

# News from our Rounds

## East

### Imogen Rogers



With Coronavirus at the front of everyone minds, it is important to ensure that routine procedures do not get forgotten throughout this difficult time.

With summer just around the corner, there is an abundance of new challenges to face as the weather heats up and a common problem is fly strike. Fly strike occurs when flies lay their eggs in warm, damp areas of an animal's fleece and is mostly seen around the back end, especially in scouring individuals. Early signs of strike usually involve nibbling at the affected area and interrupted grazing. Control strategies involve a combination of shearing/dagging and the use of fly repellents. It is important to remember that if the weather remains mild, strike can occur as late as October. Good records of when fly repellents were applied are useful and ensure treatments are repeated in late summer if needs be. Regular worm egg counts are also key in preventing the disease. Scouring individuals are significantly more likely to become burdened with strike.

## South

### Tom Cook



Have we ever had such a change in circumstance in two months? I never thought that COVID would impact us all as it has done.

For me there have been more positives than negatives this month with some lovely settled weather after the relentless winter, it is amazing how having the sun on your back makes life a little easier! We have welcomed to the world our first child Henry and are settling into life as a family well. We have also managed to move house and of course I have been focused on tackling the garden and getting the veg patch up and running rather than unpacking boxes.

Stay safe everyone!

## North

### Josh Swain



Unlike many industries, cows cannot be furloughed and luckily a tractor is a suitable location to self-isolate and get some much-needed groundwork done. For the most part it has been business as usual for the north team and we welcome new vet Charlotte Debbaut.

Now is a good time to think about what steps you can take to improve the resilience of your business.

Reducing costs may seem like the obvious solution but be careful with 'instant' savings. Stopping vaccinations or cutting back on routine foot trimming is unlikely to pay-back in the long term and could work out extremely costly.

Ask yourself the following questions. Could you feed more efficiently? Could you feed to yield or stage of lactation? Could you utilise forage better? What's your average age at first calving? If it's over 24mo this is going to drastically increase your rearing costs. Do you have sufficient replacements coming through? If so draw up a list of less profitable animals (chronic lameness, mastitis, Johnes positive). Now is not the time to be carrying any freeloaders. A good mantra for these times is "Plan for the worst, hope for the best" and we are here to help.

COVID-19 06/05/20

## Our response to COVID-19

We continue to provide veterinary services and medicines in order to support our clients in the vital role they play in the food production chain. This currently includes all regular Health and Fertility ("Routine") veterinary visits, Lameness (Vet Tech visits included), sick animal visits, TB testing and all emergency calls.

As we are all aware the C-19 situation evolves daily, but we have a contingency plan in place and a team ready to respond to changes and update plans as they occur. At the present time we have put together the following information to guide you but please contact the practice on 01935 83682 should you have any queries regarding this advice.

### For the protection of our staff:

- All external meetings and non-urgent internal meetings are cancelled.
- Visitors to practice sites are strictly limited to essential supplies and medicines collection.
- Clients will be able to collect medicines but contact must be limited and protocols adhered to. [Please check with our Dispensary Team re: sites for medicine collections.](#)
- Discussions with farmers will be in an outside space.
- Synergy delivery drivers will check they can attend client premises prior to delivering medicines.

### For the protection of our clients:

- All clients will be telephoned by our reception team or Vet Tech (VT) Co-ordinator prior to Vet / VT attendance to check there is no issue with their visit taking place. If we are aware of any issue whilst on farm human health will take priority.
- We will ensure that PPE is used on farm at all times and will maintain a social distance of 2 metres where practically feasible.
- Farm meetings/discussions will be held in an outside space.
- For emergency animals visiting the practice; all farmers must use hand gel provided, on entry and exit to the building and must only visit if not experiencing symptoms or not having been in contact with suspected infected individuals.

### General Protection:

- Limit exposure to groups of people
- No use of public transport
- Use handwashing protocols

For further advice use the government site: [www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus)

### Considering our clients

We do not underestimate the fact that farmers can also be vulnerable to the effects of isolation, especially at this very busy time of year and now exaggerated by these circumstances. There are a number of useful organisations who can offer support, please see the below links to some of those organisations:

- The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution: [www.rabi.org.uk](http://www.rabi.org.uk)
- The Farming Community Network: [www.fcnc.org.uk](http://www.fcnc.org.uk)
- Mind, the Mental Health Charity: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

### There are no current plans to cancel TB Testing

Statutory TB testing will currently continue. A risk based approach to performing TB testing has been instructed by APHA. "TB testing should only continue if, in the OV's judgement, it can be done safely in accordance with current COVID-19 public health guidance." We will contact you if there are any issues with your test but please contact us if you or your staff are in self isolation or are at risk.

