



nantwich
farm vets LLP

DECEMBER 2025

SEASONS GREETINGS!

It's hard to believe we are approaching the end of 2025 already. By the time you read this you will either hopefully be heading to or just been to our client Christmas drinks at the Royal Oak, Worleston (see below). Here's to a great evening (and recovery the following day) for all!

2025 has definitely been a year to remember. It started with a deluge of rain in early January which carried on the theme of 2024. We had record rainfall at home, with more rain in that month than the next four combined! This summer has then been one of the driest on record and unfortunately quite a few silage pits reflect this with grass silage in particular affected especially on drier farms where there was nothing worth cutting between June and September. While late season growth has been excellent it doesn't make up for the lack of growth during the peak growing months.

The one positive of the exceptionally dry year has been the early maize harvest and subsequent successful covering cropping of the stubble. The grass growing now is way ahead of anything I've seen since farmers started doing this on a regular basis. Hopefully with a good spring many of you will be able to get an early cut off this to start to replenish grass clamps.

While milk price was strong in the first part of the year the chastening drops we've seen in recent months from some dairies mean we head into 2026 in very uncertain times. Combining this with the forage shortages on some farms could make this a very challenging winter. With a Labour government likely to be in power for at least another three years this downturn in farming fortunes may not be as short lived as some are predicting. Reform UK anyone???

I'd like to finish on a positive note and take this opportunity to wish each and everyone of you a very merry and peaceful Christmas on behalf of everyone at Nantwich Farm Vets!



Herd Health Plan Updates

Herd Health Plan updates are generally not high on anyone's to-do-list, at least not until Red Tractor call to book in a visit.

Most of you (though surprisingly not all, going on recent experience!) are aware that gone are the days where a previous plan could be signed the day before without any further fuss. The reality is that each year requires an annual review of health and performance data, antibiotic use, and testing for and updating plans for BVD and Johnes control, among other things. For qualifying farmers, the BVD testing can be funded through the AHWP (see later in the newsletter), but still requires plenty of forward planning, and all of the updating work takes time to collate along with a chat to discuss targets for the coming year.

The HHP should reflect the practices, protocols and products used on farm. It also needs to be kept updated with the relevant withdrawal periods and licensed uses of products. More than one of us vets has missed correcting some of those details when changes have come about, and it's been picked up by the auditor.

A change that came about earlier this year that some of you might not be aware of (unless you have done a Medicine Course with Amy recently!) is to the statutory withdrawals to be followed if any medicine is used off-license. This can only be done under veterinary advice - whether using a drug not licensed for a particular animal (ie. Metacam in sheep), or extending any licensed treatment beyond what is recommended on the data sheet. Withdrawals in these cases are now 1.5 times the *longest* withdrawal time on the data sheet, and these need to be reflected in your medicine records.



Coccidiosis in Dairy Calves: What You Need to Know

Coccidiosis might not be the first thing that comes to mind when we think of scouring calves, but it should always be on your radar. Caused by protozoan parasites (mainly *Eimeria* species), coccidiosis typically hits calves between 3 weeks and 6 months of age, so a little later than the usual suspects of Cryptosporidium, Rotavirus, Coronavirus and E. coli.

It's especially common around weaning, when stress and changes in diet can tip the balance in favour of infection, and is similar to Crypto in that it is a protozoa that builds up in the environment.

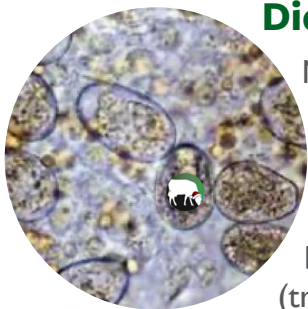
The signs? Watery or bloody scours, dehydration, a rough coat, and calves that just don't thrive. However, by the time symptoms are observed the calves will already have a degree of gut damage, and because of this the focus should largely be focused on prevention.

Good hygiene, clean bedding, and avoiding overstocking and mixing of age groups are the basics but most high-throughput systems should consider regular faecal testing and the possible inclusion of medicated feed with coccidiostats (decoquinate), or coccidiocidal drenches (Tolracol, Baycox or the like) during high-risk periods, to reduce the environmental infection pressure. But even with these preventative treatments, good hygiene practices and husbandry shouldn't be overlooked, and remember to ensure your chosen disinfectant for cleaning between batches of calves is effective at controlling coccidiosis, and that you're using it at the correct concentration!

If you suspect a problem, don't guess. Get a faecal sample tested and work with your vet to tailor a plan. Early action can stop a few sick calves turning into a bigger, more expensive headache. We have an Oocyte machine in our office that can do cocci counts in addition to faecal egg counts for cattle and sheep, and we frequently receive free or heavily-subsidised testing from various companies- you could be eligible!

Did you know?

Not all *Eimeria* species are pathogenic - some cause disease, some don't. The three most common disease-causing species are *Eimeria zuernii*, *Eimeria bovis*, and *Eimeria alabamensis* (try saying that three times fast!).



