

issue 1

# farm.

Your farm magazine from **VetPartners Ltd**



## TB: It's not all black & white

Changing perceptions,  
decreasing risk &  
building resilience.

**vetPartners**

# welcome



## **Welcome to the inaugural edition of the VetPartners farm magazine.**

As well as bringing you a healthy mix of seasonally relevant content, how-to-guides and practical on-farm advice for our clients, inclusive of all species, we will also be covering the bigger issues that are currently affecting us all (did someone say Brexit? Covid19?).

With over 30 veterinary businesses within the VetPartners group involved in farm work, we are committed to supporting UK agriculture to grow, and continue to be successful. For farm veterinary practices, the current climate is challenging with fewer vets embarking on a career in our sector. Collectively we are working hard to create transparent career progression, with a breadth of opportunities for vets, as well as continuing to be an awesome place to work. Although, we are obviously not the only sector struggling within the farming and agricultural industry, with vital farm labour roles failing to be recognised in the most recent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) Shortage Occupation List (SOL) 2020 was a challenging year for all of us. We may not know what 2021 will bring for our industry, but what remains is our commitment to you, our farmers and clients, that we will continue to provide you with clinical excellence and innovative solutions that will make your business more productive.

*Ian Cure*

LLM Veterinary Surgeon & VetPartners Farm Director



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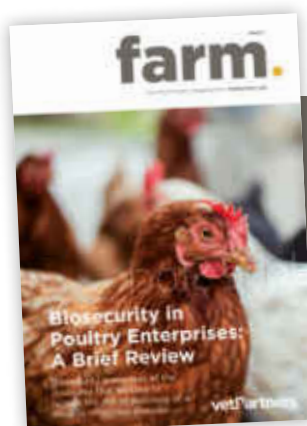
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Did you know?  
We also have  
a pig & poultry  
edition

# Covid-19

## Think social distance when calling out your vet



**Ian Cure, Farm Director at VetPartners, urges farmers to follow government guidance on social distancing and self-isolation when vets are practicing on farm.**

“Like farmers, farm vets are categorised as key workers due to being involved in food production. Farm practices are working incredibly hard to continue to provide essential services during this difficult time,” he says.

“Our priority is to maintain animal health and welfare while helping to ensure sustained production of safe food as well as minimising the risk of transmitting Coronavirus between vets and farm clients.

“The latest guidance from the BVA highlights various elements of farm veterinary work that can be carried out remotely, such as health planning and medicine reviews. Diagnosis and medicine dispense can also happen without the need for a visit, with the aid of video calling and a thorough conversation on the signs and symptoms.

“Those working in the supply of veterinary medicines are included in the key workers list released by the government, so we do not expect any major issues maintaining medicine supplies,” he adds.

Vets will assess each situation, and when a visit to the farm is deemed necessary, it is important that social distancing guidance is followed, for the safety of both the farmer and vet.

“Government guidance applies as much in rural areas as it does in cities, and following advice is going to be imperative to ensure we can continue farm calling where necessary,” says Ian.

“When a vet is on farm, make sure animals are restrained to allow a 2.5m distance between each

person for the entire visit. It’s best if visits take place in a well-ventilated area, preferably outdoors, with only one person from the farm present.

“If someone is self-isolating on the farm, it is essential to let the practice know ahead of the visit so extra precautions can be put in place. For example, two members of the practice could attend, with one handling the animal, so the farmer can maintain self-isolation.”

We have now implemented the government backed lateral flow Covid testing in our practices. This regular testing program helps add another layer to our rigorous risk assessments which ensure that we are taking all measures possible to keep our teams, and you the clients, as safe as possible.

# STOP

**We are all working  
in a critical food  
production industry.**

**Help us all to keep safe  
by maintaining a 2m gap  
at all times.**

vetPartners



# Why social distancing is important

Social distancing of 2m significantly decreases the exposure and spread of Corona Virus (COVID-19). Help us all to stay safe during this time and respect the 2m distance from your vet and team members.

Now



1 person

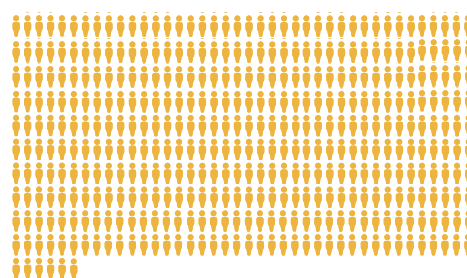
Infests

5 days



2.5 people infected

30 days



406 people infected

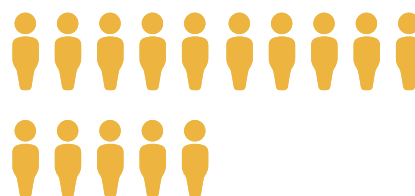
50% less exposure



Infests



1.25 people infected



15 people infected

## TB testing & COVID-19

To ensure the safety of both farmer and vet, APHA will support the decision to leave a test incomplete if it is not possible to safely maintain a 2 metre distance. We have also clarified with APHA that farmers will receive an amnesty on financial penalties if the test must be postponed, rearranged or abandoned directly due to COVID-19.

