

PCHS NEWS

Premium Cattle Health Schemes

2021 Issue



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John Scholefield Editor
PCHS, SRUC Veterinary Services, Greycrook, St Boswells TD6 0EQ
T: 01835 822456 E: pchs1@btconnect.com W: www.cattlehealth.co.uk
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Covid-19 Overview

We informed our PCHS members earlier in the year that CHeCS had issued guidance to all cattle health scheme providers about delays completing annual testing due to COVID-19. Accreditation was to be suspended when testing became overdue (one month after renewal date); however, accreditation could be re-instated as soon as the testing was carried out, provided it was clear and the herd was being managed within the rules of the scheme in the interim.

If a Johne's Disease annual test was delayed, we asked you to submit a faecal sample from any animal over two years old leaving the herd in the interim period. We recognised that statutory TB testing was taking place and that the opportunity to collect blood samples for health scheme purposes could be taken during the TB test.

Be assured that we can process and test all health scheme samples that are submitted while retaining our focus on safe working. If the vet practice is willing to undertake the sampling please go ahead with testing where you feel able to do so safely. We are achieving published target

turnaround times for the vast majority of our services. For the latest updates please refer to our [Covid-19 page](#) where we will advise of any issue around to sampling and testing. Thank you all for bearing with us during these challenging times.

Socially Distanced Buying and Selling

Livestock auctions have changed drastically over the past few months with restrictions on the number of ringside attendees, a 'drop and go' policy for vendors, more livestreaming and an increase in online sales. This is a vastly different experience to the sociable auctioneering of the past, but health status is just as important. Livestreaming and online purchasing means that it is more vital than ever before not to accept pretty pictures and impressive videos at face value without background health checks.

PCHS have been busy producing Sale (Health Declaration) Cards. In order to reflect the increase in volume and production costs there will now be a small fee of £8 per card for members and £13 for non-members for processing. This will come into effect from the 1st January 2021.

BVD Accreditation Routes

BVD Accreditation can be achieved either by blood testing in the form of check tests, or by ear tissue tagging. While check tests require a sample per management group of animals 9 – 18 months old, ear tag testing must be done on all calves that are born into the herd.

It is important that if you decide to switch from one method of testing to the other, that a crop of calves is not missed. **Each cohort** of calves either needs to be tested by the antibody check test on a proportion of the calves **OR** by all calves being tested for virus.

For example, if you normally do check tests on autumn born calves when they reach 12 months of age, but decided to switch to tissue tagging, as well as tissue tagging all the newly born autumn calves you would also

need to test the calves that were 12 months old that year (either with a check test or using management tissue tags).

It is important to remember what the different tests are looking for. While tissue testing only identifies PI animals, blood testing identifies any animals that have antibodies, meaning they have been exposed to BVD.

Testing entirely by tissue tagging is a good option for herds where calves are being sold out of the herd at a young age, however by entirely relying on this method if there is a breach of biosecurity that introduces infection into the herd but doesn't result in a PI calf, this wouldn't be identified.

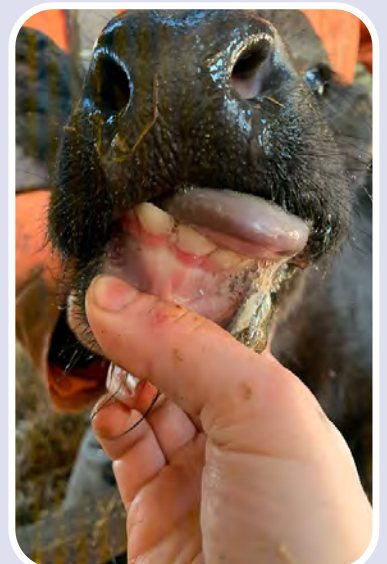


Deformed Jaws In New-Born Calves

We would like to raise awareness of a condition that makes it difficult for new-born calves to suck. The lower jaw of affected calves is set at an angle and the tongue often sticks out, especially when they try to feed. The calves are otherwise bright and alert but, if the problem is not spotted, they are at risk of starvation or disease as they don't manage to ingest enough colostrum. Their ability to feed usually improves over a number of days.

An online survey distributed to industry by SRUC in July 2019 received responses from 25 holdings across the UK. Twenty-two of these were beef herds, two had both beef and dairy enterprises, and one was solely dairy. Affected calves had been sired by Limousin (11), Charolais (9), Aberdeen Angus (4), British blue (2) and Holstein Friesian (1) bulls. Most were born between February and June, consistent with peak spring calving in beef herds; but cases were also reported in July, August, October, November and December born calves. Three quarters of herds described an incidence of less than 5 percent. However, six herds reported an incidence of between 8 and 15 percent. Twelve herds had seen small numbers of similarly affected calves in previous years. The cause of the condition is currently unknown and we would be interested to hear of further cases.

