

Autumn Newsletter

October 2026



THE AUTUMN ROUND UP...

As the days shorten and autumn gets underway, there is plenty to think about across the farm, smallholding and at home with our pets. This time of year brings changes in weather, forage, housing and management, making it a good opportunity to check that livestock are prepared for the months ahead.

Autumn is a particularly important time for reviewing herd and flock health, planning winter housing and feeding, and looking ahead to the breeding season. For smallholders, the same seasonal changes can have a big impact on animal health, even in smaller numbers. And for our pet clients, autumn brings its own considerations, from seasonal hazards to keeping pets healthy and comfortable as the weather changes. In this issue we focus on bluetongue and what else to look out for in autumn: magnesium deficiency in beef suckler cows and preparing sheep flocks for tupping season.

As always, if you are unsure about anything concerning your animals, please get in touch with the practice, we're only a phone call away

The Livestock Clinic Team



ATTENTION!

From the 1st of January -
30th September 2026 we
have sold 208 bottles of
bluetongue vaccine,
which equates to 10,400
doses.

If you are still interested
in vaccinating, please get
in touch with the office.

Hypomagnesaemia in suckler herds

Hypomagnesaemia (hypomag/grass staggers) is a metabolic disorder that can affect beef suckler cows around calving and early lactation – however is not limited to only these stages of production.

Access to spring and autumn grass is a key factor for grazed cattle, especially lactating cattle, as the passage rate of lush wet grass through the digestive tract reduces magnesium absorption. Other factors to consider include mineral supplementation and its method, grass availability, potassium levels in grass and timing of supplement. Cows under nutritional stress and older cows are also more at risk.

A minimum target intake of magnesium for a lactating suckler cow is 30g (20g for dry cows). In areas where potassium levels in grass are high (>2%) then this increases to 40g (30g for dry cows). Sufficient magnesium must be provided daily as it is not stored by the body.

Magnesium content of grass varies – average levels being around 1/6g/kg of dry matter. Wet weather reduces the dry matter of grass and therefore dry matter and magnesium intake. If using free access minerals then sufficient quantity should be provided, fresh, daily. If using lick buckets then make sure there are adequate numbers provided for the number of cows. Magnesium is not very palatable and it can take 2-3 weeks to get cows used to consuming the daily requirements so plan ahead.

Anything that decreases dry matter intake will affect the cows magnesium status and increase the risk of hypomag.

During the drought this summer we saw several cases of hypomag in suckler herds. Cattle were opting to remain in the shade and therefore grazing less. Water intake was also reduced in some animals compared to their requirement – which further decreased dry matter intake.

Weather effects are more commonly seen in bad weather where cattle congregate in sheltered areas and therefore reduce their grazing time. However we might start to see cases of hypomag during summer months when there are extended drought periods if access to water is not provided in shaded area and supplementary feed given.

Clinical signs:

- -Sudden death
- - Excitability
- - High head carriage
- - Twitching muscles
- - Staggering gait
- - Easily startled
- - Teeth grinding
- - Seizure



Treatment:

- 400ml 40% calcium borogluconate + 50ml 25% magnesium sulphate by slow IV.
Reamaining 400 ml of magnesium sulphate given under the skin
Only increases blood levels for 6-12 hours to essential

Prevention:

- Total diet should contain 2.5g/kg DM magnesium
 - Requires forage and pasture analysis to calculate deficit
- Supplementation
 - High magnesium cobs (60g magnesium oxide per cow per day)
 - Medicate the water supply: soluble magnesium salts (chloride, sulphate or acetate)
 - 250G/100l. Water becomes unpalatable at higher levels.
 - Dust pastures during high risk periods: finely ground calcinated magnesite every 10-14 days
 - Rumen boluses
 - Supplement important during stormy weather or prolonged draught periods

It is also important to note that hypomagnesaemia and hypocalcaemia are biologically linked!! A magnesium deficiency impairs a cows ability mobilise her calcium reserves. Cattle rely on parathyroid hormone to pull calcium out of their bones and intestines when blood calcium levels drop – however magnesium is required for receptors in this pathway to function. Subclinical hypomag stops this pathway being activated inhibiting calcium release and leading to hypocalcaemia. In dairy cows more that 75% of milk fever cases in mid-lactation are due to low magnesium intake.

One case often suggests a wider issue in the group so consider wider testing and re-evaluating your supplementation protocol



Fly Strike in Sheep & Camelids – Smallholder Guide

Fly strike (blowfly strike) is a painful, potentially fatal condition where flies lay eggs on soiled or damaged skin; maggots then feed on tissue. Warm, humid weather, dirty fleeces, wounds and diarrhoea all increase risk, especially from late spring to autumn.

Recognise early

- Restlessness, frequent tail switching, biting at fleece, isolation from the group.
- Foul smell, wet/discoloured wool, skin damage, visible maggots.
- Severe cases: weak, off feed, shock.

Immediate treatment (sheep & camelids)

Act quickly – the sooner you treat, the better the outcome.