For more information visit: [tbhub.org.uk](https://tbhub.org.uk)

**vetPartners**

# Dairy Farming Survey: 'The People Challenge'



## Get involved

**The UK dairy industry faces a number of long-term challenges, with the availability and retention of labour ranking highly for many individual farm businesses.**

Independent dairy research and advice specialists, Kingshay - renowned for their technical reports, of which many are compiled from analysis of farm reviews - are evaluating "The people challenge" with its latest survey.

Kingshay are keen to gather the facts surrounding labour on today's modern dairy farms, to appreciate how the use of technology and equipment may reduce labour requirements. This includes an understanding of how contracted labour, such as foot trimming, heat detection and vet tech services impact staffing levels.

Kingshay will report back on the composition of labour on farm, and help identify key areas of focus to find solutions to the current staffing challenges faced.



**INDEPENDENT DAIRY SPECIALISTS**

You can complete the survey online at [www.kingshay.com/news/labour-staff-survey/](http://www.kingshay.com/news/labour-staff-survey/) or request a copy of the survey via email by contacting [sarah.bolt@kingshay.co.uk](mailto:sarah.bolt@kingshay.co.uk).

All survey respondents will receive a copy of the report and will also be entered into our prize draw to win a £100 "Buy a Gift" voucher.

**Kingshay.com**

**01458 851555**

**[contact.us@kingshay.co.uk](mailto:contact.us@kingshay.co.uk)**







# It's Not All Black and White...

by Sarah Tomlinson

Working as a farm vet in Derbyshire since 2001, I had become disillusioned with the lack of government control of TB. However, when the “25-year strategy for England to be TB free” was launched, I realised there were things we could all do.



**In 2016 I was appointed to the TB Eradication Group (TBEAG) - where industry representatives discuss TB strategy with DEFRA's policy team. My knowledge of TB expanded, and I am now passionate about changing farmers' perceptions, showing it is possible to decrease your risk of a breakdown, build resilience into your business and be more informed when under restrictions. What I am about to say may be controversial, and may make you a little angry, but I want you to be positive and realise there are things you can do about TB.**

Do you screen for Johnes, BVD? Have you had pneumonia outbreaks? Abortion issues? Did you call your vet to investigate? Most importantly, did you agree a plan to reduce the risk of the problem recurring? If your herd is free of certain diseases, your health plan should include measures to keep it that way. So, why should TB be any different?

The skin test to detect TB is very specific, so if you get a reactor, it is 99.97% likely to have TB. After slaughter, if it has no visible lesions (NVL), then great, the animal was in the early stages of disease rather than “riddled” with TB, so wasn't a massive infection source for other cattle in your herd. This is good news. We need to get the notion out of our heads, that NVL means it didn't have TB.

The skin test's limitation is sensitivity - around 80% - so 1 in 5 infected animals may test negative, when

they are actually positive. This is why farms are shut down and can't sell animals until they have tested clear twice in a row, 60 days apart, to 'weed out' any other positives.

If you identify a BVD carrier in your herd you would want to cull it, find out if you have any more and where it came from. You need to think the same for TB, not “UGH! The government has shut me down and insisted on more testing, just because they want to make life difficult”. It's to identify all your positives and stop the spread of TB to others herds.

*What I am about to say may be controversial and make you a little bit angry*

BVD and Johnes positives cattle are often fit healthy animals, just like TB reactors, but they spread disease and will have a financial impact on productivity, vet costs and the health and welfare of your herd. These are slaughtered at your own expenses, and it is vitally important you put a plan in place to reduce the impact on farm.

I think cattle farmers are lucky with TB, not only do the government pay for the testing, but you get compensation for animals you are told to cull. I said





**westpoint farm vets**

I might make you angry but think about it, who pays for other infectious disease control? TB is just another infectious disease.

When you are purchasing cattle ask: Are you BVD free? What is your Johnes risk score? And when was your last clear herd test and last reactor? The longer a herd is free of TB the more you can trust the animals are truly clear. You can visit [ibTB.co.uk](http://ibTB.co.uk) to see all the breakdowns in England going back five years to inform your purchasing decisions.

If purchasing animals, especially expensive one-off animals, could you isolate and test post movement? Or even privately gamma prior to movement? OK, if they test positive the seller's farm will be shut down, but if they have TB so they should be! Just because certain things aren't government policy in all areas doesn't mean you can't use it as part of your TB prevention plan.

Government strategy alone won't combat TB. All farms are different and have different areas of risk. The TB Advisory Service offers bespoke advice on TB to farmers in the High Risk and Edge Areas of England - call **01306 779410** to book your free visit. You can also talk to your own vet if you have any questions about reducing your TB risk. Forget what you can't do, but change the things you can, and I do appreciate there are things out of your control BUT like I said, it's not all black and white...



**Sarah Tomlinson MRCVS**

Sarah works for Westpoint Farm Vets in Derbyshire. She is Technical Director of the TB Advisory Service.