Email: Timothy.Geraghty@sruc.ac.uk



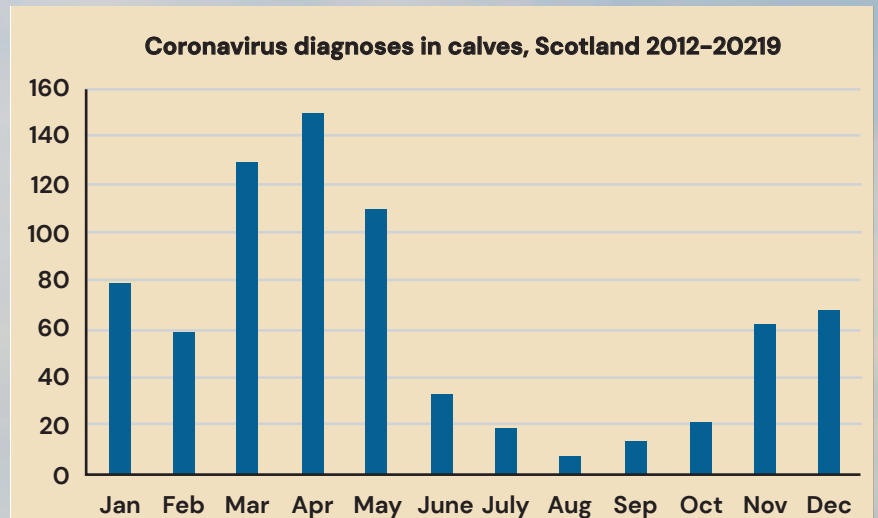
Coronavirus Disease in Cattle

While the covid-19 pandemic has brought coronaviruses to the forefront of public awareness, vets and stockmen are no strangers to this family of viruses. These pathogens can cause disease in a wide range of species, and can have a significant impact in livestock due to their highly infectious nature. The two forms of coronavirus disease in cattle mainly affect the intestinal tract, causing diarrhoea.

Just like rotavirus and a number of other pathogens, bovine coronavirus is part of the complex of organisms that are responsible for diarrhoea in calves in the first three weeks of life. Affected calves become depressed, pass profuse milky diarrhoea and dehydration can be so severe that calves die. There is no specific treatment, but many calves will require oral or intravenous fluids to aid recovery. Disease is best prevented by ensuring good hygiene and calf husbandry, with particular attention to ensuring adequate and timely colostrum intake. For farms with confirmed problems, vaccinating dams against coronavirus during pregnancy provides protection for calves via the intake of colostrum, and helps to minimise virus shedding and environmental contamination. Diagnoses in Scotland are seasonal (see graph below), reflecting an increase in infections towards the end of each calving period, as contamination accumulates.

In adult cattle, herd outbreaks of diarrhoea occur, usually termed "winter dysentery". Characterised by watery, dark and sometimes bloody diarrhoea, the virus is very infectious and will spread to the entire group rapidly. In some outbreaks mild respiratory signs are also present. While dramatic in appearance, the disease tends to be mild with affected cattle typically eating normally throughout the two-to-three-day course of illness, although a marked milk drop may occur. Occasionally supportive care such as rehydration is required, but in most cases recovery is spontaneous and complete.

Reliable testing is available to confirm the diagnosis, and is particularly useful in young calves where several different agents may be involved in the incident. Veterinary laboratories offer testing and pen-side kits are in use by some vets.



By now we are all familiar with the biosecurity procedures necessary to control spread of coronaviruses between humans. Good biosecurity is also vital in controlling the diseases caused by these viruses in cattle. Thorough hygiene and rapid isolation of affected calves is essential to prevent spread of coronavirus scour to the rest of the crop. In adult cattle, outbreaks may occur when the virus is introduced to the herd with bought-in animals. Whilst bovine coronavirus doesn't infect humans, movements of people on and off-farm can also be responsible for spread, so ensuring disinfection of equipment, clothing, footwear and handwashing between holdings is important to protect stock from infection.



TESCO Sustainable Dairy Group

The Tesco Sustainable Dairy Group have stated their intention to drive high standards in infectious disease control across their supply chain, and to support this now offer additional QVIS (Quality, Value, Innovation and Service) points for achieving certain levels of accreditation status in a CHeCS health scheme.



accreditation may not be attainable for all of their suppliers due to biosecurity requirements, they offer 2 QVIS biosecurity points for herds achieving Risk Level 1 or 2 for Johne's Disease, and another 2 points for those achieving either Accredited Free or Vaccinated Monitored Free status for BVD.