1. Restrain safely, move to shade/quiet area.
 2. Clip just enough fleece/fibre to expose the lesion (avoid over-clipping inflamed skin).
 3. Remove maggots manually (gloved) or with forceps.
 4. Flush wound with warm water + mild antiseptic (e.g. dilute chlorhexidine).
 5. Apply a treatment insecticide to the lesion and surrounding skin/fibre (e.g. Crovect or Spot-On; use only under vet direction in camelids).
 6. Call your vet for systemic antibiotics, pain relief (NSAIDs), and fluids/nursing for weak or shocked animals.
 7. Monitor 2–3/day for new maggots, worsening lesions, or systemic signs.
- Euthanasia may be the kindest option for very extensive or recumbent cases.

Prevention in sheep

- Use NADIS blowfly alert to time prevention.
- Shear/crutch/dag long-woolled or high-risk animals before peak fly season.
- Control scour: worm control, nutrition, treat diarrhoea promptly.
- Treat wounds early: footrot, cuts, umbilical infections.
- Chemical prevention (check SPC & withdrawal):
 - o Synthetic pyrethroids (Crovect): 6–8 weeks protection; some also licensed for treatment.
 - o Insect growth regulators (CLiK): 8–19 weeks prevention only; not for active strike.
- Hygiene: clean housing, correct deadstock disposal, manage manure to reduce breeding sites.



Prevention in camelids (alpacas/llamas)

Nothing is specifically licensed for fly strike in UK camelids; work with your vet for safe, effective off-label options.

- Keep fibre clean and dry; dag/crutch perineum/tail in high-risk animals.
- Manage scour and skin disease promptly; treat wounds and foot lesions early.
- Use vet-guided preventative sprays/pour-ons before peak fly activity.
- Improve hygiene around housing, manure, and carcass disposal.

When to call the vet urgently

- Large or multiple strike sites.
- Animal is weak, off feed, or recumbent.
- Signs of shock (cold extremities, rapid breathing, collapse).
- Repeated strike despite prevention.
- Camelids with extensive lesions or systemic illness.





19th November 2026 - 10am - 12pm

Introduction to alpaca for beginners

The talk will cover topics including:

- Housing, fencing and pasture requirements
- Nutrition
- Vaccinations, worming and routine health checks
- What to expect as a new alpaca owner
- Basic behaviour

Are you looking into getting
or have recently acquired
some alpacas?

Ever wondered what's
involved in owning alpacas,
but don't know where to
start?



LOCATION:

The Livestock Clinic
The Old Stables
Strood Green
Wisborough Green
RH14 0HJ

Price: £35 (ex VAT)



Presented by Lissie Gercke
BVSc CertAVP (CP) MRCVS

For Further information, or to book a place, please email
info@thelivestockclinic.co.uk or call **01483 342070**

Red mite control when Exzolt is out of stock

Occasionally Exzolt is out of stock and you might need to bridge the gap between treatments. Other control methods are more time-consuming and labour-intensive but still play a useful role in red mite control. Red mites spend most of their time off the bird hiding in dark cracks and crevices in the chicken housing, so controlling them in the environment is the most effective method.

1. Deep clean the coop

Remove the bedding and using HOT water with detergent, steam, or poultry safe disinfectant (such as Chicken vet BIOVX or poultry shield), scrub all the surfaces including the joints, perches and nestboxes.

2. Once dry, apply a mite treatment to the coop.

Dergall can be applied at night in the presence of the birds with a follow up application applied 5-7 days later. (Dergall can also be applied onto the legs to treat scaley leg)

Alternatively use a permethrin spray/powder (such as Nettex Total Mite Kill). Ensure a thorough application into all cracks, under perches, and into joints.

Diatomaceous earth (such as Johnsons Poultry mite and lice powder) can then be added into the joints and crevices.

3. Treatment of the birds (if required)

Use a poultry safe mite repellent powder/spray (such as Battles Red mite powder) under the wings and around the vent.

Provide dust baths with sand, wood ash and diatomaceous earth.

Repeat treatments three times at 5-6 days because most products do not kill the mite eggs.

Longer term prevention should include:

- Regular coop cleaning
- Monthly inspections for red mite. Sticky red mite traps might be useful for this.
- Sealing of cracks and crevices in the coop.
- Maintaining dry bedding and providing dust baths.
- Biological control is also available in the form of a predatory mite that feeds on the red mites and their eggs (Androlis predatory mite).



Don't Leave It to Chance: Vaccinating Your Flock Prior to Topping

With the autumn days shortening, the breeding season for sheep is upon us. Bluetongue has taken a large focus this season, with reports from the areas with high bluetongue incidence, of an increase in ram and bull infertility thought to be linked to the disease. The majority of our flocks and herds are now vaccinated for bluetongue but the most common causes of reproductive failure should still be considered and investigated if you encounter high barren rates (greater than 2% in sheep and 5% in suckler herds).

