

March 2026 Newsletter

www.penbodevets.co.uk/farm



Penbode Farm Vets

Since 1840

Stay connected with Penbode Farm Vets



Join our email list and you'll receive updates on upcoming courses, practical farm-focused newsletters, and timely information to support the health and productivity of your livestock. Sign up to make sure you never miss the latest guidance, events, and resources from our team.





ARE YOU DOING A CULL EWE SCREEN THIS YEAR?

Matilda Herridge-Nowell
Veterinary Surgeon
BVetMed MRCVS

Once again MSD is running their popular 100% subsidised FlockCheck scheme this year, where you can test a maximum of eight ewes for the two most common causes of abortion – Toxoplasma and Enzootic Abortion. Last year, they found that 79% of 400 tested flocks had been exposed to *Toxoplasma gondii* and 35% tested positive for exposure to *Chlamydia abortus* (the cause of Enzootic Abortion). This just goes to show how common this is and how worthwhile it is knowing what is present in your flock.

If you would like to take advantage of this free testing, get together 6-8 of your barren ewes (or those that either have already aborted at least two weeks ago or produced weak lambs) and contact us to arrange a time to take some blood samples. To save yourself a visit fee you can bring them to us at one of our branches. This way you only pay for the time it takes to take the samples – which is usually pretty quick!

The results from this testing can be used to make changes next year and to implement vaccination protocols. Knowledge is power when it comes to disease monitoring and control and it can only ever benefit you in reducing disease incidence next year.

The FlockCheck scheme is only open to those with 100 or more breeding ewes and closes on 30th June 2026. If you are having problems with abortion or any other concerns please get in touch with our team today.

FLUID THERAPY FOR COWS MEETING

This February, we held an on-farm seminar and training day focused on all things oral fluid therapy for adult cattle. The day included an insightful talk from Selekt, where we learnt about dehydration, how to treat it and the different products available for different situations.

One of the most surprising facts of the day was that the capacity of an average adult dairy cow's rumen, the largest chamber of the stomach, is around 80-100 litres. So when we have a dehydrated animal, just using a small, maybe two-litre drencher bottle, which many farmers have, is barely a drop in the ocean. This is where the Selekt pump comes in.

The pump allows you to safely drench an adult cow with larger volumes of fluid. Into which you can mix different products such as Selekt Fresh Cow, Off feed or Restore. However, to those not experienced using this equipment, it can look quite intimidating, and many have been put off because of this. But with the right training and safety checks, it becomes a very simple procedure that farm staff can perform themselves.



This was demonstrated in the second half of the day when vets Matilda and Sarah showed the group how to use the Selekt pump on a real patient. They first ran through the equipment, the different parts and how it works. Whilst passing the tube, we ran through the safety tips on how to make sure we've done it correctly.

By following this checklist every time you pump a cow, you can't go wrong:

- * Seeing and/or feeling the tube pass down the left side of the neck
- * Feeling two separate tubes in the neck - the windpipe and the pump tube
- * A rumen smell coming from the tube
- * A gurgling, bubbly sound coming from the tube

There's a Selekt product for almost every situation. Had a difficult calving in an older cow at risk of milk fever? Pump with a Fresh Cow sachet. Following a surgical LDA correction? Pump with an off-feed sachet. Showing signs of dehydration, such as sunken eyes and not eating? Combine Restore and Off feed for ultimate support.

Here at Penbode, we carry all these sachets plus Selekt Antacid and Glycerol Plus. If in doubt, ring up your local branch and chat through your particular case with a vet to make the best choice, have a vet out to examine and treat on farm. For those unable to make the talk who would like some guidance on how to use oral pumps, get in touch, and any of our vets would be more than happy to do a little on-farm training. If you would like to take the plunge and get your own pump, we can supply them. Please ring us to enquire.