Out of Hours Changes



Jill and Julie have been answering the phone calls to your out of hours emergencies (along with those of Nantwich Pet Vets and Equine Vets) for more than 30 years between the pair of them. This month they now hang up their handsets for us on the farm side, so we want to give them our biggest thanks for their uncountable disturbed nights and weekends of service, and wish them the very best.

As of Monday December 1st our out of hours calls are going to be taken for us by a company called **Kernow**, who provide the same service for a host of vet practices around the UK. One key benefit for you all is that there shouldn't be any engaged tones or waiting for someone to answer when you ring because of an equine or small animal client taking up the line!

Team News

In case you hadn't already met them, let us introduce you to a couple of our newer Vet Techs!

Sarah Hope grew up helping on her grandparents' farm in Audley, but after qualifying with a degree in Vet Physiotherapy from Harper Adams in 2021, she started down the small animal practice route. However, she was soon drawn back to her agricultural roots and took an Assistant Herd Manager role on a dairy farm in Staffordshire, followed by eight months on a farm in New Zealand before joining us. Sarah has particular interest in management factors influencing calf growth.



Sasha Thomas is from North Wales, and also developed a strong interest in agriculture from her granddad. Further experience doing weekend milkings, calf rearing and lambing seasons led to her completing a degree in Agriculture with Animal Science at Harper. From there she spent several years in the equine industry as a groom for multiple international riders, before choosing a return to farming and taking a Vet Tech role here. Outside of work she plays for several netball teams and helps in the family run garden centre.



Finally, congratulations to Joe, who completed his Masters in Dairy Science a couple of months ago. He is keen to make sure that our clients have good enough access to and utilisation of their data, whether related to milk production, mastitis, fertility or anything else. If you'd like to find out more about what your data could be telling you, give Joe a call!

AHWP and BVD

2027 is looking like it will bring with it some new legislation around BVD control. In preparation it would be a good idea in this coming year to ascertain your herd BVD status (if it is not known already). BVDFree England no longer exists so some herds that were testing may now have fallen behind.

The government has put BVD ahead of all other diseases as an integral part of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway. This means that right now you can use your funding to cover the cost of heifer BVD check testing. If you find animals positive for BVD antibodies there is further money available for PI hunts to help you eradicate it.

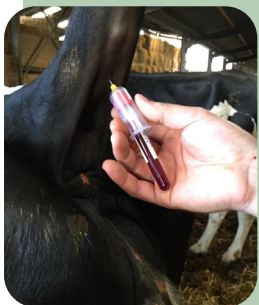
To qualify you just have to be able to answer 'YES' to the following questions:

Is your holding registered in England?

Do you have >11 beef or dairy cattle

Are you registered with the RPA? (The only tricky bit is finding your RPA Customer Reference number and password)

Search for **Animal Health and Welfare Pathway Apply Online**, follow the link, and in only a few seconds (with your RPA info to hand!), you will be given an agreement number, which will remain in place until the scheme ends in 2027. Please let your vet know your agreement number and then we can book in for a visit to do the BVD testing and discuss animal health and welfare.



BVD testing in beef cattle requires blood sampling of 5 heifers for BVD antibodies. Dairy herds can choose between a bulk tank screen or blood sampling of 5 heifers, but if you're rearing your own replacement heifers the latter gives a clearer picture of the current herd BVD status. There

can potentially be a huge BVD problem in the young stock despite a negative bulk tank virus result.

AHWP review funding for dairy is £372, with £1714 for a follow-up PI hunt, £215 if no BVD present. For beef it's £522, with an additional £837 for a PI hunt.

Funding of £436 is also available for anyone with >21 sheep and involves faecal egg counts (follow up funding £639).

Do apply because this money is available to you to help the health and welfare of your animals and it won't be there forever! I would love it if we could find the herds infected with BVD now while there is help towards the cost of eradicating this disease. If you'd like any more information please get in touch.

Just for fun

In case you hadn't already noticed, there are a number of our Christmas-themed NFV logos hidden around this newsletter. Twelve (one for each day of Christmas) to be exact. Can you find them all? Here's your first one for free...



Dates for your diary

Wed 3rd December

Market Drayton Christmas Market

With various cash prizes, vouchers and trophies up for grabs, this should be a fun outing for the day. We will be there watching on at our usual stand too!

Thurs 4th December, 7-11pm

NFV Client Christmas Party  **The Royal Oak, Worleston**

The drinks and food are on us! We look forward to seeing you and kicking off the festive season in style!

NFV WhatsApp Communities

For those of you that have missed the opportunity to join our NFV Dairy Community on WhatsApp a couple of months ago, this is the best way to keep up-to-date and connect with what is going on, new services, meetings and other news. And for our sheep clients, we have an NFV Sheep Community just for you too! Just scan the relevant QR code below using your phone camera and follow the link.



Nantwich Farm Vets
Dairy Community
WhatsApp community



Nantwich Farm Vets
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Get in touch...



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