

April 2026 Newsletter

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Penbode Farm Vets
Since 1840

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BLUETONGUE IMPORTANT UPDATE

Our vets have recently diagnosed Bluetongue on two separate farms in the local area following fertility and abortion issues in cattle. Because of this, it is more important than ever to be aware of the signs of disease and to protect your livestock through vaccination.

In cattle the main signs include; abortion, fertility issues, crusty swollen nose and head, fever, lameness and calves being born small, blind or deformed.

In sheep the signs are similar but often more severe and more likely to be fatal. Bluetongue is a viral disease spread by midges making the containment of its spread very difficult and treatment is not possible. The best thing to do to decrease your risk is to vaccinate.

For further details please get in touch to speak to one of the team directly or to order your vaccine today.

AHWP

By Lesley Bingham
Clinical Director,
Veterinary Surgeon
BVM&S MRCVS



As part of the Sustainable Farming Initiative set out by Defra you can now register for an Animal health and welfare review for each species (cattle, sheep and pigs) on your farm. The amount of funding on offer differs depending on which species you apply for as does the mandatory testing involved.

Who is eligible?

Anyone with 11 or more cows or 21 or more sheep can apply for that species. There is also funding for those with 51 or more pigs.

What does the funding cover?

Funding is available to pay for a vet to carry out disease testing and also focus on a specific area on your farm which will help improve livestock productivity and welfare, this can be anything at all. There will also be enough funding to help to cover your time as well.

Required testing:

Cattle – At each initial visit BVD testing must be carried out, this usually involves 6 samples from 9-18mth old animals and a bulk milk test on dairy farms. The costs of BVD testing including taking the samples and lab fees are all covered.

Sheep – A faecal sample to check for worm egg counts must be taken at each initial visit followed by a reduction test post drenching when treatments are carried out. The costs of the worm egg counts are all included in the funding.

Additional topic:

Alongside the required testing there is enough funding to cover a vet to spend time on a farm discussing a specific topic, this could be anything you would like further input for but some suggestions include:

- lameness advice
- mastitis investigation
- pneumonia investigation
- parasite control planning
- medicines review
- pre lambing visits

Follow up visits

Following on from your initial review you are also eligible for a follow up visit which must be carried out within 10 months of your initial visit. This can be used to carry out any follow up testing or to discuss disease control.

How to claim you funding

You must firstly apply for the funding via the government website (if you applied before June 2024 you will need to apply again). Once you have your agreement number contact Penbode and we will arrange a visit.

Each farm is eligible for 3 initial reviews and 3 follow up visits per species, providing initial reviews for the same species are 1 year apart.

The practice will invoice you for the work carried out. To claim your funding you will need to submit the report which the vet will send to you. You will then get the agreed amount paid directly to you.



Improve Animal Health and Welfare

You can now apply for more than one species!

As part of the Sustainable Farming Initiative set out by Defra, payments for the Improving Animal Health and Welfare Scheme are changing from 22nd January 2026.

This scheme isn't to replace health planning but can instead be used to focus on a specific area on farm that will boost livestock performance, and therefore deliver better productivity for you. It's currently only available to farmers in England.

Review funding:

Review funding:		Old	New
Dairy	To include BVD testing	£372	£447
Beef	To include BVD testing	£522	£647
Sheep	To include worm egg count sampling	£436	£574
Pigs	To include PRRS testing	£557	£648

Follow up funding:		Old	New
Cattle (Biosecurity)		£215	£258
Beef (BVD present)		£837	£954
Dairy (BVD present)		£1714	£1884
Sheep		£639	£658
Pigs		£923	£1087

Please note:

- An IAHW agreement must be in place before the review takes place.
- The follow up visit must be done within 10 months of the initial review.