Penbode Supreme Dairy Club

Free routine
fertility call
outs

Reduced Price
Farm Medicines

Reduced
hourly rate

Antibiotic
Reduction
Report

Digifarm Herd
Health Analysis

Johne's
Control
Plan

Herd Health
Review

BVD Control
Plan

Milksure Top
Up

Quarterly
locomotion
scoring

Annual
youngstock
audit

Quarterly
condition
scoring

Annual
Transition Cow
Audit

10 x in house
worm egg
counts



Upgrade from our
Champion Dairy Club for
an extra £24

Ex Vat p/m

Penbode
Supreme
Dairy Club



Our Champion Dairy Club includes:

Free routine fertility call outs. For all pre-booked fertility work

Reduced Price Farm Medicines

Reduced hourly rate. up to 20% off normal Penbode rate

Digifarm Herd Health Analysis. Free access to our new and exclusive farm health monitoring service.

Herd Health Review. Your routine vet will conduct your annual health and performance review and make recommendations as to how this can be improved.

Antibiotic Reduction Report. We'll work with you to understand how we can refine and reduce your antibiotic usage on farm.

Johne's Control Plan. We will analyse your test results, carry out a John's risk assessment and complete your Johne's Plan and Action Johne's Declaration.

BVD Control Plan. We will analyse your test results and provide you with a BVD control plan for your farm.

Milksure Top Up.~ We will complete the MilkSure top up process with you and your farm staff.

Quarterly condition scoring. Carried out by our VetTechs

Below are the extras you receive when you upgrade to our Supreme Dairy Club.

Quarterly locomotion scoring. Carried out by our RoMS qualified VetTechs

Annual youngstock audit Single visit carried out by VetTechs to assess the growth rates of youngstock on your farm.

Annual Transition Cow Audit. Review of your farm's transition cow management including BCS, feed space and environmental pressures. Metabolic profiling can be carried out (lab fees apply). Time spent investigating this area will benefit your herd in so many ways.

10 x in house worm egg counts Can be used throughout the year to inform your parasite control decisions.

When you join our Supreme Dairy Club, you unlock a premium set of benefits above and beyond what's included in our Champion Dairy Club. Enjoy quarterly locomotion scoring by our RoMS-qualified VetTechs, ensuring your herd's mobility and lameness management are closely monitored. Benefit from an annual youngstock audit to track growth rates and spot potential issues early, plus a comprehensive annual transition cow audit covering BCS, feed space, and environmental pressures—with optional metabolic profiling for deeper insight. You'll also receive 10 in-house worm egg counts throughout the year, helping you to make informed, proactive parasite control decisions. All these extras are designed to elevate your herd's health, productivity, and long-term success.



BULL FERTILITY TESTING

Andy Stokes

Veterinary Surgeon
BVSc CertAVP (Cattle) MRCVS

Bull fertility issues are a real problem, and a significant proportion of bulls we test are shown to be sub-fertile. Complete infertility is rare, but occasionally we see it, with disastrous consequences if a single bull is relied upon. More common are sub-fertile bulls which result in prolonged calving periods or more cows being empty at the end of the breeding season. To maximise herd efficiency it is crucial that infertile and sub-fertile bulls are identified.

Why do a bull fertility test.....

Pre-purchase?

Increasingly bulls are being tested prior to being presented at bull sales. This gives the vendor piece of mind that the bull will not be excluded from the sale at his inspection (although this is not guaranteed!), and the purchaser piece of mind that they are buying a bull proven to be producing viable semen.

Pre-breeding?

Just because a bull is fertile in one breeding season does not guarantee this the following year. In fact, the older the bull, the more likely that an episode of infection or trauma has occurred rendering the bull sub-fertile. This problem is compounded by the fact that older bulls are more dominant, preventing younger, more fertile bulls from mating. The answer is to test all bulls about 6-8 weeks prior to the breeding season.

What do we do at a bull breeding examination?

The bull will receive a thorough clinical examination; body condition score, heart, lungs, eyes, dental pad alignment and locomotion will all be assessed. The scrotum and testicles are carefully examined for any abnormality. Scrotal circumference will be measured and together with the bull's age, compared to reference values, either breed specific if available, or industry standards (see below).

