

Spring 2025 Farm Newsletter

All-Wales Avian Influenza Prevention Zone

As of the 30th of January, all of Wales has been placed in an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone. This introduces strict biosecurity measures for all bird keepers, **which includes pet birds**. All keepers **MUST** complete a mandatory biosecurity self-assessment checklist within 7 days. This is in addition to the previous requirement to register as a keeper of birds. You may be asked to present this form if you are inspected.

Biosecurity

The main causes of bird flu are contact with: wild birds (especially waterfowl), faeces from infected birds, dirty footwear, clothing, vehicles and equipment. There are some steps you can take to keep your birds safe:

- Prevent mixing with wild birds, for example by deterring them with bird deterrents (check the NFU code of practice first) or foils/streamers to scare them away
- Checking outside areas around your birds housing daily and remove wild bird faeces, feathers and carcasses
- Keeping food, water and bedding in enclosed areas to prevent wild birds accessing them
- Change the times you feed your birds, as wild birds can learn routines and will gather for food
- Prevent wild birds from nesting on your bird house/sheds
- Fix roof leaks to prevent contaminated water entering your bird house/sheds
- Remove moss from the roof, as it attracts wild birds
- Fence off/cover standing water and ponds
- Control rodents and pests as they can carry in disease on their fur/feet
- Clean and regularly disinfect your housing, see the DEFRA website for more advice
- Wear clean footwear and clothing when entering bird housing – including using a disinfectant foot dip or having dedicated footwear for inside bird housing
- limit and control access to your birds – keep visitors to a minimum and record their details

If you have over 500 birds, you must follow additional guidance found on the Government Bird Flu page.

The follow are signs of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. This is a **notifiable disease**, if you suspect this, you **MUST** speak to your vet as soon as possible, who will arrange testing through the APHA. Signs include:

- sudden death
- swollen head
- closed and runny eyes
- lethargy and depression
- lying down and unresponsiveness
- lack of coordination
- eating less than usual
- sudden increase or decrease in water consumption
- head and body shaking
- drooping of the wings
- dragging of legs
- twisting of the head and neck
- swelling and blue discolouration of comb and wattles
- haemorrhages and redness on leg shanks and under the skin of the neck
- breathing difficulties such as gaping (mouth breathing), nasal snicking (coughing sound), sneezing, gurgling, or rattling
- fever or noticeable increase in body temperature
- discoloured or loose watery droppings
- stop or significant drop in egg production.

Included in this issue:

- Avian Influenza update
- Pre-lambing talk dates
- Benchmarking
- Staff announcements
- Schmallerberg testing
- Alternatives to Heptavac-P
- Ranide replacement
- Sweet Itch Vaccination
- Colostrum update
- Rotavec corona vaccine update
- Benchmarking lambing data

Pre-lambing talks

Our popular pre-lambing updates talk will be running again this year:

11/02 at the Monty Club in Newtown

13/02 at the Red Lion in Llanidloes

18/02 at the Horse and Jockey in Knighton

20/02 at the Severn Arms in Penybont

All meetings start at 7pm. Please phone your local branch to book so we know numbers for food.

Schmallerberg Testing

The APHA have waived lab fees for Schmallerberg testing this year. If you suspect any cases, please let us know. Please note some criteria must be met.

Hafren Veterinary Group

Newtown

01686 625344

Llanidloes

01686 413475

Knighton

01547 528292

Cross Gates

01597 851500



Alternatives to Heptavac P

Heptavac P is usually recommended as the ideal clostridial vaccine, as it covers all the clostridial diseases and pasteurella. Unfortunately there are, once again, supply issues, so it's very difficult to get hold of this year. Below is a summary of alternatives, but nothing will cover everything as well as Heptavac P, so talk to a vet if you're not sure what to use:

Vaccine	Diseases Covered	Diseases not covered
Ovivac-P Plus	Pulpy kidney, baxy, tetanus, blackleg, pasteurella	Lamb dysentery
Ovipast Plus	Pasteurella only	Clostridial cover
Lambivac	Pulpy kidney, struck, tetanus, lamb dysentery	Pasteurella
Covexin 8	Pulpy kidney, lamb dysentery, sruck, blackleg, braxy, tetanus	Pasteurella
Covexin 10	Pulpy kidney, lamb dysentery, struck, blackleg, braxy, tetanus, clostridial metritis, yellow lamb disease	Pasteurella
Bravoxin 10	Pulpy kidney, lamb dysentery, struck, blackleg, braxy, tetanus, clostridial metritis	Pasteurella

If none of these are appropriate for your farm, please phone your local practice to discuss possible import options.

What clostridial diseases are we vaccinating against?

Pulpy kidney – this species of clostridium causes sudden death in lambs, which causes rapid rotting of the kidneys after death, hence the name. It occurs in rapidly growing lambs, on good pasture, where clostridium overgrows in the intestines and poisons the lamb from inside.

