

Wishing all our clients a very Happy Christmas and New Year!

We would like to thank you all for your support and patience this year, we really appreciate that you trust us with your business. NorCal has had yet another busy year, we've loved getting to know our new clients better and look forward to hosting more meetings.

A vet will of course be available 24/7 over the Christmas period for any emergencies and the office opening hours are below.

As you are all too aware this has been yet another difficult year for farming with one of the driest, hottest summers on record as well as the continued implications of the latest Budget and for many of you ongoing TB restrictions. We hope that 2026 brings better weather and livestock prices remain high! We hope you all have a lovely Christmas and take some much-needed time off to relax and reset for 2026!



Christmas Office Hours

Monday 22nd December 8:30am - 12:00pm

Tuesday 23rd December 8:30am - 12:00pm

Christmas Eve - 8:30am - 12:00pm

Christmas Day - Office Closed - Vet available

Boxing Day - Office Closed - Vet available

Monday 29th December 8:30am - 12:00pm

Tuesday 30th December - 8:30am - 12:00pm

Wednesday 31st December - 8:30am - 12:00pm

Thursday 1st January - Office Closed - Vet available

Friday 2nd January - Normal office hours (8:30am-4pm)



Beef Benchmarking Club

Thank you to all our beef clients that are involved in our beef benchmarking club. Our farm walk back in September was a huge success with a great turnout from all of you. We will be hosting our winter meeting on Wednesday 28th January from 6:30pm at the Thame Chinnor Rugby Club to go over all the data collected from yourselves.

We will be sending out our annual Beef Benchmarking Questionnaire before Christmas so please look out for it on your emails! If you are not already a member of our Beef Benchmarking Club and would like to be one please contact the office or Becca and we can add you on so you get updates about our planned activities next year!

Lice in Cattle

Lice in cattle causes irritation and scratching resulting in productivity losses through reduced feed intakes, poor coat quality as well as welfare issues. Lice cannot survive for more than 35 days without cattle to feed from. Now that cows are housed the lice can spread easily from cow to cow. Over winter long grown hair also allows them somewhere to hide. There are two types of cattle lice: biting and sucking. Differentiation is only important if you are relying on injectable clear wormers to treat lice - only sucking lice will be killed. Pour-on clear wormers as well as pour on synthetic pyrethroids will kill both sucking and biting lice.

Managing the Downer Cow

There are many reasons that cows can become downer cows. It is important to identify as soon as possible what is causing the cow to be unable to stand, as this will affect how you treat her and whether she has a reasonable chance of returning to full health.

Some of the common reasons that we see include:

- Metabolic, e.g. milk fever, grass tetany. If caught early, appropriate treatment of these cows (e.g. calcium into the vein) can help these cows to make a full and rapid recovery
- Trauma, e.g. doing the splits. These cases will benefit from pain relief and anti-inflammatories, and a prompt assessment of whether catastrophic injuries have occurred. Catastrophic injuries in adult cows include fractures or dislocations of the limbs, and there is no way we can effectively treat these so we would recommend prompt euthanasia.
- Infections e.g. toxic mastitis. Severe infections can cause cows to become downer cows - in these cases the cow requires rapid treatment with anti-inflammatories and antibiotics, as well as fluids given either orally or into the vein.

In addition to identifying and treating the underlying cause of the downer cow, it is essential that all downer cows receive excellent supportive care to keep them as healthy as possible and prevent further complications. The most important aspects are ensuring the cow has access to a palatable diet and plenty of clean water within easy reach. She must also be kept on a well bedded area and be turned regularly to minimise the muscle damage that inevitably occurs from the pressure of the cows weight onto her muscles.

If hip lifters are used they should be only applied for short lengths of time and the cow should be able to place all 4 feet on the floor, so they support her to stand.

Whilst downer cows can occur at any time, the period around calving is particularly high risk for all of the causes listed above. It is therefore worth thinking about actions you could take during this period to reduce the risks. Keeping yards clean and well bedded and ensuring diets for heavily pregnant and freshly calved cows are appropriate (including mineral supplementation) are often the most important factors.

Flock Check Sampling

From the 1st December MSD have opened their subsidised blood sampling for toxoplasmosis and enzootic abortion. This sampling allows you to identify possible causes of early lamb losses.

Both Toxoplasmosis and Enzootic Abortion can result in barren ewes, still births, mummified lambs or weak lambs which fail to suck.

Toxoplasmosis is spread via cat faeces that contaminates hay/feed and is transmitted to the ewes. Depending on which stage of pregnancy a ewe is infected will determine the outcome of the pregnancy. Once a ewe has had toxoplasmosis and they build up an immunity they are unlikely to show signs in subsequent pregnancies. Toxoplasmosis can also cause abortions in humans therefore pregnant women should avoid all involvement with lambing.

Enzootic Abortion is transmitted through infected birth fluids and placenta. Once a ewe becomes infected the organism can lay dormant until the following year when the ewe shows clinical signs. Once a ewe has had EAE they build an immunity but can still continue to shed the organism and infect other ewes through infected birth fluids and placenta.

Vaccines are available for both of these diseases. If you suspect toxoplasmosis or enzootic abortion please contact us to organise testing and set up a control programme.

Spring Calving Rota-Corona Vaccine

As you are preparing for Spring calving it may be beneficial to have a think about whether you had many cases of scours in calves last year. We did see a lot of E.Coli scour this last Spring with devastating consequences so we would urge you to consider vaccination as well as chatting to one of us about various other methods to help prevent this occurring.

Scour is one of the most common causes of death in young calves and pregnant cattle can be vaccinated against rotavirus, coronavirus, and E. Coli (K99) from 12 until 3 weeks prior to calving.

Calves who have gut damage from scours will not achieve the same daily growth rates and will take longer to reach your weight targets. Antibodies produced by the cow from the vaccine will be stored in her colostrum and passed to the calf at their first feed - it is important to note that antibodies produced by the cow or heifer will not transfer to the calf before birth. Therefore, it is again vital to follow the 1,2,3 rule and ensure that in the 1st 2 hours a calf receives at least 3 litres of good quality colostrum as the ability of the calves' gut to absorb antibodies begins to decrease from 2 hours after birth. If scours are an issue, it is always worth the cost to collect samples for us to test to identify the cause, best treatment and how to prevent further infections.

Please give us a call to discuss vaccinating against scour or how to effectively deal with an outbreak of scours should one occur.



NorCal Vets

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