## Don't miss out!

The inaugural TB Advisory Service conference was held in June 2019, with the opening address given by Professor Sir Charles Godfray. If you weren't able to attend the event, videos of all the presentations are available to purchase on the FarmIQ website - [www.bit.ly/TBASConference2019](http://www.bit.ly/TBASConference2019) for just £25 plus VAT. To find out more, please contact TBAS on 01306 779410



# 5 Ways to Improve Your Beef Housing

It's now well accepted that housing can hugely impact on the productivity of our dairy cows but sometimes we can overlook how much of an impact it can have on the health and productivity of our housed beef cows.

Matt Hylands gives us five things to focus on...



**Obviously not everyone can erect a new building with all the bells and whistles, but everyone should be able to take a step back, assess their current building and make small changes as required. There are a few key areas that can quickly and easily be assessed on farm.**

First things first, **feed and water.**

## **1. Feed space – is there enough of it?**

- Do adult cows have at least a head-locking yoke or 0.6m barrier space per cow?
- Is the feed barrier height/style negatively impacting on intakes?
- Is it too low and causing neck abrasions or are they able to comfortably reach all of the ration without unnecessary straining against solid structures?

## **2. Is water restricted at all?**

Adult cows should have at least 0.1m per cow of water space available, ideally over multiple drinkers, allowing totally unlimited water intake. This water should be fresh and clean, because stale or limited fresh water can restrict feed intakes, especially if on particularly dry straw-based rations.

## **3. How about stocking density/lying space?**

An over-stocked building can quickly become a limiting factor on growth rates, whether that be through limited feed and water space or the

increased disease challenge that comes with having multiple animals housed in the same air space. On the other hand, it's important to realise that an under-stocked building can restrict natural ventilation through lack of heat produced by insufficient number and/or size of animals. AHDB produce many recommendations for stocking density which vary massively depending on size and age of stock and are easily accessed online.

## **4. Is there adequate ventilation?**

Ventilation, although often over-looked, can have a huge impact on both the welfare and productivity of livestock. An adequately ventilated building will provide enough shelter from both rain and wind whilst allowing enough ventilation to facilitate the removal of exhaled pathogens and moisture.

Ideally, a well designed and adequately stocked building will allow winds to ventilate on gusty days whilst preventing any draughts or chills at cow height but encourage natural ventilation to occur on perfectly still days. The ins-and-outs of designing a building capable of ventilating in such a way is well beyond the scope of this article but that doesn't mean we can't easily assess your ventilation and make some simple fixes if need be:

- On still mornings or evenings does moisture settle on your cows' backs?
- What's your calf pneumonia rate like throughout winter?



One of the easiest ways to assess your building's ventilation is to light a smoke bomb and observe the smoke's behavior. Ideally the heat produced from the cows forces the smoke upwards and out through an open ridge or outlet and totally clears within two minutes.

If this isn't happening (or if smoke is left lingering in corners or even worse it rises and then cools and falls back down to cow height again) then there are a few simple things you may be able to do. It's often enough to allow the escape of exhaled pathogens and moisture so lifting the ridge or removing it totally will often fix most problems. Don't forget about inlets though, it's vital to allow the influx of fresh air in replace of the old stale air that's rising through the ridge. Inlets are best provided above cow height to prevent any draughts, and should be at least four times the area of the outlet space to allow for adequate

natural ventilation via the 'stack effect'.

### **5. Does your lighting and handling allow for easy inspection?**

Other aspects to consider are both lighting and handling facilities. There should be enough lighting to be able to inspect all cattle at any times, and handling facilities should allow safe and easy handling of all types of stock.

If you have any questions about your own beef buildings, how you might improve feed intakes, ventilation or handling facilities or, even better, if you intend to erect a new building then please do get in touch. We would relish the opportunity to have a chat with you regarding any of the above - we love a well ventilated building!

**[lambertleonardmay.co.uk](http://lambertleonardmay.co.uk)**  
**[info@llmvets.co.uk](mailto:info@llmvets.co.uk)**







# Product Guide

Winter is a wonderful time of the year, but with it comes the possibility of several illnesses within the herd. Here is our 'pick of the products' to keep animals healthy through these wintry months.



### **Bovilis Intranasal RSP Live**

Bovilis Intranasal RSP Live is a new vaccine which reduces the clinical signs of respiratory disease and viral shedding from infection, with Bovine Respiratory Syncytial Virus (BRSV) and Parainfluenza-3 Virus (Pi3V), which are the two key pathogens that cause pneumonia in calves. No other UK-licensed BRD vaccine can be administered earlier in life. This is a significant benefit because the sooner these vulnerable young calves can be protected from viral pneumonia and the permanent lung damage it causes, the better their potential lifetime productivity.



### **Eprecis®**

Eprecis® is a unique presentation of eprinomectin for use against internal and external cattle parasites. As it is an injectable, Eprecis allows you to deliver precise and efficient treatment to the right cow at the right time; with 89% bioavailability that reaches peak plasma levels within 2 days. Such Targeted Selective Treatment (TST) is also in line with the latest anthelmintic responsible use guidelines.



### **Multimin**

Multimin is a unique, prescription-only, four-in-one trace mineral injection to combat oxidative stress and its effects in cattle. Containing Zinc, Copper, Maganese and Selenium. Multimin is designed to be administered during - or in advance of - periods of high demand in dairy and beef cattle, such as breeding, calving, weaning and vaccination. Trace minerals are crucial to helping combat oxidative stress to the body's immune system. Many factors including poor oral bioavailability from feed and forage, oral antagonists, variable intake and high excretion under stress can lead to inadequate levels of available trace minerals.



