

Newsletter

September 2026

www.penbodevets.co.uk/farm



Bluetongue Update

As of 17th August there have been 650 confirmed cases/premises of bluetongue (BTV-3) across the UK in the 2026-2027 season. It is important to emphasise that a case means an infected premises rather than individual animals. The number of actual infected animals will be much higher than 650 as not every animal is tested. Here in Devon and Cornwall we are the hardest hit areas with 332 cases confirmed in Devon and 110 in Cornwall making up 68% of UK cases. So what do you need to know?

What should I do if I suspect a case of BTV?

BTV is a notifiable disease. This means that it is a legal requirement to report any suspicions to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). If you suspect a case call the APHA on 03000 200 301. Here you will speak to a duty vet. If you would like to have BTV testing performed the ministry will cover the laboratory fees for three affected animals. The choice to test is yours unless you are told otherwise, so they will not cover the cost of having a vet come out to take the samples.

What strains are out there?

In the last BTV season there were cases of the BTV-8 strain found in Cornwall. This season the only strain found has been BTV-3. This is the strain that is protected against in the vaccine we supply.

Are there any movement restrictions?

There are no movement restrictions within England or between England and Wales. If you have a positive BTV-3 case confirmed no movement restrictions will be imposed upon you. Movement of animals to Scotland from England does require you comply with a general license (EXD608(EW)).

Is it too late to vaccinate?

No! The main risk season for the biting midges who spread this virus is April to November. And with the weather being so mild it is expected that midges will continue to thrive for some time yet this year. Vaccination remains the best way to protect your livestock.

What is the vaccine schedule?

At Penbode we use the Syvazul BTV-3 vaccine. Sheep require a single 2ml dose under the skin. This can be done from 3 months of age. The onset of immunity after vaccination for sheep is 4 weeks. Cattle require a 2ml dose into the muscle and then again three weeks later. This can be done from 2 months of age. The onset of immunity after vaccination for cattle is 3 weeks after the second dose. The revaccination schedule has not been established yet by the vaccine manufacturer. To discuss this please get in touch and speak to one of the vet team. Use of this product in goats and alpacas is off-license so again please get in touch to discuss if this is necessary for your stock with one of the vets.

What is the situation with vaccine supply?

As you may be aware stock of the vaccine had dried up and we were unable to supply it. This was due to massive national demand. However, we have recently been able to import some Syvazul BTV-3 vaccine from Europe and are currently able to clear our backorder list and take new orders. Please be aware that stock is still limited and you will most likely be placed on a waiting list. Our team are working extremely hard to obtain vaccine and cater to everyone's requests as best we can.

What if I only need a few doses?

Penbode has run a number of vaccine splitting days over the last few months. Once a bottle of vaccine is opened it must be used within 10 hours. For this reason we can only provide single doses of specific pre determined dates. If you are interested in the splitting service please get in touch to be placed on our waiting list.

Does the vaccine cause fertility issues?

The safety of the vaccine has not been established in breeding males. Equally there has been no evidence that the vaccine reduces fertility in males or females. When weighing up this issue it is worth remembering that animals who become infected with BTV will suffer serious reproductive impacts, including reduced fertility, impaired semen quality, temporary infertility in rams, abortions, foetal abnormalities and stillbirths.

This has been a very difficult time for livestock owners and the whole team here at Penbode are here to offer support and answer your questions. Please do not hesitate to get in touch.

PENBODE CLIENT REACHES BRITAIN'S FITTEST FARMER FINAL



Farming is well known for being physically demanding, but the mental strain of the industry can often be overlooked. Long hours, working alone and the pressures of running a farm business can all take their toll. This year has been particularly challenging across the South West, with months of drought conditions followed by the recent outbreak of Bluetongue. Now more than ever, it is important for farmers to look after their own mental health.

For Dan Metherell, who runs a dairy farm in Kilkhampton, exercise has always been an important way to relieve stress and keep fit. Having played football in his younger years, Dan more recently joined Bude CrossFit where he found a new way to challenge himself and maintain his fitness. Earlier this spring, Dan decided to take that challenge a step further by entering the Farmers' Weekly Britain's Fittest Farmer competition. Launched in 2018, the competition provides a fun and engaging way to celebrate the physical and mental resilience of farmers and raise awareness of the importance of wellbeing within the agricultural industry.