Register here:



Join us on the
20th June
2026



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
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NETWORK

COCCIDIOSIS VS NEMATODIRUS INFECTION IN LAMBS

By Sarah Phillpot
Veterinary Surgeon
BVSc MRCVS

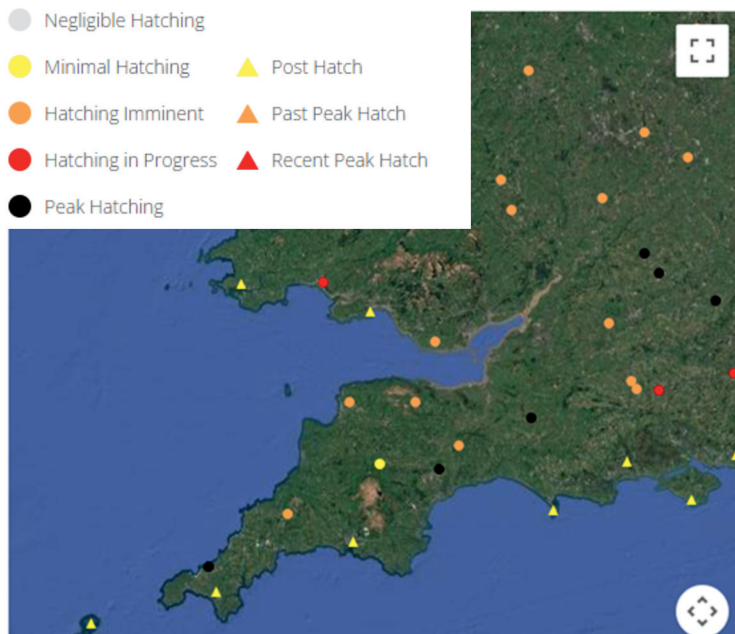


The first day of spring has officially been and gone, and we're now in the full swing of the UK lambing season. For some, April signals the start of their 2026 lambing period, whereas for others, lambs have been playing and grazing happily in the fields, with sunshine (hopefully!) on their backs, for a couple months now. With the start of the warmer weather, we need to keep a watchful eye on our lambs for signs of diarrhoea and dehydration as we will soon see the mass hatching of *Nematodirus* eggs on our pasture. Most causes of diarrhoea in multiple lambs aged between 3 and 12 weeks are coccidiosis, nematodirus and other gut worms, however coccidiosis and worms require different treatments, so we need to be sure we are using the right treatment for the right parasite at the right time.

Nematodirus

Nematodirus infection occurs when eggs passed by lambs on the pasture the previous year undergo a period of chilling (winter), and are then exposed to daily temperatures exceeding 10°C. These eggs hatch, and the infective larvae can then be ingested by this year's lambs. Disease can occur rapidly if susceptible lambs are grazing infected pasture when a mass hatching occurs. When this article was written (mid-March), the SCOPS *Nematodirus* Forecast was predicting imminent egg hatching at our local stations of Chivenor (6.0m above sea level) and Cardinham (200m a.s.l), and minimal hatching at North Wyke (177m a.s.l). The forecast predicts the hatching date based on temperature data from 140 weather stations across the UK,

Nematodirus Hatching Forecast



Nematodirus Forecast Map – captured mid March <https://www.scops.org.uk/forecasts/nematodirus-forecast/>

Coccidiosis

Disease occurs when susceptible lambs ingest pathogenic (disease causing) oocysts (eggs) from the environment. Only 2 coccidia species cause disease in sheep; other species are harmless. The parasite invades the gut cells, replicates and emerges by bursting open the cell, hence damaging the gut lining, leading to the diarrhoea and dehydration seen in infected lambs. It takes 2-3 weeks from lambs ingesting an oocyst to shedding oocysts in their faeces. Disease can be seen in lambs aged 3-8 weeks old, although can be seen in older lambs if they are immunocompromised. As the season progresses, and environmental contamination increases, disease can occur in younger lambs. You may see ongoing growth rate issues in lambs after they have been infected due to the chronic damage to the intestine preventing uptake of nutrients from their diet.

Coccidiosis vs Nematodirus Summary Table

The table provides a summary of the key differences between coccidiosis and nematodirus (overleaf)

Both diseases can cause devastating losses in your flock if not diagnosed and treated promptly. The table below lists some of the key similarities and differences between the two, most notably the different medicines required to treat the parasitic infection.