Bull and Ram MOT and fertility checks can ensure the best chance of mating success in your herd or flock. With prices of breeding males rising significantly in recent years, it's ever more important that this investment doesn't result in an issue further down the line.

The main causes of abortion or barren ewes at scanning are shown below. MSD Flockcheck data from 2026 showed that 74% of barren ewes tested had been exposed to toxoplasmosis, while 24% had been exposed to enzootic abortion (EAE).

RESULTS FROM 2026 FLOCKCHECK

Disease	Prevalence of exposure
EAE	24%
Toxoplasmosis	74%

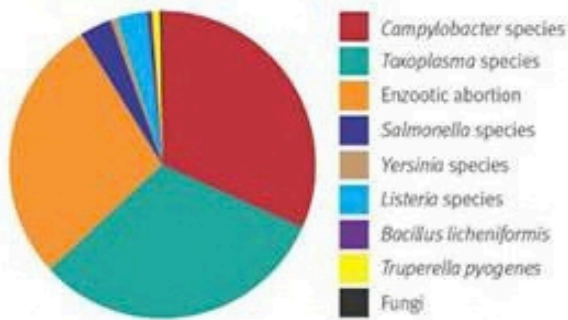


Closed flocks are still at risk of **toxoplasmosis**, as the disease is spread through cat faeces, which can contaminate the environment where ewes graze. If infection occurs early in pregnancy, it **can result in resorption and barren ewes** at scanning. Infection later in pregnancy can lead to **abortion**.

EAE (Chlamydia abortus) is usually introduced into a flock when an infected animal is brought into a naïve flock. This can result in **abortion storms** within the flock with reports of up to **30% of a flock aborting** as a result.

Campylobacter was also found to be responsible for a large number of abortions in sheep. Campylobacteriosis can spread when susceptible animals ingest contaminated feed or water, or through direct contact with infected foetuses or foetal membranes.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT CAUSES OF INFECTIOUS ABORTION?



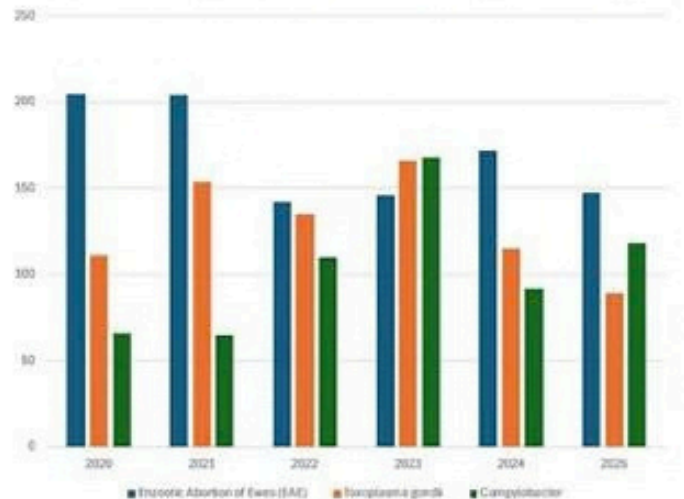
80% of submissions were due to:

- EAE
- Toxoplasmosis
- Campylobacter

toxovax[®]
enzovax[®]

Together raising healthy lambs

2. VIDA: Annual report of diagnosed causes, 2012 - 2025



MSD
Animal Health

Vaccinations are available for all of these diseases and remain the best method of preventing lamb losses within flocks (Vaccines are available in a range of bottle sizes, making them suitable for flocks of any size). Good biosecurity is also important in reducing the risk of disease entering and spreading within the flock. **Investigating abortions** and the causes of **barren ewes** is important in building an understanding of the disease profile on your farm. Please get in contact if you'd like to discuss vaccination or breeding issues in your flock.

Guidelines on recommended vaccinations can be found on the NOAH website: [22/08/NOAH-Livestock-Vaccination-Guideline-August-2022.pdf](https://www.noah.co.uk/22/08/NOAH-Livestock-Vaccination-Guideline-August-2022.pdf)

A NOTE FROM THE OFFICE:

Office hours:

Please note, our office hours are **8.30am - 5pm** and the on call vet cannot answer office enquires outside on these hours. Anything non-urgent will be pushed to the next working day.

Thank you for your understanding and as always, we're only a call away 24/7!

The Livestock Clinic Team.

Upcoming Events.

2026/27

Nov

19

INTRODUCTION TO ALPACAS

An informative meeting led by Lissie, our camelid practice certificate holder.

10am - 12pm, The Old Stables

DEC

TBC

CLIENT XMAS SOCIAL

Networking, vet Q&A, christmas vibes

5.30pm, Location TBC

JAN

14

MEDICINES AND INJECTIONS PRACTICAL

A Practical session focusing on vaccinating, and injecting small ruminants for pet owners

10am - 12pm, The Old Stables

FEB

25

PET SHEEP AND GOAT TALK

An interactive session on the management of pet sheep and goats

10am - 12pm, The Old Stables

The Old Stables, Wisborough Green, RH14 0HJ