### BREAKING NEWS

Animals under 180 days may now be exempted from routine statutory herd TB tests if cannot be performed safely under social distancing rules. See [www.tbhub.co.uk](http://www.tbhub.co.uk) or contact us for further details.



## COVID—what does it really stand for?

A note from Synergy MD Andrew Davies



No-one currently working in the Synergy team has ever lived through an international crisis like this before. There are people alive in the UK- like Captain Tom God bless him-who lived through the Second World War and only they will have memories of disruption on this sort of scale, for a much longer time than the current period of lockdown.

The NHS has been tested and responded incredibly well and the ability to now reach its virus testing targets is a further example of the need for good organisation.

Sometimes, as we engage in our normal working days (remember them?), you may be excused for, particularly now, having well planned days that become chaotic but importantly the team culture and ethos of the business kicks in and bestows resilience.

Not even the Foot and Mouth epidemic in 2001 obviously had anything like this sort of global and human impact so this is a unique situation for all of us.

*"When the going gets tough the tough get going!"*-and all becomes *"swan-like"* on the surface!

Having some reflection, I wondered what does COVID-19 actually mean to us all:

### C Crisis and Challenges?

There is no doubt that this nasty little virus has provided both of these. But as Margaret Thatcher once said (at the time of the Falklands War):

*"It is exciting to have a real crisis on your hands when you have spent half your political life dealing with humdrum issues like the environment."*

I am not sure anybody today and particularly the current occupant of Number 10 would agree with that sentiment!

While no-one can deny that we are in the middle of a national crisis, I think **C is also for Celebration.**

I think we as an industry should be rightly proud of how we are dealing with this crisis. The way in which we are continuing to provide for the nation and how we have all responded positively in these difficult times has been fantastic.

It is so easy to focus on the challenges -It is **also important to celebrate our successes.**

### O Organisation

One of the main reasons businesses are able to continue to operate successfully is because of an inherent and sometimes sub conscious organisational structure within.

## May 2020

- COVID—what does it really stand for?
- COVID thoughts from the Synergy "front line"
- Wires in cattle – an all too common problem
- Cow Comfort
- Practice News
- Seasonal Promotions
- Regional News

### I Information

I did think about adding communication to the list of several 'Cs' that sprang to mind as I began writing this. Communication is all about the transfer of information: the correct information, in a timely and easily understood manner.

As we have faced this crisis together, we are working very hard to keep you all well informed. Over the coming weeks the only certain thing is that the situation will change but we will continue to provide the best information as quickly as we can, knowing that there might be a different message tomorrow!

If anybody feels they need to know something or feel in any way uninformed, please do not hesitate to get in touch. ***It is not for isolation!***

### D Determination

This is a crisis that has challenged us all, and all of us will have different responses and different ways of dealing with it.

We are determined that, when it becomes possible again, we will all emerge from this situation even stronger and wiser.

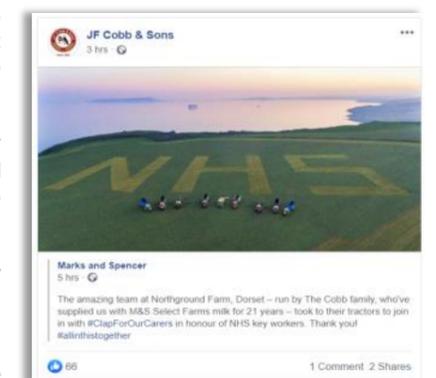
There is no doubt that ***"these times too shall pass."***

It is very difficult to put any sort of timeline, on when we might return to something like a normal working week. However I do strongly believe that many opportunities will emerge in the future and thinking about them in advance can help us all manage the threats.

***"I never think of the future. It comes soon enough."*** Albert Einstein.

### V Value

Nobody will ever forget the value of our NHS and all the Doctors, Nurses, Carers and support staff who are on the front line of this war against Coronavirus. We salute and thank them.



It is reassuring and long deserved that you the Food producers of this country and UK Agriculture generally are also recognised as Key Workers keeping the nation fed.

Being part of this places us all in a position to emerge from this crisis even stronger with farmers being valued for producing quality food whilst also looking after the countryside and the environment, and vets providing quality service and advice to protect animal health and welfare and support the industry.

We as vets are familiar enough with the basics of virology and epidemiology and have valued understanding of herd and flock disease situations to empathise with the complexity of this crisis and at least advise you to not inject Dettol to cure Covid!

## COVID thoughts from the Synergy “front line”

**Social distancing is easier on paper than in reality.**

The Synergy team have discussed via virtual group calls, ways to carry out procedures whilst maintaining social distancing, which threw up some useful tips which we are implementing and conveying.

A lot of farmers are already relatively isolated which makes us, as a veterinary team, acutely aware that we are at potential risk of carrying the virus onto farm; especially daunting if there are older or immunocompromised individuals in the vicinity. We are also aware, that for some, we are the only social contact for the day or even week, therefore the mental health of you, our farmers, is also high on our radar.