### **Ubac**

Ubac is a unique subunit vaccine to stimulate active immunity against Streptococcus Uberis. It is indicated for active immunisation of healthy cows and heifers to reduce the incidence of clinical intramammary infection caused by Streptococcus Uberis, to reduce the somatic cell count in Streptococcus Uberis positive quarter milk samples; and to reduce milk production losses caused by Streptococcus Uberis intramammary infections.



### **Vigophos**

Vigophos is a combination of B12 (Cyanocobalamin) and an organic source of Phosphorus (Butafosfan). The medicine is licensed for the treatment of secondary ketosis in cows because of the effects on metabolism of the constituent molecules. Vitamin B12 is an integral part of several enzymes involved in energy production pathways and is important for normal hemopoiesis. Phosphorus is vital at all stages of energy production due to the phosphorylation of intermediate molecules in metabolic pathways and the role of Andenosine Triphosphate (ATP) in energy transfer. Vigophos can be used in livestock where additional metabolic efficiency would be beneficial.

**If you would like any more information on the above products, please contact your practice and discuss with your vet, to make sure they would be the right fit for your herd.**





# Orphan Lambs

As our fields and sheds are becoming awash with the sound of bleating lambs, unfortunately some of these youngsters may end up as orphans for a number of unavoidable reasons.



**The first 24 hours are crucial in a lamb's life and a lamb that doesn't get a first suckle from its dam needs colostrum as soon as possible.**

If viable the dam can be milked, however if it is not possible colostrum supplement products should be used, as a lamb needs approximately 200ml/kg within the first few hours of life. Ideally within the first 30 minutes, the navel should also be immersed in iodine. Following the first 24 hours, lambs may then be fed from commercially available lamb milk replacer – however it is vital to remember that 'little and often' feeding regimes are better for lambs than large, infrequent feeds.

A common issue with bottle fed lambs is abomasal bloat, which is a result of *Sarcina* bacteria

increasing the production of lactic acid and leading to an increase in gas-producing bacteria in the gut. A yoghurt recipe originally formulated in Norway, has been shown to be greatly beneficial in preventing the development of abomasal bloat in lambs. This yoghurt milk can be fed from day 5 of a lamb's life, with a milk replacer fed on days 2 – 5.

- Orphan and hypothermic lambs will best benefit from a heat lamp to keep warm, especially in particularly cold weather.
- Lambs that appear weak may need additional help from an injection of glucose into the abdomen (intraperitoneal injection).





### Yoghurt milk recipe:

3 litres warm water

1kg replacement calf milk powder

200ml acidophilus yoghurt

### Directions:

- Pour the warm water (40°C) into a 9 litre bucket
- Add the milk powder and mix well
- Mix in the yoghurt and cover with a lid or sheets of newspaper. Keep the mixture warm for the next few hours – if the air temperature is too cold, the milk will take a long time to ferment
- The yoghurt should set within 8-12 hours and may have a soft crust on top with some liquid at the bottom, or it may resemble thick commercial yoghurt
- Top up with cold water to the 8 litre mark on the bucket and mix, to feed directly to lambs
- Depending on the number of lambs, you can also add the yoghurt mix to the daily ration at a rate of 1:7 (ie. One-part yoghurt to seven-parts milk)
- The yoghurt mixture will keep in the fridge for up to 7 days, if stored in sterilised containers. Remove 200ml of the liquid yogurt as the starter for the next batch.
- Always remember to offer forage and creep feed to aid in the development of the lambs rumen, and ensure free access to water

### Cormac White, FarmVets South West

Cormac graduated from UCD in 2015 and has since worked in Egypt and New Zealand. He has a strong interest in calf and sheep health, as well as herd and flock health planning and the boundary between human and animal diseases.

[thefarmvets.co.uk](http://thefarmvets.co.uk)  
**01278 663399**





# Unpacking by Ami Sawran

Although it may feel like it has only just finished, it won't be long before we are all preparing for another unpacking season.

As it pays to be prepared, here is a rundown of our steps towards unpacking success. Paying particular attention to point 2 (and getting your plasma drive booked in early) will certainly give you one less thing to think about next time around.



## 1. Getting Kitted Out

Something that can be genuinely life-saving is having a birthing kit prepared, to be grabbed at a moment's notice. In that kit you may have medicines ranging from vitamins to pain-relief and from anti-inflammatory to antibiotic. Your vet may not be able to dispense these medications 'as and when' without a visit, as they must certify your animals 'under their care'. Ensure you have had a consultation with your vet, so they can advise you on which medicines to keep on the premises, for when you need them most. As for what else should feature in the kit, consider:

- Small lambing ropes
- Lambing snare (protected wire to help safely align the head), disinfectant, clean water, scissors, towels
- Clamp for a bleeding umbilicus
- Oesophageal feeding tube (such as for lambs), long-armed gloves, iodine for naval dipping, lots of lubricant (lube bottles with a long spout are most useful)
- A headtorch
- Your vet's telephone number
- Plastic sheeting (in case of a uterine prolapse, you can keep it clean on the sheet until a vet arrives). If you are unsure how to safely use ropes and a snare, ask for a demonstration from your vet beforehand

