FriarsMoor Livestock Health

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

WRAPPING UP 2025

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Director – VetMB MA MRCVS DBR

We thought it only right to dedicate this 2025 wrap-up to Daisy, who is coming to the end of a year of cancer treatment. Daisy's determination and resilience is incredible.

My first draft of this article was rather sombre and I was politely told to re-write it by both Jo and Ellie! Honest feedback is always the best policy and that is one thing you can rely on within the FMLH team!

We recently had a farmer ring us to fact check the rumour that we had sold to a corporate! This was a very simple question to answer, **NO, we have not**! We remain staunchly independent, celebrating the talent and potential we have within our team, and looking forward to complimenting the current team of directors with new additions in the future.

The rush of calls that we normally see in the Spring was sent into the stratosphere this year by bluetongue. Hats off to the team in the office who fielded all the calls, rapidly adapting to amendments to policy; ever encroaching zone boundaries and the packaging and posting of so many blood samples!

One of my regular farms sold up in this period which required a monumental effort coordinating blood sampling and paperwork to ensure that the herd could complete the sale despite the blue tongue restrictions It was a true team effort, calling upon most of our clinical team and slotted into our everyday work with good humour and a determination to see it through. It was a great example of how invested we are on the farms we deliver services too, willing them to succeed but also knowing the importance of helping our farmers deliver their goals.

Cooling cows and calves effectively continues to be a real focus for us. We recently met with Reading University who described the results from climate monitoring work within local cattle housing. The collecting yard stood out as an area that we should focus on more to help prevent further day time heating of our cows. The Reading teams projections for a heat wave in 2080 were, as you can imagine, bleak, however there are many new ideas being developed for both passive and active cooling, such as earth air tunnels, which passively (and cheaply!) cool the air before it enters cattle housing.

Read more overleaf...

SAVE THE DATE!

Farmers New Year Drinks from 7pm

Join us for our annual new year drinks, come and socialise with our team and fellow farmers, further details next month.

14 Jan Halsey Arms, Pulham DT2 7DZ
21 Jan White Hart, Yetminster DT9 6LF (TBC)
28 Jan Coppleridge Inn, Motcombe SP7 9HW

PODCAST

We are proud to say that our own Helen Rogers recently joined ffinlo Costain - 8point9 - on the new Farm Gate podcast to discuss this quiet revolution.
Hear Helen, alongside Claire Whittle (The Regenerative Vet) and Lee-Anne Oliver (Ruminant Revival) and find out how vets are becoming better farm partners.

Listen here: 8point9.com/whats-a-regenerative-vet

OUR CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS - CALL 01258 472314 FOR EMERGENCIES
CHRISTMAS EVE 8AM- 1PM / CHRISTMAS DAY CLOSED
29-31 DECEMBER OPEN AS USUAL / NEW YEAR'S DAY CLOSED

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One of the benefits of the dry summer was that the gut and lung worm larvae hid below the pats and in the top soil, easing us into a false sense of security during the summer months. The late summer rain soon brought them all back to the surface and worm egg count results have never been so high! I diagnosed my first suspected case of resistance to Ivermectin wormer in heifers this autumn, adding to a couple of cases seen by the team in the 2024 grazing season in cattle.

Please do get in touch to review your parasite management and don't assume that it is only sheep flocks who need to alter their grazing management! It is a really engaging topic, requiring us all to think differently and ultimately saving time and money by maximising herd immunity and reducing our reliance on wormers! It is as relevant for dairy herds and sheep flocks as it is the beef rearer or suckler farm.

One of our aims over the past few years has been to try and utilise our entire team's knowledge on farm, recognising that we have a critical mass of clinicians and techs which has allowed us to develop special areas of expertise, whilst remaining small enough to be a truly connected team. Historically, some vets and vet practices have been very protective of 'their own' farms, limiting the opportunities to incorporate others' ideas on farm. I have watched with great pride this year as the team have actively engaged other FMLH vets and techs on their regular farms, bringing in new ways of thinking and expertise, bouncing off one another to create really useful solutions to create change on farm.

As the final touches are completed in the new HQ, we look forward to making this and all our satellite branches an even more useful space for all our clients in 2026. We are, as always, incredibly grateful for all your support. Wishing you a very merry (and uneventful) Christmas and New Year.

HEIFER EFFICIENCY FROM SERVICE TO CALVING

This year the focus of our youngstock discussion group meetings has been looking at how we can improve farm heifer efficiency values – the number of heifers calves that are born alive who survive into 2nd lactation.

	Born alive that calve in for 1st lactation	Born alive that calve in for 2nd lactation
UK Data	**78%**	**65%**
FMLH youngstock farms	**85%**	**76%**

FMLH Jan 2025. UK data - Wathes et al., 2008, Sherwin et al., 2016, Stanton et al., 2012

On average in the UK, heifers start paying back their cost of rearing halfway through their second lactation (Boulton 2017). Our November meeting focused on efficiencies to be gained in the period between service and calving.

- The fertility of the heifer is programmed when it is a developing embryo in the dam.
- Heifers reach puberty at 40% of adult weight and need to cycle 3 times for the reproductive cycle to mature ahead of the service period when they should be at 55-60% of adult weight.
- The embryo implants at around day 16 therefore a consistent diet for 6 weeks post service with minimal stress is crucial.

BVD (bovine viral diarrhoea) remains an infection which can reduce fertility – more farms are becoming BVD monitored rather than vaccinated.

Biosecurity will be the weak link for BVD to enter a naïve herd – a new bull, visitors to the farm, escapee incidents on the boundary, vehicles visiting different farms. It can appear without the source of the virus being known, hence why vaccination remains the best insurance. Farms discussed their monitoring protocols at the meeting which highlighted some weak spots. A monitoring protocol is relevant for all BVD Free herds - both naïve and vaccinated. The youngstock testing is relevant for dairy, beef suckler and beef rearing herds.

Milk testing	Youngstock testing
BVD Antibody quarterly	**6 tested from 9-18 months old. If there are separate management groups, then each should be tested.**
BVD PCR twice a year	**Tissue tag and test. Should include button tags for stillborn and aborted calves.**

For more information about how BVD behaves in the dairy and beef herd please visit **www.fmlh.co.uk/news-resources**