**High standards of cleanliness and handwashing, companionship and clinical expertise are more important than ever.** Although we are not on the ‘front line’ in the hospitals, as vets we have a duty to protect both human and animal life and set high standards.

This period of trade disruption and likely future famine (as predicted by the World Food Programme), will cause our own nation to consider where their next meal is coming from, and question our own food security and sustainability. 42% of people said the pandemic had changed the way they view food, with searches for ‘How to Cook’ having risen by 3600% in the last few weeks.

Over the last few months people have started to shop more locally and buy direct from

farms. The eggs may be completely sold out in the supermarket, ( that in itself may raise questions regarding the supermarkets own supply chain) but you can buy them directly from the farm a few miles from your front door. Many people will have driven passed the ‘eggs for sale’ sign for years without batting an eyelid but suddenly it has become a lifeline to be able to buy this produce.

Three million people have now brought vegetable boxes or produce direct from farm. This supports local businesses and the community. This should have been valued more in the past but now it is more important than ever.



**Farmers play a crucial role in the food supply chain and recognising you as ‘key workers’ was essential to keep the country working.** Backing British farming is

more important than ever and we need to support the industry through this pandemic so we can continue to provide the food our consumers have become accustomed to. It should not have taken a global pandemic for us to value our farmers and the food they produce, but it has, and we should now ensure the momentum is maintained when relative normality is hopefully resumed.

Why have we as vets been deemed key workers? Put simply – our involvement in food

production, specifically the animal based-food chain; and being professionally responsible for the health of farm animals and veterinary prescription medicines to secure food safety and public health.

**The veterinary profession understands that the health of humans, animals and the environment are inextricably linked. and given that COVID-19 and an estimated 70% of emerging infectious diseases in humans over the last 30 years have been zoonotic, veterinarians need to be engaged in a One Health collaborative approach.**

The causative agent this time has been identified as a novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. It is thought to have originated in bats and spread to the human population via other animal species such as the pangolin.

Being forced to pour thousands of litres of milk down the drain is emotionally and financially damaging for farmers. A spot price of 6p a litre to farm is not much better, given cost of production is around 25p a litre. A few miles away a family may be struggling to get enough nutritious food and be dependent on food banks.

As is so often the case in our jobs; it is rarely about animals, but more frequently about the people that rely on animals for their livelihoods, and the people who benefit from animal production.

**Whilst this virus has united the world, its impacts are not equal.**

**Alasdair Moffett  
Veterinary Surgeon**



## Wires in cattle – an all too common problem

**Two of our clients have recently suffered costly outbreaks of wire related disease in their adult dairy cows.** Technically labelled Traumatic Reticuloperitonitis this common issue results from cattle eating sharp pieces of metal (usually tyre wire or chopped fencing wire in silage), which goes on to penetrate the wall of the animal’s first stomach (the reticulum). Cows are very poor at identifying metal in their mouths and swallow it without much chewing. As the reticulum contracts during cudging and digestion it pushes these pieces of wire through the reticular wall into the abdomen. Infection is introduced at the same time causing peritonitis. The wire(s) can move about potentially damaging other organs to include the liver, the chest cavity or the heart. Some wires may simply cause a small area of peritonitis and the cow is able to make a reasonable recovery. Others may be more drastic and even result in sudden death if the wire pierces the heart. In most cows the initial signs are an immediate sharp milk drop, often

to as little as 5 litres. Cows are likely to go off their feed, have a slight temperature and absent/much reduced rumen movements. They may be slightly bloated and have a hunched appearance due to abdominal pain.

A significant number of cows will go on to have a grumbling peritonitis with abscesses, poor milk yield and loss of condition. Some will develop infections which are fatal. Milder cases with only localised infection may recover reasonably well, depending on the location of the wire damage. Treatment for individual cows typically involves the introduction of a magnet, which is designed to lodge in the reticulum and attract the wire. This is administered along with a course of antibiotics and pain relief. Long term/severe cases are very difficult to treat and longstanding cases are often unresponsive and are best culled.

The majority of wires come from tyres which have disintegrated on top of the silage pit or have been inadvertently either precision chopped or gone whole into the feeder wagon. It is very important to check and dispose of any dubious tyres immediately and take care to avoid getting any into the feeder wagon!