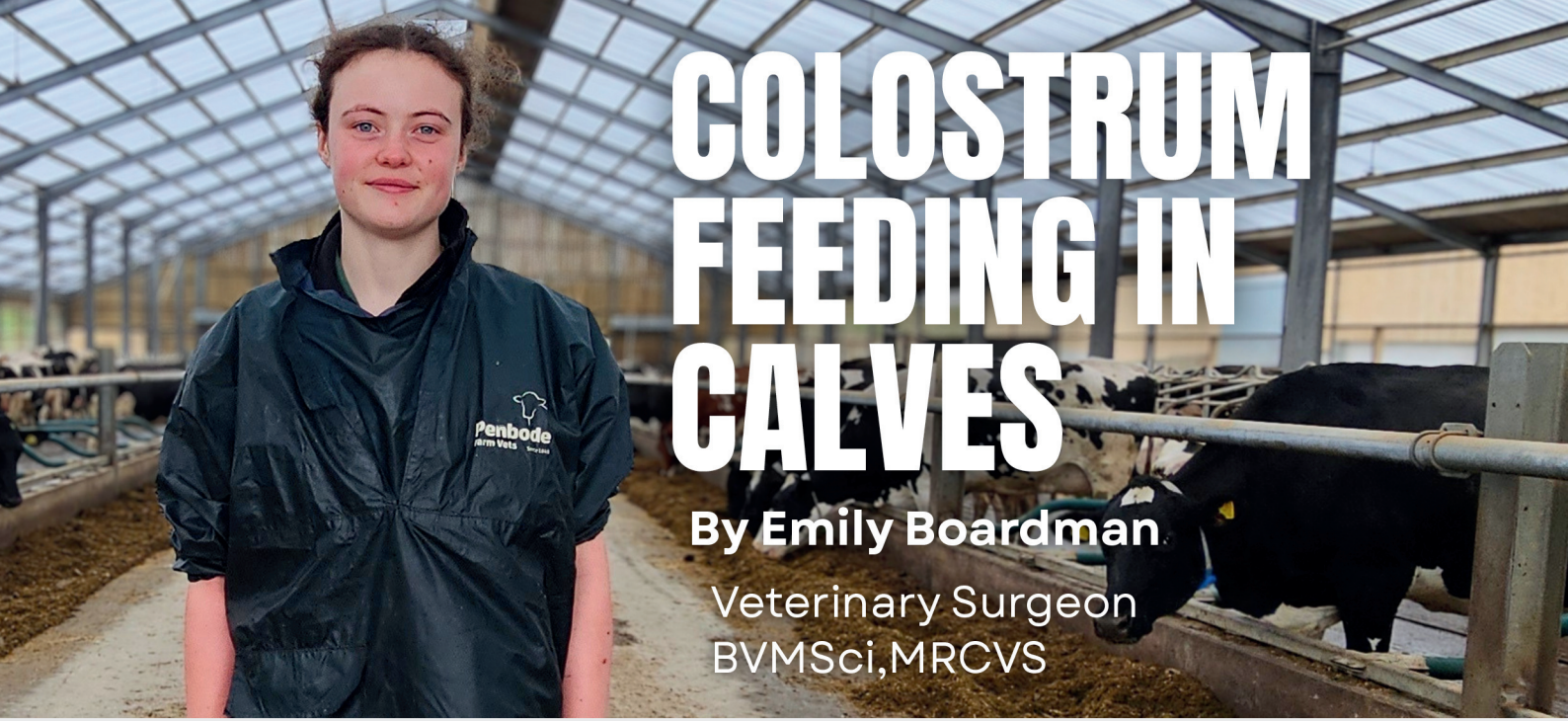
This year's competition featured two qualifying events, held in Oxford and Lincoln, with competitors taking on a series of tough physical challenges designed to test speed, strength and stamina. The fastest ten competitors from each category — men and women, split into under and over 40s — progressed to the next stage. This was followed by an assessment of the competitors' mental health awareness by the competition judge and representatives from the Farming Community Network (FCN). Dan successfully secured his place in the final, which is due to take place later in September at Diddly Squat Farm Shop.