The Tesco Livestock Code of Practice identifies the diseases that they currently want to control, which include the major cattle endemic infections – BVD, Johne's, IBR and Leptospirosis.

Outside of CHeCS accreditation, further QVIS points are available to farms either vaccinating for IBR or monitored negative for disease, farms who achieve BVDFree status, those running a closed herd or those only buying less than 5 animals in a 12-month period.

QVIS points are available for those who can demonstrate a commitment to disease eradication. Although they recognise that full CHeCS

Tesco also stated that the future is likely to involve improved disease control and eradication.



CHeCS Rules

The CHeCS rules have now been updated to make some changes to the IBR and Johne's Disease programmes. A summary of the new rules can be seen below, while a full written version of the rules can be seen side by side with the previous version here: http://bit.ly/CHeCS_Addendum

IBR: Rules have been updated so that rather than all breeding stock having to be tested annually, now all animals 12 months of age and over must be tested annually.

Johne's Disease: Members need to be aware that any animal that leaves the herd or dies before the results of the herd test are known, may have a positive antibody result. Therefore, to ensure that such animals can have confirmatory screening carried out you should arrange for your vet to collect a faeces sample from these animals before they leave the holding (this can be done at the same time as taking the blood sample). This can be managed for animals that have been subject to emergency slaughter, culled for some other reason, sold or otherwise died. The faeces sample will be stored at the lab. The faeces sample will only be tested if the blood sample tests positive for antibodies.



New Sheep Monitoring Schemes Aim to Reduce Risk of Disease



UK sheep farmers can now benefit from SRUC's two new monitoring schemes designed to reduce the risk of disease in sheep, having been launched to sit alongside the Premium Sheep and Goat Health Schemes (PSGHS) accreditation.

While PSGHS Accreditation is the gold standard, the monitoring schemes provide a level of assurance for buyers looking to reduce disease risk. PSGHS Monitoring Schemes are being launched for two important infectious sheep diseases: maedi visna (MV) and Johne's disease, with potential for other diseases to be added at a later date.

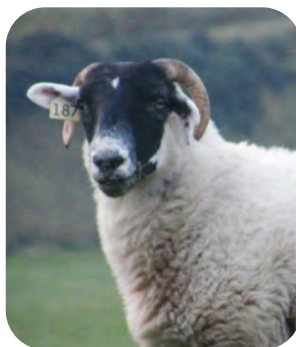
Monitoring will be of value to all flock owners, whether pedigree or commercial, wishing to minimise the impact of disease in their flocks. The monitoring schemes are based on annual testing of three main groups for each separately managed flock:

- Targeted testing of high-risk adult animals – either 12 or 20 depending on the size of flock (above or below 500)
- Testing of rams
- Testing a proportion of added animals where they have lower health status, as these pose the greatest risk in introducing disease

Testing can be done at any time of year but SRUC asks members to allow six weeks before animals are sold to give plenty of time for arranging sampling, testing, and reporting. The farm's private veterinary surgeon must take the samples.

SRUC Veterinary Services decided on a targeted testing approach, as opposed to testing a random sample, following years of experience detecting disease using '12 ewe screens' which are regularly used by many commercial flocks.

The PSGHS MV Accreditation Scheme also successfully uses 12 ewe screens in non-accredited commercial flocks run by MV accredited members. Targeting of the animals to test is based on selection by the flock's veterinary surgeon,



from those that are thinner or have raised poor lambs/ had a poor milk yield, with no other apparent reason on examination (such as lameness or dental disease). This means that fewer animals need to be tested compared to a test based on a random selection of animals.

Another important part of membership is an annual appraisal of farm biosecurity, working through a biosecurity guidance checklist with the farm vet. The Health Status Report for a monitored flock will be awarded annually and will record the number of years that a flock has been monitored.

SRUC's Dave Wilson, PSGHS Veterinary Manager, said: "We hope that this new scheme will appeal particularly to commercial producers of female breeding stock who want to reassure buyers that they take these diseases seriously, and are working hard to reduce the risk of spreading disease."

Phil Stocker, Chief Executive of the National Sheep Association (NSA), said: "NSA plays an active role on the PSGHS Advisory Board and these schemes are something we have definitely encouraged. It is very timely given the growing interest in iceberg diseases and is a great opportunity for commercial sheep farmers to get involved as a method of reducing losses and inefficiencies."