Struck – this causes sudden death in adult sheep, due to the rapid toxin build up in the blood

Braxy – causes sudden death, usually after eating frozen root crops in winter

Tetanus – this causes progressive stiffness of the legs, followed by death

Blackleg – this occurs after wounds, usually on the legs, let clostridium through the skin or umbilicus, causing sudden lameness and very high fever, which can progress to death

Clostridial metritis – this is a severe uterine infection that can lead to sudden death

Lamb dysentery – typically causes sudden death, though sometimes profound scour is seen first

What is Pasteurella?

Pasteurella is a bacterial infection that is the most common cause of death in all ages of sheep. It occurs when sheep are stressed, for example by movement or lambing, and then bacteria that usually reside in the throat of healthy sheep invade the lungs leading to pneumonia or septicaemia. This usually leads to sudden death.

Ranide Replacement

We have been able to obtain a replacement for Ranide, for use on farms where there is resistance to traditional flukicides. Please get in touch with your branch if you previously required Ranide. As before, this is a prescription only product, so it can only be dispensed after testing proves resistance to other flukicides.

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Spring 2025 Farm Newsletter Continued

Sweet Itch Vaccination

Sweet itch is an allergic reaction to the saliva of certain biting insects that causes intense itching, biting and rubbing of the skin. You'll often see bald patches too. It most commonly affects the mane, tailhead, face and under the belly, and is most common in Spring and Summer.

There are a few ways you can reduce your horses risk of sweet itch, such as a sweet itch rug that covers the most affected areas, use of a permethrin insect repellent (permethrin is toxic to cats), stabling horses at dawn and dusk, and ensuring turn out areas are as far from standing water and woodlands as possible.

The Insol Dermatophyton is the vaccine licensed in horses to protect against ringworm, but anecdotal evidence shows that it's effective when administered off-licence against sweet itch. The vaccine is given in two doses, 14 days apart, and best administered in spring before fly season starts. Please contact your local branch to enquire or add your name to the list.

Staff Announcements



We are pleased to announce that Isla and Allen are expecting a baby and returning home to South Africa! We will certainly miss them, and we're sure all our clients wish them all the best.

Colostrum in lambs and calves

The 5Qs of good colostrum management are an effective way to consider your use of colostrum:

- Quality – ensure IgG level in colostrum is >50g/l (if not, top up with commercial colostrum), this can be measured with a refractometer, please ask at your local branch if you need a demonstration
- Quantity – 50ml/kg for a lamb, or 4L in first 2hrs for calves
- Quickly – within 1-2hrs of birth
- Quietly – minimise stress to increase absorption of protective antibodies
- sQueaky clean – make sure colostrum is safely handled and all feeding equipment is clean

Why is colostrum so important?

Young ruminants are born without immunity and low energy reserves – this is all provided by the colostrum from the dam. Getting enough **good quality** colostrum into young stock leads to:

- 70% lower veterinary costs
- 230g high average daily gain (calves)
- Heifers are, on average, 2 weeks earlier to first calving, improving efficiency

(Faber et al, 2005)

The quality of colostrum a young animal has received can also be checked with blood sampling, as we can check they have a high enough concentration of immune cells in the blood. This is really important when investigating commercial colostrum quality, as some of them can't be absorbed by young stock properly.

We usually recommend a product like **Immucol Platinum**, as it has been shown in a recent farm study (in Wales) to achieve above the minimum desired concentration in 100% of calves. Commercial colostrum quality varies greatly, unfortunately **there is no requirement for colostrum being sold in shops to be proven to be effective**, and many of them have been shown to not absorb properly, so we recommend checking with your vet if you're not sure about what you're using.

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Rotavec Corona Vaccine

Did you know scouring calves are 2.4-2.9 times more likely to die during rearing?

Rotavec corona is a single-injection vaccination given to dams, which then passes immunity to the calves from diarrhoea caused by Rotavirus, Coronavirus and E Coli.

Injections are given to all heifers and cows once a year. Transfer of immunity is through colostrum, so it's important that all calves get sufficient colostrum from the dams.

This vaccine protects the calves for at least 28 days post calving, getting calves through the biggest scour danger period.

This must be given between 12 and 3 weeks before calving is expected.

Available in 5, 20 and 50 dose bottles.

AI Service

Our new AI service is now up and running, if you'd like to find out more about our semen catalogue, please get in touch!

Benchmarking data

We often find there is a lack of data available for farmers to compare their lambing data to in this area. So, we are going to offer some benchmarking data to clients. If you are interested in joining, please fill out the data sheet below. All data will be processed anonymously and averages for the area will be sent to all participants. If successful, we will start benchmarking for further areas of interest.

Benchmarking data

Scanning %

Lambing % Singles

Doubles

Number of singles

Twins

Triplets

Number of ewes lambed

Number of barren ewes

Number of lambs turned out

Have there been any abortions? If so, was a cause diagnosed?

Pedigree/Commercial

Indoor/Outdoor

Details if needed:

For returns of results only:

Farm name

Email address:

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