Alongside his fitness challenge, Dan continues with the 24/7 demands of running his dairy farm, where he milks 120 cows through two robots. With a year-round calving system, the herd averages an impressive 11,500 litres, with milk at 4.3% butterfat and 3.5% protein. To reach the final at his first attempt is a fantastic achievement and is testament to Dan's dedication, determination and commitment to sustaining his own wellbeing alongside the demands of running a busy dairy farm.

Dan is a great ambassador for the local farming community, demonstrating the positive role that exercise can play in helping farmers stay physically and mentally resilient in a challenging and at times, a lonely industry. His achievement also helps reinforce an important message: making time for ourselves is just as important as looking after the farm and the animals.

The whole Penbode team wishes Dan the very best of luck for the upcoming final. We're delighted to celebrate his achievement and will be cheering him on all the way!





COLOSTRUM FEEDING IN CALVES

By Emily Boardman

Veterinary Surgeon
BVMSci, MRCVS

Colostrum feeding is something we as vets go on about a lot, but why is it so important and how can we make the most of colostrum?

Why is it so important?

Unlike humans, the structure of a cow's placenta does not allow any transfer of antibodies to the foetus. This means when a calf is first born it hasn't received any immunity from its dam. Colostrum is full of immunoglobulins (antibodies) and therefore is vital in providing the calf with immunity. If you vaccinate the cows because you want the calves to gain immunity from them (e.g. Bovigen Scour), the only way that the calves receive any of this immunity is from the colostrum. Calves with poor colostrum intake have higher morbidity and mortality and in the long term will have poorer growth rates and lower yields in their first lactation (if replacement heifers).

How to get the most out of colostrum

Many of you will have heard of the 3 Qs, but there are now 5 Qs:

- Quality
- Quantity
- Quickly
- SQueaky clean
- Quantify

Quality

You can't tell the quality of your colostrum just by looking at it. The easiest way to measure quality on farm is using a BRIX refractometer (you can get these online for under £20). If the BRIX reading is below 22% this is not very good quality and we'd advise not feeding this to calves, if you have a cow that is producing colostrum with a reading higher than 22% then it is worth storing any excess for calves of cows with poorer quality colostrum. (N.B care must be taken to observe Johnes control measures. Speak to your vet for bespoke advice on this) Colostrum can be stored in the fridge for up to 24 hours or a year in the freezer.

Quantity and Quickly

The guidelines for this are 10% of bodyweight in colostrum in the first two hours of life (can be split into two smaller feeds if needed) followed by a second feed of 2L within 12 hours of birth. The calf's ability to absorb immunoglobulins through the gut declines rapidly after birth and so the quicker they have the colostrum the more immunity they will gain from it. The quality of colostrum also drops by 3.7% every hour after calving so it's important to harvest it as quickly as possible if bottle/tube feeding or to store it. The only way to be certain of quantity is by bottle or tube feeding, if leaving to suckle the cow, the calf should be constantly suckling for at least 20 minutes to consume an adequate volume of colostrum.

Squeaky Clean

It is always important to ensure that feeding equipment is clean, but this is especially important when it comes to colostrum feeding. High bacterial levels in colostrum is associated with lower antibody levels in the calves. All equipment used to collect and feed colostrum should be well cleaned and disinfected and colostrum shouldn't be left uncovered between collection and feeding, to minimise any contamination.

Quantify

This step is to check that the colostrum management you are doing is effective. To check this we take bloods from calves between 24 hours and 7 days old and check the total protein levels of the serum. If the protein levels are not adequate we can then review colostrum management and protocols and ways in which we can improve it.

Johnes

In cases of cows with Johnes you should not feed their colostrum or milk to calves, as this is a way it can be transmitted to them, this is particularly important for potential replacement breeding stock.

SHOW AND EVENTS RECAP

By Jay Waylen
BSc Hons



It's certainly been a summer of highs and lows, but for this I am going to focus on all the highs of the summer.