Carolyn Gill, who keeps a flock of Shetland Sheep in Dorset with her husband David, is the first member of the new scheme.

She said: "We are very proud and pleased that our Shetland flock is the first member in the UK of SRUC's monitoring scheme. We wanted to have recognised health monitoring at a level appropriate for our flock, and the new scheme is a perfect solution by giving us greater confidence in – and awareness of – our sheep's health."

In instances where disease is found, the farmer can take a proactive approach to manage the disease with their vet, benefiting from the discounted test prices available to members.

To find out more, visit www.sheepandgoathealth.co.uk, email psghs@sruc.ac.uk or visit the online brochure.



Events/Webinar

Unfortunately, all of the normal shows and events that SRUC Veterinary Services would exhibit at were cancelled or postponed in 2020. We hope that at least some of the events that we normally have a stand at will be able to go ahead in 2021. If possible, we will be at the usual events, including NBA and NSA events as well as the large agricultural shows.

You can follow our social media accounts or our blog to keep up to date with where we will be, and we hope to meet as many of our members as possible.

As an alternative to our usual event schedule for 2020, SRUC Veterinary Services ran a webinar in conjunction with the NBA and our colleagues in SRUC Research and SAC Consulting, focusing on different aspects of beef productivity and efficiency.

The programme for the webinar was as follows:

- **Beef market outlook – Robert Ramsay (SAC Consulting)**
- **Going to the bull sales: How to protect the health of your herd and your new purchase – Helen Carty (SRUC Veterinary Services)**
- **Reducing age at slaughter – Mike Coffey (SRUC Research)**
- **Increasing calf birth rates – Steven Sandison (Orkney Beef Farmer & Nuffield Scholar)**
- **Q&A Session with all 4 speakers and Neil Shand of the NBA**

Recordings of all four talks and the Q&A session can now be watched on [YouTube](#). Following the success of the webinar we are currently looking into organising more. We will email all health scheme members to let them know when they are going ahead – if we do not already have a record of your email address and you want to receive these updates please get in touch with us to update your contact details. pchs1@btconnect.com

Notice Board

Purchased Animals

Please remember that if you purchase accredited animals, it is important that you obtain some evidence of their accreditation from the seller, such as a copy of their certificate. This should be sent to the health schemes office along with any blood samples that are taken after purchase.

Welsh BVD Bloods

Our clients in Wales and/or their vet practices may not be aware that our labs are able to undertake Welsh Government BVD testing. However, for Welsh PCHS members it must be highlighted that PCHS standards require a single BVD virus test where fewer than seven animals have been tested – which is not required by the Welsh BVD scheme. This means that all Welsh herds can send their Welsh Government BVD testing samples to us and for those that are also PCHS members, please make sure you send an additional sample to be virus tested when required.

Using Other Laboratories results:

We are now offering members that have tested with a different laboratory the option for their results to be transferred to PCHS and used towards accreditation, as long as the lab is of the same UKAS Accreditation standards as our labs.

The charges for using other labs' results are as follows:

Tissue tag results: The first years' worth of results will be accepted free of charge; subsequent years' results would then be charged at £70 per annum (however PCHS must be used for any supporting blood tests). This is to allow members who have bought tags that have their testing contracted to another lab to continue in the PCHS accreditation programme.

Blood test results: The first years' worth of results will be accepted free of charge if they have already tested. We will not accept blood test results after this point.

Milk test results: The first years' worth of results will be accepted free of charge; subsequent years' results would then be charged at £70 per annum (however PCHS must be used for any supporting blood tests).

Please note: the charges would be £70 per herd, not per disease.

Member Profile:

Simon & Claire Bainbridge
Bainbridge Farms, Donkin Rigg
Cambo, Morpeth, Northumberland



Simon and Claire Bainbridge's farm near the village of Cambo in Northumberland. His parents moved to the farm in 1991 and Simon took over in 1994, growing it from the 360 rented acres it was then to the 1,650 acres that it covers today. The farm is home to their herd of 150 suckler cows, flock of 1,500 breeding ewes and 24,000 laying hens.

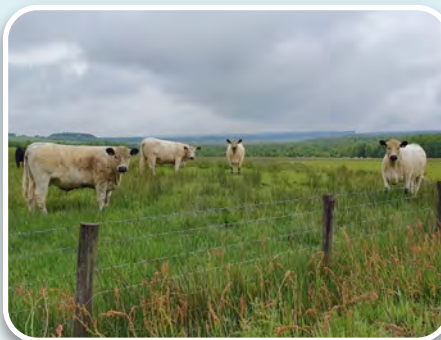
The upland and moorland landscape is mainly permanent pasture, with 300 acres of red and white clovers, 50 acres of whole-crop barley and vetch and 30 acres of brassicas, all of which is organic. The Aberdeen Angus and Hereford cross cows calve in the spring and the calves go on to be finished before 24 months, with no purchased concentrate use. Simon has added some White Galloways to this core herd with the objective of out-wintering to factor into future environmental schemes.