Age (months)	12-15	>15-18	>18-21	>21-24	>24
Minimum Scrotal Circumference	30cm	31cm	32cm	33cm	34cm

The sheath and penis will be palpated for any abnormalities and the tip of the penis should be visually examined during semen collection if possible.

The internal accessory sex glands are examined by rectal palpation. Gentle stimulation with the electro-ejaculator probe should induce an ejaculation. The semen is examined under the microscope immediately for motility, and in finer detail back at the practice for any abnormalities of individual semen.

Taking into account all of the findings, the bull will be classified as suitable for breeding, or not. Finally, it is normally left for the farmer to observe the bull mating a cow in standing heat, to confirm that this behaviour is normal, and he is able to mate.

All of our dairy and beef scheme members receive a free visit for us to carry out bull fertility testing, and should consider it as a routine part of their annual herd health management; a simple investment in helping to secure the fertility of your herd, and giving you piece of mind. Call the practice today to get your visit booked in!



Holsworthy Market

A reminder that a member of our team
will be at the
Holsworthy Market every Wednesday
Between 10am -12pm

We are pleased to be supporting the
Holsworthy Market Health Hub where
the market nurse will be available
between 8am-10am and 12pm - 4pm at
the Penbode Hut



HOLSWORTHY MARKET HEALTH HUB



Your Local Farming Health Hub

Find us on Facebook @ Holsworthy Market Health Hub

Market Nurse

- Experienced and qualified community nurse
- Offering clinical assessment, support and referrals
- No appointment needed!

Penbode Hut

Every Wednesday

8-10am / 12-4pm

Healthcare Assistant

- Providing mini health checks
- Catch problems early, improve long-term health

Market Café

3rd Wednesday each month

Community Navigator

- Connecting you to local organisations and support
- Pop up events providing advice, support and guidance
- For your physical, mental and business health

Market Café

2nd Wednesday each month

Pop up events!



LAMBING

Jemma Young
Veterinary Surgeon
BVM BVS MRCVS

With lambing time now very much upon us, we have been trying to make sure that you are all feeling as prepared as possible going into this busy season.



Pre-lambing meeting:

Matilda started the evening with an informative talk on pre-lambing nutrition and post lambing problems. Steve from Forte Healthcare discussed their new product Arkgaard and how it can fight against watery mouth. This is available to order from your local branch. I closed the meeting with a short introduction to our new benchmarking scheme, which is discussed at the end of this article.

Lambing Course 2/1/26:

Our annual lambing course, run by myself and Matilda, was a day of theory and practical sessions, covering everything from pre-lambing preparation to practical lambing techniques and both ewe and lamb aftercare. There was lots of different levels of experience and attendees' flocks ranged in size, from small flocks to large commercial set ups which made for lots of interesting discussion. Participants left with the skills and confidence needed for the upcoming lambing season and beyond.





Young Persons Lambing Course 17/2/26:

Run for young people between the ages of 14-18, our young person's lambing course focused on the practical aspects of lambing and lamb care, using our lambing simulator and other teaching materials in our Holsworthy lambing bay. We covered different lambing presentations and lambing techniques, as well as covering lamb resuscitation and newborn lamb care. We finished the evening with a hot chocolate to warm up!

Lambing Benchmarking:

Following up from our recent Flock Health Club meeting, we are excited to launch our lambing benchmarking scheme for 2026.

Benchmarking is real-time data monitoring that allows early detection of disease or other issues. This provides data to support flock management decisions and evidence-based changes.

We use the data to compare year-on-year performance and set achievable goals for improvement. Most importantly, it doesn't have to be complicated.



So, what are we asking you to do?

Use the forms from the QR Codes to complete your data for your lambing season. Further information on lamb deaths can also be recorded if you wish.

At the beginning of July, we will use your data to write a lambing report, which you can discuss with your vet or one of our dedicated sheep vets.

If you wish, your data will also be used anonymously in our summer benchmarking meeting. If you require any more persuasion, everyone who submits their lambing data will be entered into a draw to win a hamper to be given out at our summer benchmarking meeting.

For further information or to request a hard copy of the forms, please ring your local branch and ask to speak with me or one of our sheep vets.