## 2. Consider Plasma Banking

Though we hope that all cria will be born fighting fit, and that the hembra will have enough good quality colostrum for them, it sometimes transpires that the cria does not get enough colostrum, or the colostrum is not of sufficient quality to convey vital antibodies to diseases. In this case, a cria may have failure of passive transfer (FPT) of immunity. FPT cria are best treated with an intravenous infusion of plasma that has been spun down from the blood of vaccinated, healthy, usually male alpacas on your farm. Plasma is also indicated for premature cria, after a difficult birth, and in cases of mismothering. Ask your vet if they can provide this service prior to unpacking, to allow you to stockpile an adequate supply of frozen plasma, which can be stored for up to 2 years.



### 3. The back-up plan

If plasma banking is not available to you, there are still ways you can supplement cria if they are not feeding appropriately. Cria must consume 10-20% of their bodyweight in the first 24 hours of life (over two hourly feeds), with a golden window for absorption of vital antibodies in the first 8 hours. Keep track of the cria's weight from the day of birth onwards. If it appears the cria is not getting this from the hembra (sometimes indicated by vocalising, increased attempts to feed, or not swallowing during nursing), then you may need to bottle, or even tube feed as an alternative. Goats colostrum and milk is the most common alternative, though if you are sourcing this from a farm, please ensure that it is from a Johne's disease free source. Again, if you are unsure how to safely tube feed, ask for a demonstration ahead of time.

### 4. When to call a vet

Though many camelid owners are very experienced with unpacking, it's worth knowing when veterinary intervention is required. As we expect most unpacking to occur between 10am and 2pm, anything outside that time is worth investigating. Keep in mind once the hembra is actively labouring, some progress should be made every 15 minutes, and cria should be delivered within 45 minutes. If, for example, only one leg is visible for more than 15 minutes, this warrants gentle investigation with a well-lubricated, gloved hand. Check whether the other leg is simply tucked up against the pelvis and holding up the process – can this be carefully brought round, guarding the delicate walls of the uterus from the foot? Is the head within reach? Labour cannot progress without the head being in position; upright and between the feet. Shoulder lock is the most common cause of cria becoming stuck, which can require gentle rotation of the cria. If you do not feel able to correct the cria's position, this may need to be done under epidural by your vet. If you are unsure of whether you have a back or front foot, remember that the first two joints of the foot bend the same way on the forelimbs (making a 'U' shape), and opposite ways on hindlimbs (making a 'Z' shape). If you have a cria coming backwards (back legs, or rump first), it may be sensible to speak with your vet, as backwards delivery is more difficult and can compromise the cria's breathing.

# DID YOU KNOW



## Unpacking

the alpaca birthing process

## Plasma banking

blood is taken from a donor and is separated into its 2 components, red blood cells and plasma

## Cria

a baby alpaca, that usually weighs at least 6kg when born

## Hembra

Adult, female alpaca





If you are sure that labour is occurring but the hembra isn't open normally, she may have a uterine torsion, which requires veterinary intervention. If you feel that everything is now in the correct position, back away and allow the hembra to progress naturally – pulling on a cria can cause damage to the uterus and vaginal tissues, or bring about a prolapse. If ever in doubt, speak with your vet, who will be able to guide you – the camelid reproductive tract is fragile, so it is always better to err on the side of caution.

### 5. The Aftermath

After the cria is delivered, check membranes and mucus are cleared from the nose. Do not be tempted to 'swing' the cria or hang it over a gate – this compresses the lungs. Place the cria so it is lying on its sternum (breast bone) and rub the sides of the chest with a towel to stimulate breathing. Cleanly and carefully check for any damage (tears or bruising) to the vaginal tissue – this may require veterinary examination, or the administration of antibiotics and pain relief. If you do note damage and excess bleeding, applying pressure with clean, damp gauze can help before your vet arrives. Check also for a rare twin. Don't be tempted to pull on the placenta just yet – this should be passed in its entirety within 6 hours of birth. If this has not happened, or you have checked it and it is not entire (it is essentially a sack that envelopes the whole cria, so shouldn't have jagged pieces missing), then you may need your vet to check the hembra and potentially administer medicines to help her pass the remnants.

