



nantwich
farm vets LLP

NOVEMBER 2025

BIRD FLU!

As some of you will no doubt be aware there has unfortunately been an outbreak of bird flu in Cheshire. A 3km protection and 10km surveillance zones are in place, along with movement restrictions of poultry, captive birds, products from birds and mammals. As of Thursday 30th October there is also a mandatory housing order in Cheshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire (among others) for any premises with more than 50 birds or all premises (even with fewer than 50 birds) if any eggs or other poultry products are leaving the premises (even if just given away!). It also means NFV vets will be getting stuck in again with a load of surveillance visits on behalf of the APHA.

A general licence is available for the movement of mammals excluding dairy mammals, therefore dairy enterprises with poultry on the premises within these zones will require a specific licence from the APHA, otherwise the movement is prohibited under the restrictions. Please go onto the gov.uk website, where there is a plethora of information, and links to follow in order to apply for a licence. It does say to apply for a licence with 5 days notice, so plan ahead! Licences, if granted, will be subject to conditions and biosecurity measures intended to reduce the risk of disease spread.

As a reminder, you are obligated to report any clinical signs that are consistent with bird flu, so if you have poultry or other birds susceptible then be vigilant.

Sudden death



Sometimes with no prior signs

Respiratory signs



Dyspnoea, coughing, sneezing

Swelling



Oedema of head, comb, wattles and legs



Bluetongue is near!

With cases having been confirmed last month in Shropshire and Cheshire there is a risk we may have some more cases before winter is upon us. Even though the mild weather may have helped fill a big hole in everyone's silage clamp it has also been helpful in aiding midge survival and the spread of Bluetongue.

Please familiarise yourselves with the common signs of Bluetongue, including: fever, lethargy, loss of appetite, swelling or ulceration around muzzle mouth and eyes, nasal discharge and crusty sores.



Go to the **DEFRA website** for a good resource and any advice on how to spot and report the disease. Please speak to a vet if you suspect a case as this disease is a notifiable disease.

That's just showing off!

Our resident show-girl Jodie has been busy taking her skills both nationally and internationally in the last couple of months. Some notable events have been representing the UK in Belgium at the Young Breeders School, winning a 1st and honorable mention with a cow at Dairy Day (top), and a 2nd for a calf at the All Britain Calf Show (bottom) together with coming 4th in the handling. Well done, Jodie!

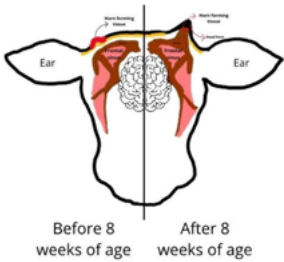


Early, regular disbudding is better for calves - and easier for you!

Disbudding is one of the most important early-life management jobs for calves - but timing is critical. Handled at the right age, it's quick, low-stress, and sets calves up for strong growth. Left too late, it becomes a more invasive procedure with higher risks.

HOW HORNS GROW

At birth, a calf's horn buds are small, free-floating pieces of skin tissue that sit above the skull bone and aren't yet attached. Over the first 6–8 weeks of life, a bony core begins to grow underneath the bud and develops its own nerve and blood supply. As the calf matures, the base of the horn becomes hollow and eventually connects directly to the frontal sinus — a hollow cavity within the skull. Once this happens, removing horns means opening into the sinus, which is far more invasive, takes longer to heal, and carries greater risks of pain, bleeding, and infection. This is why the ideal time for disbudding is before the horn bud fuses to the skull, while it is still just a small skin structure.



- optional sedation (“knock-down disbudding”) for particularly lively calves or for farmer convenience ie. for larger groups

The aim is minimal tissue trauma, rapid recovery, and a smooth return to feeding.

WHY ‘LITTLE AND OFTEN’ BEATS BATCH DISBUDDING

Research shows that stress in young calves directly impacts feed conversion and growth rates — so calm, well-timed handling is an investment in productivity. When farmers wait to gather large groups for disbudding, older calves can slip through the net.