The herd is closed other than buying in bulls which are purchased privately and always at an equal or better health status. Simon believes that the Aberdeen Angus and Hereford breeds complement each other, being good ruminants and finishing well off grass – essential for their system as no feed is purchased. All heifers have a pelvic measurement taken at 14 months of ages before being put to the bull and calving at two years old, any of those with an area measuring smaller than 140cm² or any protrusions not being kept for breeding, as well as any without a suitable temperament. The cattle and sheep work well in conjunction with each other – the massive growth of grass in summer allows enough to be harvested for the cattle to be housed for up to 6 months of the year, resulting in lower overall outdoor stocking rates and a reduced risk of resistant worms in the sheep flock.

The Bainbridge's have been members of the Premium Cattle Health Scheme since December 2006, having joined after suffering what is believed to be one of the worst BVD outbreaks the UK had ever seen. The herd was naïve and not vaccinated and having just one PI calf in 2005, this then

leapt to 33 PIs in 2006 before falling back to only one PI in 2007. Although the initial source of infection couldn't be found, the fact that the heifers were synchronised to calve at the same time is likely to have exacerbated the scale of the outbreak.

Since gaining BVD accreditation, Simon has noticed many benefits to the herd including a marked improvement in overall health, the cattle finishing more consistently on time, no need for antibiotics, no problems with pneumonia, less fertility issues and no problems in calving heifers at 2 years old. Although they are not currently selling any breeding stock, the current goal is to continue building up the numbers to at least 200 cows so that they can do so in the future. In terms of accreditation the Bainbridge's aim to improve their Johne's Disease risk level status and continue to test for BVD, however Simon states that his main ambition is for his children to inherit a healthy herd without any underlying diseases.



As well as his full-time commitment to the farm, Simon is also the Northumberland County Chairman of the NFU, and a member of the Premium Cattle Health Scheme advisory group. Other than the livestock enterprises on the farm, the Bainbridge's have put a lot of effort into diversification and future proofing, with other ventures including letting out a commercial fishing lake, an equestrian facility including stables

and outdoor arena and a holiday cottage opening soon in an old granary building. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, Simon and Claire also set up a small farm shop to make their eggs available to the local community and have since added locally grown potatoes and locally produced rapeseed oil, with the long-term goal of also selling their own beef from the Galloway cattle in the shop.

You can find out more about the Bainbridge's at their website www.Bainbridgefarms.co.uk or on social media: www.facebook.com/bainbridgefarms Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BainbridgeFarms/>

Notice Board

Testing Cull Animals

For the Johne's Disease, IBR and Leptospirosis schemes, it is important that all eligible animals are tested when the herd test is being performed, even if they are due to be culled from the herd in the coming weeks. This is to ensure that the herd test is comprehensive and any problems are identified and addressed in a timely manner. As these animals are the most likely to show signs of having these diseases, they are a crucial indicator to the underlying health of the rest of the herd

Blog

We have a new health schemes blog, acting as a hub for information for all of health scheme members. This includes important updates to the schemes, as well as other useful information such as disease surveillance news, member profiles and more. The posts can be filtered by either PCHS or PSGHS, so it is easy to see what information is relevant to you. You can visit the blog at www.sruc.ac.uk/blog/healthschemes

Johne's Disease

When submitting faecal samples, please make sure that you send at least 10g of material per sample. Our lab may not be able to run the test properly without this amount and in this case we would require a second sample to be submitted.

Meet the Team



George Caldwell

Head of Veterinary Services
BVM&S, MSc, CertCHP,
Dip ECBHM, FRAgS, MRCVS



Alison Braddock
Marketing and Business
Development Manager
BSc (Hons)



John Scholefield
Marketing and Business
Development Officer
BA (Hons)



Colin Mason

BVM&S, BSc,
Cert CHP, MRCVS



Tim Geraghty

BVMS, MVM,
Dip ECBHM, MRCVS



Helen Carty

BVM&S,
Cert AVP (cattle),
MRCVS



David Wilson

MA BVMS DSHP
MRCVS



Julie McDiarmid

Senior PCHS
Administration Manager
BSc (Hons)