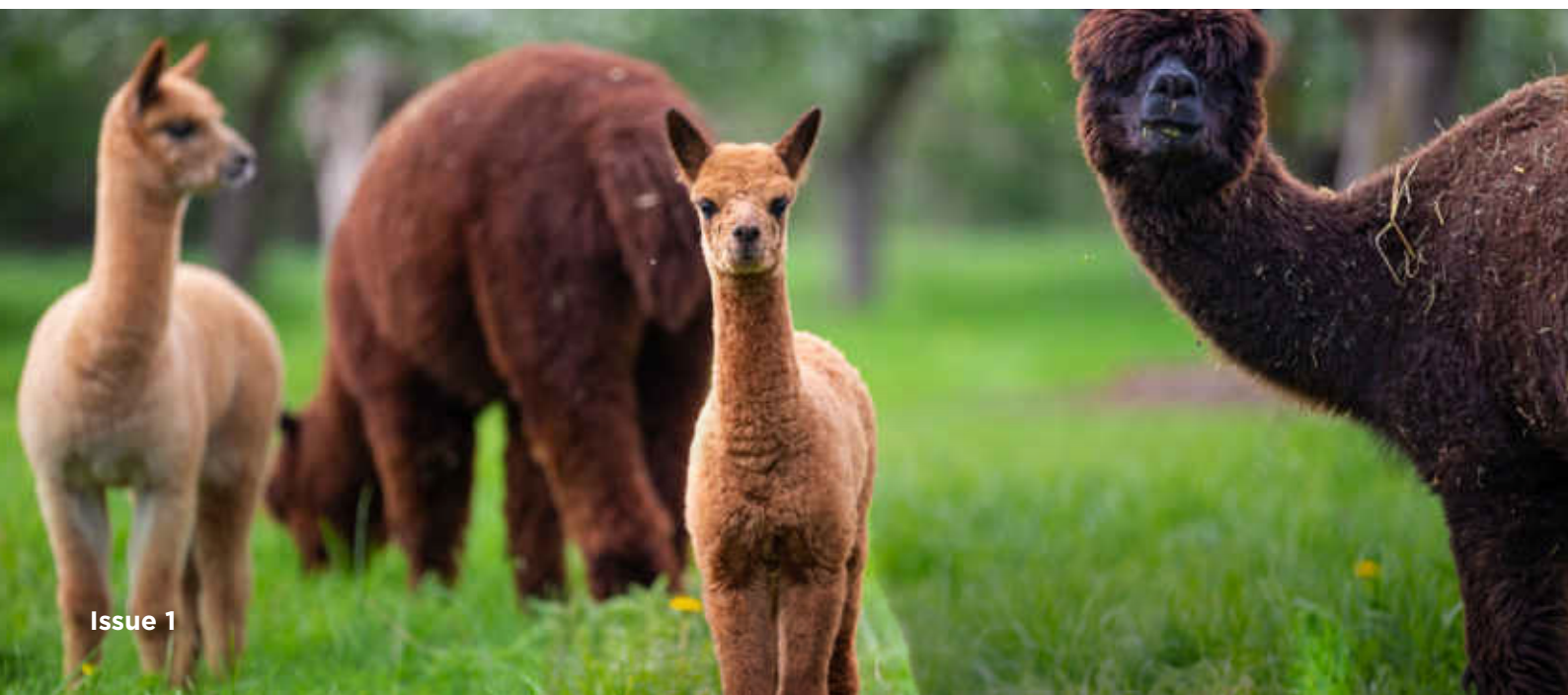
Preparation, as always, is key to the smooth running of the unpacking season, but in the event that you are unsure about how to handle unpacking, from labour to lifelong care, don't hesitate to contact your veterinarian to put a bespoke birthing and health plan in place. Here's to a productive and stress-free season ahead – good luck!

[westpointfarmvets.co.uk](http://westpointfarmvets.co.uk)



Ami Sawran BVSc MRCVS

Ami Sawran is the head of the Small Ruminant and Camelid Working Group for Westpoint Farm Vets, and lead of VetPartners Camelid Special Interest Working Group.











# On Farm Health and Safety Training

## TB Testers with Yellow Wellies

Sadly, we are all aware of how dangerous on farm work can be.

Farmers Weekly has previously reported that “Agriculture has the poorest record of any industry in Britain”, according to the Health and Safety Executive. Some 33 people were killed in agriculture across the country in 2017/18 – 18 times the all-industry fatal injury rate, according to the latest figures.



**A major safety campaign to reduce farm fatalities and accidents was launched at the LAMMA agricultural machinery event in Birmingham in 2019. Co-ordinated by the Farm Safety Partnership, which represents 38 farming-related organisations, the campaign ran through 2019 and focussed on different aspects of farm safety – including child safety, livestock handling and working at height. More was planned in 2020 but this was curtailed by Covid19 and 2021 is in the planning stage.**

Joining the mission to try and keep reducing the number of accidents on farm, we hosted a one day training session for our TB testing team from LLM and Willows Vet Groups .

The session was run by Yellow Wellies, a Farm Safety Foundation that was established by the NFU in 2014. The ultimate aim of the foundation is to have zero avoidable deaths on our farms.

The aim of the session was for our team to:

1. Understand the importance of protecting and preserving their physical and mental wellbeing at work
2. Understand the risks and hazards of dealing with livestock for TB testing

3. Assess a farming visit/task, identify potential risks and implement preventative measures
4. Understand what constitutes good handling facilities and how they can keep you safe
5. Appreciate how to build personal resilience and offer support to those you come into contact with

The feedback from the day, run by Steph Berkeley and Olivia Turnock-Rogers, was very complimentary from the group, especially with regard to the content and the knowledge of the trainers.