Fencing wire may also be an issue although this has been improved by the addition of magnets and metal detectors to forage harvesters. However in my experience this technology is far from perfect and issues still



occur despite farmers/contractors saying it is an impossibility! Ash from bonfires may also contain metal fragments. Magnets can be given to all the cows in a herd in the face of a major problem. Magnets are a cheap one-off treatment (approx. £2/head) and are very worthwhile. Indeed on many units it is now become part of routine heifer management to insert a magnet preservice when giving infectious disease

**Ed Powell-Jackson  
Veterinary Surgeon**



## Cow Comfort

**With Spring turn out have you ever stood back and watched your cows? Ever wonder if your cows are happy? As dairy farmers you visually check your cows several times a day but you may be missing signs your cows are telling you.** These clever creatures will indicate their health, physical traits, posture and comfort through their behaviour. Housing has an effect on the lying behaviour, overall health and performance. Each housing system has its own advantages and disadvantages in terms of welfare.

Dairy cows are designed to lie down for 10-12 hours per day. This is a high priority, even higher than social interaction and eating. A lying cow will help udder function and milk production



When there aren’t enough cubicles, lying time will reduce, interactions between cows become aggressive and both mastitis and lameness increase. Having more cows than cubicles can have an impact via additional soiling of the bedding and hoof damage through increased standing times. We want a

well-designed cubicle bed which will allow the animal to lie down and rest without rubbing against the partitions. Poorly designed cubicles will result in soiled and wetter beds.

When a cow is in the lying position, she will lunge forward to push all the weight from her hindquarters to her front legs. With the transfer of the weight she will thrust herself forward whilst lunging. It is recommended to have 0.6m of space in front of her to rise nicely. If restricted she will have problems rising. If the beds are not correct the cow will not lie down but will stand until she exhausts herself.

For an open cubicle for a Holstein cow, the ideal length is 1.8m (180cm of cow lying space), 0.6m lunging space, curb 20cm, neck rail to floor 1.3m, brisket box 0.1m, partitions (inside to inside) 1.2m-1.8m with the width of the cows hips in mind and the neck rail to the curb 2.2m.

Cows will look for the most comfortable resting place. This can become a competition between cows and cause conflict which can lead to diseases and reproductive problems. Cows prefer to remain standing rather than

the discomfort associated with lying or rising when housed on rough bedding. With uncomfortable cubicles this can increase the number of cows perching, this is front feet in the cubicles and the back feet in the passageway. This leads to pressure on the back feet leading to bruised feet which could turn into a sole ulcer.



As a mobility mentor I’m always looking to help farmers improve their cow comfort and help see things you might be missing. Why not enquire about someone who hasn’t seen your farm looking at it from a different perspective? We want to keep the cows and the farmers happy!

**Happy cows give more milk.**

**Natalie Harrow  
Vet Tech**



In these times of COVID 19 restrictions, we have been offering a telephone consultation service which will be extended once “normality” resumes. This is suitable for cases where an animal does not need to be physically examined in order to reach a diagnosis. This can be aided by smartphone photographic/video technology and can assist with group or individual problem cases and allow us to provide valuable advice. This will be

charged at normal professional fee rates of £15 plus VAT per Telephone consultation.

For farms with regular veterinary visits and a Synergy Herd or Flock Health Plan these telephone consultations are included in the veterinary service we provide and will not normally be charged. Where a telephone consultation necessitates a visit to be able to provide accurate diagnosis, treatment and advice then the telephone consultation fee will naturally be waived.

**We welcome Charlotte Debbaut to our North team & Martijn 't Hoen to our East team!**



Charlotte is Belgian but has been working in the UK since 2014 and enjoys working with cattle, sheep and goats! Martijn is Dutch and has also been working here for the past six years during which he has developed a good understanding of UK farming systems. Both are Cow Signals master trainers and have moved to Somerset with their time consuming Vizsla puppy! They are looking forward to meeting and working with our Synergy clients.



## SEASONAL PROMOTIONS



**SPOTINOR**  
2.5L £120.00  
1L £60.00



**ECTOFLY**  
2.5L £33.70  
5L £58.90



**TAURADOR PO**  
(= Dectomax PO)  
2.5L £105  
5L £185

Cannot be used in milking animals.



**ENOVEX PO**  
2.5L £27.50



**ENDOSPEC**  
2.5L £30  
10L £58.78

**A seasonal reminder of the high risk Nematodirus forecast in sheep.** Looking at

the SCOPS website we can see that some of the stations in the South West have gone high or very high risk for mass hatching and lambs 6-8 weeks old are likely to be at risk of clinical disease. If you look at [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk) you will be able to see the current risk at the nearest station to you. Pastures considered to be high risk are those which have had lambs on them at this time of year, for the last two years. This worm does not cause disease in adult ewes or yearlings. The treatment of choice is a white drench however we need to be mindful of resistance and a post drench worm egg count 10 days post worming is recommended. Remember a pre-treatment count is not useful with this worm i.e. we should be treating based on the forecast and risk.

**Emily Gascoigne**

All prices EX VAT. For a full list of promotional items please contact Synergy dispensary on 01935 83682. Offer ends 31/05/20.