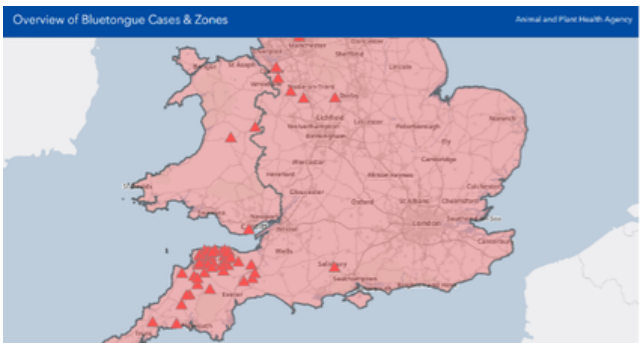
FriarsMoor Livestock Health

AUGUST

BLUETONGUE ESSENTIALS

Bluetongue cases are on the rise again across the SW and Welsh border and it remains important to stay vigilant and respond to any suspicious cases immediately. Bluetongue is still notifiable – ring a vet for advice or report directly to the APHA. Currently all of England and Wales are in the same Restriction Zone, which means that pre-movement blood sampling is only required for export to Scotland/abroad.



Current confirmed cases - August 2026

Bluetongue is a virus spread by midges. There is no cattle-cattle, cattle-sheep etc transmission, however the same infected midge could infect multiple animals in a group, making it seem infectious between animals. This year's outbreak has seen more extensive spread and more severe disease than previously, particularly in sheep. Mortality of sheep testing positive is around 25%. Clinical disease is more obvious in sheep.

MONITORING YOUR FLOCK/HERD CAREFULLY AND LOOK OUT FOR THE FOLLOWING CLINICAL SIGNS:

CATTLE

- Crusting around nostrils
- Weeping eyes
- Ulcers in mouth
- Lesions on teats
- Interdigital lesions
- Milk drop
- Inappetant
- Abortions, foetal deformities, stillbirths

CALVES

- Small, weak calves
- Deformities
- Stillbirths
- Born blind
- Typically die within a few days of birth

SHEEP

- Facial swelling
- Drooling
- Rapid loss of body condition,
- Fever
- Crusting around nostrils
- Clear/mucousy nasal discharge
- Ulcers in the lower lip and dental pad
- Lethargy, unable to stand

Nasal discharge & crusty lesions around nose

Dental pad ulcers

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT BLUETONGUE?

Liaise with a vet and contact APHA to report suspicion of disease – taking pictures for vets/APHA can be helpful! APHA funded blood testing is then carried out by us, not APHA vets. Current turn around for results is estimated to be around a week due to the high volume of cases. Because BTV is a virus there is no direct treatment, instead the focus is on supportive care – speak to your vet for the most appropriate treatment for the affected animal.

There are currently no further movement restrictions, blood testing or cull orders for test positive animals.

VACCINATION

Vaccination remains best practice, but a surge in demand due to the current outbreak means that there is high demand and some stock issues at the wholesaler – please ring the practice to discuss the best vaccine for you and current availability, as it will change on a day-to-day basis.

REDWATER FEVER RESEARCH

We are proud to be involved in research with the ultimate aim to develop a vaccine against bovine babesiosis ("redwater fever"). Many of you have experienced the disease, which can lead to deaths and production losses, and the only licensed treatment is expensive and results in very long withdrawal periods.

Researchers at the Royal Veterinary College have asked us to forward any babesia positive samples from our lab to them to find out more about the genetic diversity of the parasite within the UK. You and your farm ID will not be made known to them, they only ask for the first three letters of the post code to identify the region and the breed of cattle (or at least whether it is from a dairy or beef animal).

If you have any concerns about us forwarding your samples or prefer us not to do so please let us know or talk to us for more information.

RAM VASECTOMY DAY / WEDNESDAY 2 SEPTEMBER / WEST STOUR, DORSET SP8 5SF
CALL THE FARM OFFICE TO BOOK OR FIND OUT MORE: 01258 475314

SUMMER ROUND UP

With the summer months in full swing, we are all appreciating the long days although perhaps not so much the extreme heat! For stock and their keepers alike, the recent heatwaves have proved a challenge and leave us wondering what the rest of the summer may have in store.

In the short-term strategies to maximise shade, considering housing during the heat of the day and where possible reducing stocking densities can all help. We would encourage that feeding stock should be done in cooler parts of the day where possible and reducing handling during the heat of the day is also advisable.

We have seen some brilliant ideas from farmers trying to aid their stock in keeping cool, especially homemade sprinkler type systems to increase evaporative cooling of the animals. Many farmers provided hose showers to cattle in the peak of the heat wave and I suspect enjoyed the water splashing themselves!

If you are having any routine healthcare procedures undertaken in any future periods of extreme heat please do contact us and we will work with you where possible to try and avoid the hottest parts of the day.

In the longer term it leaves us all wondering whether more extreme weather events may become more normal and how we will combat these. How can we harness the potential of the excess rainfall we have within certain winter months? Undoubtedly a nuisance at the time but a valuable resource as the seasons change.

Article by Eleanor Livingstone, Senior Veterinary Lead, BVSc MRCVS DBR

We see more and more fans being installed, these are brilliant for aiding in air flow but very energy thirsty and thus solar panels are often installed alongside. How can we improve shade at grazing? Or water trough availability to maximise the use of shadier grazing areas. There are many questions that will be asked in the years to come about how to adapt our farming systems to future proof ourselves against climate change.

As the summer progresses, we look forward to the many social opportunities that the agricultural shows provide us. We will have our usual pitch at the Gillingham and Shaftesbury show on the 19th & 20th August, serving a BBQ lunch on both Wednesday and Thursday and tea and cake throughout the rest of the day.

We will also have hospitality at The Melplash Show in Bridport on the 27th August, providing an opportunity for our more westerly clients to spend time with the team and will see many more clients at the Dorset County show on the 5th & 6th September where we sponsor the sheep shearing.

As a team it is a real highlight of our year seeing so many clients and sharing some food and drink. We are so fortunate to be immersed in such a tight knit agricultural community, and the summer show season is an opportunity to appreciate the very best of this community. We wish all of our clients who will be showing animals the very best of luck and look forward to enjoying a catch up with the multiple generations of families that we are able to see all together on show days.

Closworth will be closed on Wednesday 19 August as we are at the G&S show.
West Stour and other branches open as normal. Closworth will re-open on Thursday 20th.

GILLINGHAM & SHAFTESBURY SHOW 19 & 20 AUG 2026

JOIN US FOR FOOD & DRINKS
19/20 AUGUST / STAND G29

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