Some of the team's take home messages included:

- Improve my communication with the farmer and have a plan of the test before, as well as handling facilities
- Improve my risk assessments. I'll speak more to the farmer, have a pre test discussion with the farmer and prompt a risk assessment in my head

For more information on how to improve health and safety on your farm, visit [yellowwellies.org](https://yellowwellies.org)

# Responsible use of Antimicrobials

by Tim Potter



**The concerns over antimicrobial (antibiotic) resistance in human medicine are frequently reported in the media, and with this amount of attention the use of these products in animals remains under scrutiny. The recent announcement that sales of antibiotics for use in food-producing animals have continued to fall over the last year is testimony to the work that has already been done to ensure responsible use, but we still have a way to go.**

The term “responsible use” is frequently used, but what does it actually mean? **“As little as possible, as much as necessary”** is one phrase been used to describe the approach to responsible use of antimicrobial drugs on farm. Antimicrobial drugs are just one of the available tools for managing disease in livestock and it is essential they are used alongside good husbandry, biosecurity and preventative medicines such as vaccination. In the face of a disease outbreak there may well be a place for antimicrobial drugs for immediate management, but it is important to identify the cause of the disease and formulate a management plan which will help reduce the risk of recurrence.

Antimicrobials should not be seen in isolation from the disciplines of animal management, animal welfare, husbandry, hygiene, nutrition and vaccination. Diseases must be controlled to reduce the need for antimicrobial drug use, and they can only be controlled successfully through a holistic approach. Prevention is always going to be better than cure; avoiding the need for the use of antimicrobials will be better for the animal in terms of health and welfare, better for the producer in terms of the economics of their business and better for society as a whole by reducing the potential risk of the emergence of antimicrobial resistance.

One of the cornerstones of responsible use is ensuring products are used correctly; it is important that producers always use medicines in accordance with the guidelines given to them by their veterinary surgeon and provided with the medicines. Producers should ensure that they always give the appropriate amount for the animal’s weight and should not be tempted to under-dose. It may appear to save money in the short term but will frequently work out more costly as there is an increased risk of treatment failure. Similarly always complete the entire course as it is prescribed; missing out that final dose because the animal is seemingly recovered increases the risk of the disease reoccurring; which will require another course of treatment.





Another key principle of the responsible use of antimicrobials is using the correct drug for the disease

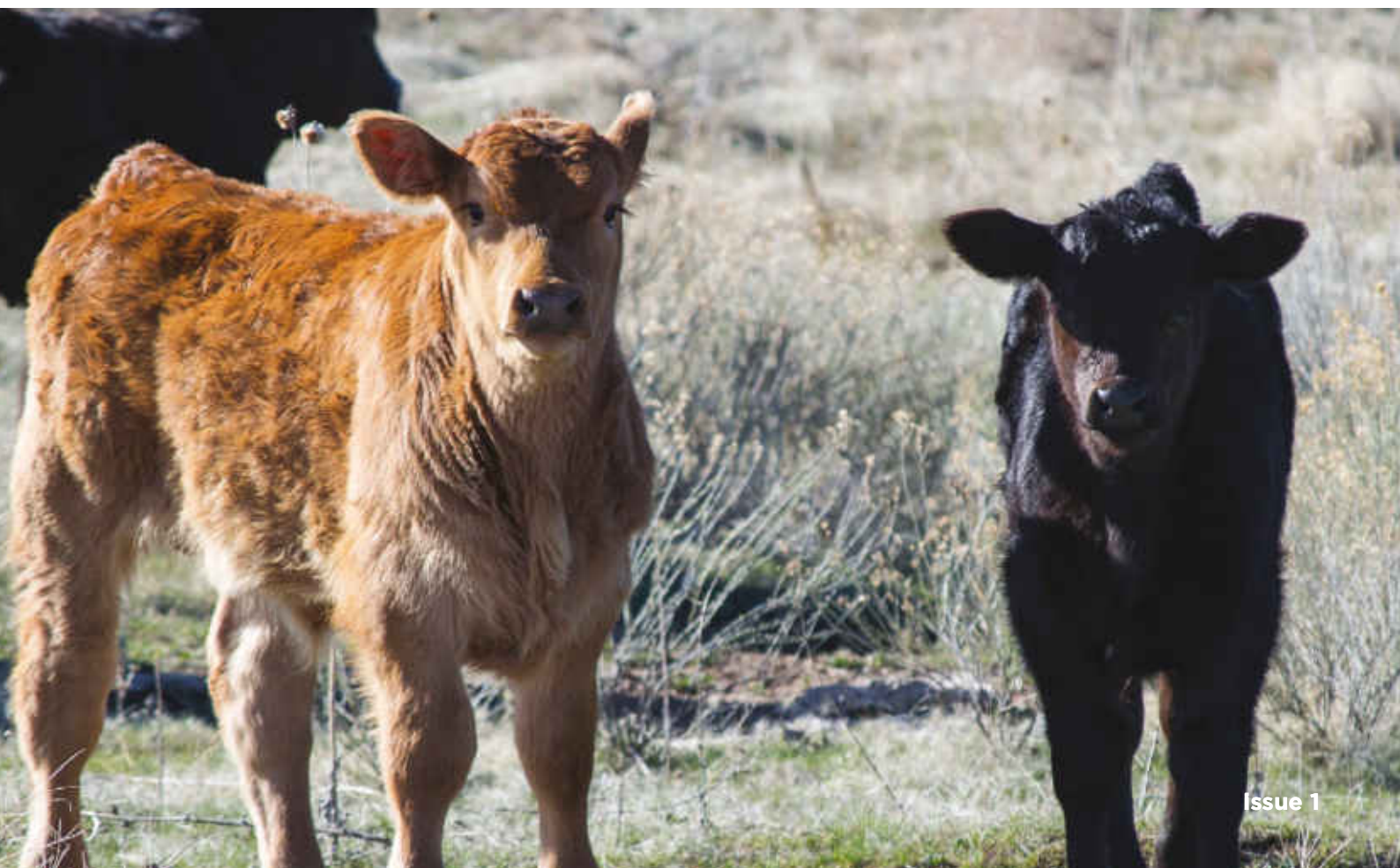
condition. Milk samples from clinical cases of mastitis or cows with high somatic cell counts can be used to identify which pathogens treatments should be targeted against and which control measures should be implemented. For diseases such as pneumonia there are a number of vaccines available which can help prevent the disease and by using diagnostic tests it is possible to come up with bespoke vaccination plans to reduce the risk of the disease occurring.