We kicked off summer with our first ever Penbode Farm Vet's Summer Ball, what an incredible night we all had, it would be fair to say you lot know how to party, the dance floor was filled from the moment the band started playing. We raised an incredible amount £5729.05 for The Farming Community Network and £988.05 for Clawton Young Farmers.



A huge thank you to all who supported the evening, be it if you attended on the night or if you were a business or organisation who donated gifts and prizes so generously. If you missed out on this years ball, I can promise you – you won't want to miss out on the next one, so save the date – **Saturday 17th June 2028** for the second Penbode Farm Vet's Summer Ball.

Don't panic though, we've got plans for next year in the form of a Penbode Hoedown, yeehawwww! So dust off your cowboy hats and boots and get ready to party on **Saturday 25th September 2027**.



We've had several successful courses and meetings throughout the summer, including a calving course and a really informative summer sheep meeting with a focus on benchmarking and abortion. We held our 3rd annual Farm Vet Taster Day in July, this event is aimed at young people who have an interest in becoming vets one day, we struggle to accommodate work experience within the farm department but this day allows us to give students an insight into what being a farm vet is like. A huge thanks to Sarah Haworth of Newlands farm for your help with this day, it is great to be able to have a farm walk incorporated within the day and to do a mini dairy fertility routine.



We've had a busy show season and it is always great to see so many familiar faces and some new ones too. We love being a part of these great community events and it is genuinely one of the highlights of our year. We take full responsibility for the good weather at the shows this year with our choice of merchandise - the branded Penbode umbrellas we bought weren't needed – however, will come in handy for a rainy day in the future!



You might have spotted us taking part in Bude and Bradworthy carnivals, Again, it's great to see so many familiar faces as we danced our way around the carnival route.



Jemma, Oli and Jay attended the Ram sale at the end of August at Holsworthy Market, we were pleased to be a part of this lovely event and it was great to be on hand to answer queries and have a general catch up with people. We served refreshments all evening.

We've got **one last event planned for you this summer**. We are fully aware that this summer has been a tough one, with the severe lack of rain and many of you battling a bluetongue outbreak. We would therefore like to **invite you** to get off farm and enjoy a night of light hearted fun with us on **Saturday 12th September** at Holsworthy Area Sports Pavilion, from 7pm. The bar will be open; we hope to have a game of rounders (no pressure to join in with this) and a BBQ with proceeds going to the Air Ambulance. This event is open to all in the farming community, bring the family or come alone – but most importantly, please come along and enjoy an evening with like minded people who have all faced the same challenges you have this summer, sometimes we all just need a good chat and a bit of light hearted fun.

Please RSVP to jay.waylen@penbodevets.co.uk or call your local branch, so we have a rough idea on numbers.



3 DAY DEFRA APPROVED AI COURSE

3 Day DEFRA approved AI course

£550pp includes lunch on day 1. Day one is held at our market kiosk at Holsworthy market, with a practical session looking at post-mortem material in our small ruminant examination area in the Holsworthy practice. Days 2 and 3 are out on farm. Tuesday 29th Wednesday 30th September and Friday 2nd October.

Call your branch or email jay.waylen@penbodevets.co.uk to book

AI refresher course

£175pp, a hands on AI refresher course to be held on farm. Friday 16th October 2026.

Call your branch or email jay.waylen@penbodevets.co.uk to book

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.



MilkSure Course

With Andy Stokes

Senior Veterinary Surgeon
BVSc CertAVP (Cattle) MRCVS

Thursday 24th September 2026
11:30 am – 2 pm

Is your MilkSure (Part 1) training due?
Why should you take this course?

Farmers will benefit by:

- ✓ having fewer costly milk residue failures
- ✓ using medicines more effectively and therefore more efficiently
- ✓ fulfilling Red Tractor antibiotic regulations
- ✓ demonstrating to consumers a clear commitment to producing pure, safe milk.

After this course you and your staff will:

- ✓ feel more in control of safeguarding your milk production
- ✓ know the three main areas which are risky and you will have the necessary tools to avoid residue failures
 - ✓ have fewer decisions to make
- ✓ have less doubt and better peace of mind.

Location – Our Hut at the Hoslworthy Market

Call your branch or email jay.waylen@penbodevets.co.uk to book your seats (please let us know of any dietary requirements)