Benchmarking



Lambing Cards

Reminders:

- Is lambing time approaching, but you're not quite prepared? Our 2026 lambing order form is now live! Access it using the QR code below, or visit your nearest branch to pick up a paper copy.



- Order all your meds required, alongside other equipment you might need, such as ropes, naval dips and disinfectant. Select which products you would like, and we will sort the rest.
- Spring is in the air, soon we will be into worm season again, use the SCOPS Nematodirus Forecast when it goes live, to prepare for the first worms of the season
- Keep an eye out for our next Sumer Meeting, to include our benchmarking data. It won't be one to miss!
- For any queries and questions over the busy spring season, please remember we are available to chat over the phone and in person.

Penbode Flock Health Club

Annual Membership Benefits



For just £20

Ex Vat p/m



Vaccinate badgers to shape policy for TB eradication

With Government announcing a TB strategy refresh and acceleration of badger vaccination, we would like your support in a farmer-led, NFU delivered badger vaccination project in your area.

The NFU & industry need your help to develop an evidence-based approach to future delivery.

Scaling up badger vaccination

The Government has made a clear commitment to focus on vaccination to tackle TB in the badger population. In response, the NFU, and local landowners in your area, have set up a project to shape future policy, bridge the knowledge gap and ensure industry has access to a large scale, cost effective and impactful delivery model. With a reduction in TB over the past decade we need to maintain the benefits, build evidence and keep moving with the tools



we do have to reach TB eradication.

Utilising local trusted industry trappers, and a small team of experienced Zoological Society of London (ZSL) vaccinators, we will increase landowner access to badger

vaccination, assess its effectiveness and test differing methods of delivery.

With nothing to lose, we simply need your permission for trained trappers and vaccinators to access your land (approx. 2 -3 weeks/year) and deliver badger vaccination free of charge.

How is badger vaccination delivered?

The badgers on your farm will be cage trapped and vaccinated with Badger BGC vaccine, using the following process:

- Each vaccination area will be broken down into 'trapping rounds'.
 - Traps are placed and pre baited for 7-10 days
- Traps are then set for 2 consecutive days
Cage trapped badgers are vaccinated, hair clipped, and stock sprayed to avoid revaccination.

For further information contact:
NFU TB delivery team: 02476858778
or email tb.vaccination@nfu.org.uk

Building Evidence

ZSL will conduct blood sampling and monitoring of badgers in the vaccination areas to track TB (*M. bovis*) and analyse the effectiveness of vaccination.

Camera traps will assess badger population densities, estimate vaccination coverage (percentage vaccinated.)



Different approaches

To create a more cost effective and practical vaccination delivery model, the project looks to trial three different vaccination programmes. Depending on your location, vaccination will be delivered in one of the following ways:

- **Standard Approach** – Annual vaccination, for four years, following the current badger vaccination programme.
- **Intermittent** – Vaccinate every other year- Attempting to cut delivery costs and expand faster.
- **Targeted** – Reactive vaccination, vaccinating on TB breakdown holdings and nearby farms.

Workingtogether

Whilst Defra-funded and NFU-delivered, we will be working with an experienced team of local industry trappers and ZSL vaccinators. APHA will also feed in by providing data on the local disease picture.

What we need from you!

1. Signyour access agreement
2. Provide a map of your land, along with your SBI number
3. Return the documents to: Unit 4G, Westpark 26, Wellington, Somerset, TA21 9AD

Wouldyoube willing to setyourown traps?
Trappers will be paid for their work.

Join us on the
20th June
2026



**Over 60% of tickets
have now sold**

Location: Tetcott Village Hall, EX22 6QX

Arrival: 7pm, Carriages at 1am

£50 per ticket, includes drink on arrival, two course meal and wine

After dinner tickets £20 (From 9pm)

Charity auction and live music by Reckless

Dress code: Black tie

Licensed bar

Raising money for



For tickets or a table, please contact Jay:

jay.waylen@penbodevets.co.uk

01409 253418

Penbode
Farm Vets Since 1840

FCN
THE FARMING
COMMUNITY
NETWORK