Your local Penbode Sheep Team member will be happy to discuss these in more detail with you and create a bespoke parasite management plan for your 2026 lamb crop.

however it should always be used in conjunction with the altitude and aspect (whether south or north facing) of the fields, your grazing history and any concurrent stress related factors in the lambs, e.g. weaning. South facing fields tend to have an earlier hatch, whereas for every 100m increase in altitude, hatching will occur 7 days later than those at lower altitudes. Generally, hatching tends to occur in southern England in late March through to May.

	Coccidiosis	Nematodirus
Age of lamb affected	Typically 3-8 weeks old, however can occur in older naive lambs.	Typically 6-12 weeks old
How infection occurs	Lambs ingesting infective disease-causing oocysts either at pasture at heavily contaminated gathering points, e.g. around feed trough, or inside buildings in earlier lambing flocks. Only 2 species cause disease	Lambs ingesting infective larvae that have overwintered on the pasture (eggs shed by last year's lambs). If the egg hatching occurs rapidly, lambs will ingest high numbers leading to clinical signs.
Risk Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oocysts can survive over winter in buildings and on pasture under suitable damp conditions, so if disease diagnosed in previous years, these areas could pose a risk. Oocysts are resistant to drying, freezing, heat and many disinfectants. • Older healthy lambs and ewes can shed oocysts contaminating the environment (avoid grazing mixed age groups). • Concurrent conditions, e.g. nematodirus, malnutrition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nematodirus larvae likely to be on pasture that was grazed by lambs last spring. • Eggs can remain on pasture for up to 2 years. • Main risk period: 6-12 weeks (grazing). • Concurrent infection, e.g. coccidiosis
Clinical signs seen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid onset diarrhoea +/- blood • Dull • Not eating • Dehydration • Weight loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid onset diarrhoea • Lethargic • Abdominal pain (colicking) • Rapid weight loss • Dehydration • Sudden death
How to diagnose	Clinical signs, farm history, faecal sample, post mortem	
Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral drenches: Diclazuril (Vecoxan, Dycoxon) or Toltrazuril (Baycox, Tolracol) • In feed: Decoquinatate (Deccox) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White drench (group 1 - Benzimidazole)
	Please discuss treatment with your vet. Severe cases may require further symptomatic treatment, e.g. fluids.	
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower environmental contamination via good biosecurity, hygiene and management. • Reduce susceptibility - ensure good colostrum, and nutrition • Reduce stressors, e.g. transportation, mixing, castration • Timed and targeted preventative treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the Nematodirus Forecast • Avoid the high-risk period if possible – move at risk lambs to low-risk pasture (i.e. not grazed by lambs last spring).



Mastering Meds Course

with Matilda Herridge-Nowell

Tuesday 14th April 2pm - 3:30pm

At the Penbode Market Hut, Kivells Market, Holsworthy

Contact your branch to book your space or email

jay.waylen@penbodevets.co.uk

Red Tractor approved



THE NATIONAL JOHNES MANAGEMENT PLAN

By Andy Stokes
Senior Veterinary
Surgeon
BVSc CertAVP
(Cattle) MRCVS

Phase III of the The National Johnes Management Plan (NJMP) began a year ago. The aims of the NJMP remain the same as Phase I and II, seeking to manage and reduce the incidence of Johnes disease on dairy farms through implementation of one of the six control strategies listed below, and monitored on each farm by BCVA Accredited Johnes Veterinary Advisors.

Control Strategy	Proportion of Farms Nationally
1. Biosecurity protect and Monitor (For herds confirmed as clear)	11%
2. Improved farm management	6%
3. Improved farm management and strategic testing	43%
4. Improved farm management test and cull	28%
5. Breed to terminal sire (For flying herds)	12%
6. Firebreak vaccination	0.30%

The above pattern is mirrored by our farms locally with most of you adopting Strategy 3: Improved Farm Management and Strategic Testing. This uses test results to identify the highest risk cows and implement management changes towards these cows only, in order to limit the spread of disease. The remainder of the herd can be managed normally.

As your herd level of Johnes reduces, many of you will move to Strategy 4: Improved Farm Management, Test and Cull. This is similar to Strategy 3, but with immediate culling of test positive animals, rather than separate management of them.