This means more difficult handling, higher pain levels and resultant reduced feed intake and growth after the procedure.

A little-and-often approach — checking calves regularly and disbudding in small numbers — means every calf gets treated within the ideal age range, with minimal disruption to its routine.

HOW WE CAN HELP

Our professionally trained vet techs can take full responsibility for your disbudding schedule:

- Regular visits to catch calves at the right age
- Calm, low-stress handling techniques
- Gold-standard pain control
- No missed calves, no big stressful catch-up days

Contact the practice today to get your regular disbudding plan in place.

Disbudding under 6 weeks	Dehorning over 8 weeks
Bud is still free floating and not attached to any internal structures	Horn is fused to the bone and sinus
Avoids sinus exposure and major tissue damage	More invasive
Requires less handling time, easier and cheaper	More handling time, more costly
Minimises pain and stress, meaning calves stay on feed and keep growing	Higher degree of pain and stress, more impact on growth
Faster recovery, few complications	Longer healing time with a higher risk of infection

HOW THE PROCEDURE IS DONE

Modern disbudding combines effective horn growth prevention with pain control:

- local anaesthetic to block the cornual nerve behind the eye.
- anti-inflammatory medication to reduce swelling and post-procedure discomfort.
- heated iron cautery to seal the blood supply and remove the horn bud.

Mast year

We are sure you have all noticed the incredible amount of acorns, conkers, apples (and other fruits) and seeds on all of the trees this year. This is due to something called a *mast year* where the entire woodland ecosystem simultaneously produces a vast amount of ‘mast,’ a term for trees’ fruit and nuts. This survival strategy to produce more than can be consumed is thought to have been triggered by the dry summer and favourable weather conditions to follow. Although the risk of acorn poisoning may have increased, at least it means more apples for potential crumbles!!



Pioneering Cow Monitoring

Do you know how many of your cows are lying down at 3am? 4am? And 5am? We're excited to share that Nantwich Farm Vets are pioneering an innovative way to monitor dairy cow comfort — helping our clients make smarter, more targeted improvements on farm.

Partnering with Vet Vision AI, we're now able to offer a service using time-lapse cameras with night vision and clever artificial intelligence to track cow behaviour 24/7. This means we can now measure things like resting time, feeding patterns, cow heat maps and overall cow comfort in a way that simply wasn't possible before. Farmers using the service will get clear reports, enabling them to benchmark their figures against other UK herds as well as the potential to benchmark one area or shed on the farm against another, then make changes to drive improvements based on solid data — not guesswork.

With an extra hour's lying time being thought to be worth around 1L of milk, there is real opportunity to help identify marginal gains, as well as troubleshoot a variety of different issues that might be causing you a headache. Comfy cows are productive cows!

Curious to find out more? Visit vetvisionai.com or contact Business Development Manager Phil at the practice.



Just for fun

What do you get when you cross an angry sheep and an angry cow?



Answer: an animal that's in a baaaaad mooood!!

Dates for your diary

Mon 3rd November, 6:30pm-9pm

Pre-lambing Sheep Meeting

Join our vet Amy Cox plus the team at Massey Feeds for a tour of the feed mill and a discussion around all aspects of pre-lambing preparation to ensure that lambing time goes as smoothly as possible.

Wed 19th November, 9:30am-4pm

CowSignals®

Join us for a visit from CowSignals Master, Tracey Towers, for this one-day half theory / half practical session. In one day you'll change the way you look, think and act based on what your cows are telling you. Numbers are limited to ten, so book your place soon!

Tues 25th November

First Aid for Feet

A one day, Lantra accredited course to introduce individuals to the basics of cattle hoof care. A blend of classroom theory and practical trimming and blocking on cadaver feet.

26th - 28th November

Intermediate Hoof Trimming Course

A course suitable for all skill levels, from those with no trimming experience to those having done it for years and needing a knowledge refresher.

Did you know?

You can find more information and register for all our up-coming courses on our website! Just go to

www.nantwichfarmvets.co.uk/training

or you can try clicking on each of the events above to go to their information and booking pages.

Get in touch...



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