystrike and parasite prevention, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

We wish you, your families, and your livestock a safe, healthy, and enjoyable summer.
Best wishes,

The Livestock Clinic Team