Phase III shifted from using the number of positive cows, to using the average test value (ATV) to monitor progress of Johnes control within a herd. Your ATV is simply the average of all your Johnes test results. There is a target set to achieve an ATV of less than 5.5% by 2030. For herds conducting whole herd milk testing, an ATV is easy to establish. For those not on whole herd testing, a random 60-cow screen can be used to generate an ATV. For those testing blood samples for Johnes disease, these results are not comparable to the 5.5% value which only applies to milk test results.

Why Use ATV?

ATV will be affected by the number of animals testing positive, and the severity of disease (the size of the test values). ATV is a more appropriate measure of disease within a herd than the number of positive cows, which can simply be reduced to zero by culling them all, but doesn't mean that all the disease has gone. Johnes is a non-binary disease and is ideally monitored using a continuous variable (ATV) rather than a binary variable (positive vs negative).

How can you improve your ATV?

Whilst culling positive cows is an important part of every strategy, culling alone without addressing the generation of new infections, is not a sustainable means of control. The measure of new infections is the J4% and can be thought of as the tap of new infections. Turning this tap off is essential and requires a robust management plan to prevent youngstock from becoming infected. This should be at the heart of every Johnes Action Plan and may involve some, or all, of the following measures...

- Do not allow any Johnes positive cows to enter the calving yard.
- Do not allow any colostrum, milk or faeces from Johnes positive cows to come anywhere near replacement calves.
- House calves well away from any adult livestock.
- Clean and disinfect boots before entering calf housing.
- Remove new born calves from the calving yard ASAP, or at least move into a separate pen within the calving yard. The so –called “cuddle box” is ideal.
- Keep calving yards well bedded, and clean out regularly.
- Pens where Johnes positive cows have calved must be cleaned out after every calving.
- Do not put sick cows in the calving yard.
- Do not put calves in the sick pen.



How do our herds compare to the national situation?

The UK-wide picture is that we have made significant progress against Johnes disease. Results from quarterly testing herds show that the median ATV has reduced from 7.6 in 2010 to 5.8 in 2024. There is a huge variation in the level of Johnes disease on our clients' farms. We have a small number of herds who are clear of the disease, and even accredited clear under a CHEC's disease surveillance scheme. Many herds are close to, or below the 2030 target of 5.5%, whilst others have a long way to go to get the disease down to this level.

It must be understood that controlling Johnes is a long term prospect, there is no quick-fix.

Why control Johnes – a reminder!

Phase III of the NJMP cites the following reasons to tackle Johnes disease...

Food safety – the potential link with Crohns disease

Animal welfare – the disease itself, plus Johnes cows suffer more lameness and mastitis

Sustainability – premature culling

Economic – reduced milk yield, increased costs due to associated diseases; SCC, mastitis, lameness

International competitiveness – we need to demonstrate a proactive stance on tackling the disease

Antimicrobial resistance – greater antibiotic use due to more mastitis and lameness

Industry customers – many retailers are committed to reducing the level of disease in their supply pool


Industry cohesion – all farmers need to pull together on this; those not doing so pose a risk to the industry's reputation

Acting On Your Results

Whole herd Johnes testing at least twice per year is recommended, but this comes at a cost in terms of lab fees and labour. It is very frustrating to then find the results of these tests are not acted upon. If you have a new set of Johnes results, then please, please, please use them! Discuss them with your vet, and make a plan for the problem cows, as well as addressing what is driving the generation of new cases in your herd.

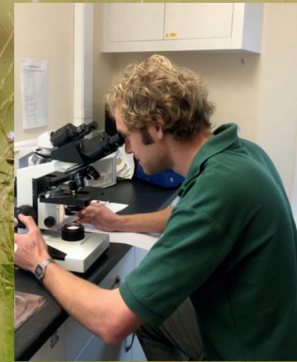
Penbode Farm Vets Taster Day

For those aged between 15 and 18



The day will include a mix of practical and theory sessions. It will give those interested in a career as a farm vet an insight as to what it entails.

There will be no charge for this event. However, places are very limited, we are therefore asking all those interested to apply for a space on the taster day by sending a letter of interest to jay.waylen@penbodevets.co.uk. Applications close on Friday 30th May



Thursday 23rd July 2026
10am - 3pm