

White Lodge Farm Clinic

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Welcome to our Winter Newsletter!

Welcome to the Winter edition of our farm newsletter. We've been very busy this year, and after the recent announcement of TB testing increasing to 6 monthly we've decided to employ a new member of staff to take on the majority of TB testing. See below for more information!

We've just had our first farmer's meeting since the beginning of COVID for the Red Tractor Medicines Course. It was lovely to welcome you all back into the practice and we hope it is the first of many events we can hold again! If you didn't manage to attend this course but may be interested in any future courses then please contact reception to register your interest!



Our vets are currently involved in a sheep scab project, taking blood from sheep and running a new blood test to assess whether sheep have been in recent contact with the scab mites. The aim of the project is to try to eradicate scab from the country. It's proving to be a really useful test and is of particular use to test bought-in sheep, or sheep returning from grazing on common land, and can really help to keep sheep scab out of your flock. Only 12 sheep out of a group need to be tested! For more information on the test, please speak to one of our vets.

New Member of Staff - Meet Michael!

Michael started with us in September, and is our new farm veterinary technician. Michael's main job is to carry out TB testing, and he has undergone intense training with all of our vets, and we're pleased to announce he passed his final TB testing practical exam with 100%! Michael has come from a local farming background, and has years of experience with farm animals (and farmers!). His last job was working as a delivery driver and we've heard that he finds TB testing much more enjoyable and exciting!



FOCUS ON: FARM DOG HEALTHCARE

Farm dogs are the most loyal, and probably the most useful members of staff you can have on a farm. However, after their puppy vaccinations, the majority of farm dogs very rarely see a vet other than to greet them on farm, or for working incidents that require a bit more than blue spray. All farm dogs should be discussed as part of a herd health plan drawn up with a vet. However, discussed below are some of the routine treatments you should consider for your dogs on farm.



Vaccinations

Dogs in the UK are routinely vaccinated against Distemper, Hepatitis, Parvovirus (DHP all in one vaccine), and Leptospirosis (Routinely the L4 vaccine). There is also an optional vaccine against kennel cough.

- The **DHP vaccine** is only required every 3 years in adult dogs, and there is some evidence to show that some dogs will have immunity that lasts longer than this. These diseases are all carried by other dogs and can be fatal, so are particularly important for farms where other dogs may be visiting, or if the dogs leave the farm.
- **Leptospirosis** is a common bacterial disease, that causes kidney and liver failure in dogs, and without treatment is normally fatal. Even with treatment, dogs will require lengthy hospital stays, and antibiotic courses, and owners are often faced with bills of well over £1000. Lepto is carried by many animals, especially **cattle** and **rats**, and the bacteria can also be picked up from contaminated water. The majority of dogs we see with lepto have come from a farm background.
 - **The immunity from a lepto vaccine only lasts one year, so this is the most important vaccination to keep up in farm dogs, and must be done yearly for good protection.**

- **Kennel cough**, while very rarely a fatal disease, can cause a working dog to require weeks off work, and also has the potential to cause long term damage to a dog. This vaccination is also needed every year, and would be recommended again for farms where other dogs may be visiting, or if the dogs leave the farm.

Worming

As we all know, dogs play an important role in the transmission of some worms to livestock. The most common we see is the sheep tapeworm '*Taenia ovis*' aka '*cysticercus ovis*' - a tapeworm cyst that forms in the muscles of sheep, and although not harmful to humans, leads to whole carcass condemnation on aesthetic grounds. **Tapeworms are picked up by**

dogs eating contaminated carcasses, so are unfortunately most commonly spread by the farms own dogs!

Lungworm is also a disease of increasing importance, and is now very prevalent in our area. Lungworm is carried by slugs and snails, and can be picked up even by eating out of bowls that have a snail 'trail' across them. Lungworm can cause a wide range of signs, including respiratory issues, and can be fatal in some cases. **Lungworm treatment is recommended for any dogs that eat slugs or snails, or have food/water bowls outside.**

Other worms such as roundworms are unlikely to affect adult dogs, but may also have effects on a working dogs' performance.

A complete worming tablet every month will prevent tapeworm and lungworm, and prevent stock being infected.

Flea/Tick treatments

Ticks are well known for carrying Lyme's disease and other diseases that can affect dogs, causing significant illness, and leaving them with long term issues if not noticed early.

Fleas are also the carrier of a type of tapeworm, and also cause condition loss and significant irritation for dogs. Although fleas and ticks used to be seasonal, they now seem to be a problem all year round! Most products are monthly, although some products are every 3 months.

RECOGNISING AND MANAGING PAIN IN LIVESTOCK

Pain relief can make a big difference to an animals' recovery time, whether they are sick or undergoing a procedure. However, it is still not used as commonly on farm as it should be!

What is it?

The drug most commonly used is called Meloxicam – a yellow liquid. It provides pain relief and also has anti-inflammatory properties. This means that not only does it make the animal feel better, making them more likely to eat and drink, and therefore recover quicker, but it can help treat diseases such as pneumonia and wounds where inflammation plays a key role.

When to use it?

Meloxicam is great to use for any animals that are sick, injured, or just don't look quite right. As cattle and sheep are prey species they conceal pain very well so sometimes it can be hard to tell.

Therefore as well as obvious signs of illness, look out for animals that:

- Have a 'tucked up' appearance
- Slower than usual, or at the back of the group

- Spending more time lying down
- Eating or drinking less than usual
- Sunken eyes
- Drooping ears

Some common illnesses and ailments to use Meloxicam:

- Pneumonia
- Wounds
- Lameness
- Hard calving/lambing
- De-horning and disbudding
- Castration/ringing
- Mild scour cases



How to use it

Meloxicam (20mg/ml) is given subcutaneously at a dose rate of 1ml/40kg for cows and 1ml/20kg for sheep. One injection will last 72 hours so most of the time an animal will only need a one off dose.

Recocam, Animeloxan, and Metacam are trade names of the product.

If you're not sure whether you should be using meloxicam on a particular animal, then please don't hesitate to give one of our vets a call!



LIVER FLUKE - WORTH TESTING FOR?

Liver fluke in cattle and sheep most commonly causes disease around late winter/early spring. Clinical signs of liver fluke include weight loss, anaemia, fluid retention (oedema), weakness, abdominal pain and death. Fluke are picked up by the accidental ingestion of small snails which host the middle life stage of the fluke. They then migrate from the intestines, through the abdomen and live in the bile ducts of the liver. The eggs from the fluke are passed in the faeces, and these can be detected by looking at samples under the microscope. Treating for fluke if not needed, or not treating if it is needed are both very costly exercises! However, a pooled faecal sample (5 grams from at least 10 animals of fresh faeces) can be taken to assess whether treatment or further investigation is necessary, and can be dropped into the practice. At or after housing is the best time to test before disease is seen!