Antimicrobial drugs are an important tool in the treatment of disease and it is essential that everyone involved in their use works to ensure they are used responsibly to help preserve their availability and effectiveness. The responsible use of antimicrobials means reducing the need for them through a holistic approach to disease control, and when they are required ensuring that they are used correctly.



#### **Dr Tim Potter BVetMed PhD MRCVS**

Tim graduated from the Royal Veterinary College in 2003, followed by a farm animal residency. In 2011 Tim was part of the group which created the National Youngstock Association, to help promote best practice in calf rearing.





# EU exit - what do new UK rules for overseas workers mean for Agriculture?

Free movement of labour between the UK and EU ended on 31 December. The UK Government has started to operate a new points-based immigration system. This system treats migrant workers from the EU and rest of the world the same and there looks to be some challenges ahead if the government don't change some of the rules.



## How important are migrant workers to agriculture?

AHDB reported that:

- 20% of the permanent workforce in agriculture and horticulture were EU nationals
- In addition to this, 95%+ of the circa 60-70,000 seasonal, casual and gang labour were from the EU
- 40% of the food manufacturing workforce, were migrant workers. This include areas as diverse as livestock slaughter and meat processing to potato and vegetable packing

The conclusion was that the EU provided a pool of labour willing to undertake work that had become unattractive for UK nationals. Many of the roles filled were seen as physically demanding, dirty and with unsociable hours.

## Did COVID-19 see recruitment drive?

2020 was a challenging year in so many ways. Among the challenges has been the disruption COVID-19 restrictions caused to travel, which has limited the availability of migrant workers. Only a small proportion of the usual EU seasonal workforce were able and willing to take roles in the UK. According to a study 71%-86% managed to source

adequate labour last year from the UK labour force. With an end to furlough, and changes as we come out of Covid restrictions, will this be the case in the future? There will definitely still be demand for EU labour as before.

## How will roles in the food supply chain fit with the new migration system?

The new points based system offers a number of routes for migrant workers to enter the UK. Of these, the most relevant for year round work in the food supply chain is the skilled worker route. This awards points based on a set of criteria and a minimum of 70 points is required.

A key criterion here is the 'job at appropriate skill level' requirement. To qualify, the Government stipulates that jobs require at least level 3 qualifications (i.e. A level or equivalent). This would cover roles such as farmers, skilled agricultural trades, horticultural trades, farm managers and production managers in food processing.

There is potential for some jobs to attract bonus points due to their presence on the Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC) shortage occupation list. However, here, the food supply chain will be disappointed to see there are only a few sector



roles featured. Many in the industry would argue that these roles are skilled, even though they don't require high level qualifications.

#### **An extension to the Seasonal Workers Pilot**

Seasonal farm or horticultural worker and picking roles are not viewed by the Government as sufficiently skilled for the skilled worker route. However, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, the Government

announced a Seasonal Workers Pilot for 2021 with an expanded quota of 30,000 places. This represents an increase from the 10,000 quota of last year's pilot. The Government announcement acknowledges that the new quota will not be sufficient to fill all seasonal roles, highlighting that the recruitment of UK workers from 2020 should continue.

# Practice Spotlight: Oakwood Veterinary Group



**Based in Harleston and East Anglia, Oakwood veterinary Group has been providing veterinary care to farms for over 100 years. Covering a large geographical area, the team regularly visits clients in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire. The team boasts a good mix of experienced vets, some with post-graduate qualifications and an in-depth knowledge of their chosen species, and younger vets with recent training in newer techniques and ideas.**

The vets at Oakwood are actively encouraged to continue developing their knowledge and expertise through post-graduate training courses to ensure that they can offer farmers the very latest developments in farm animal veterinary medicine. The Oakwood team prides themselves on being at the heart of their farming community and taking a real interest in the issues that face the modern-day farmer.

It was, however, the extra-curricular assistance that landed Emily Craven, Ruminant Clinical Director at Oakwood and winner of the BVA Young Vet of the Year 2019. Emily stood out to the judges as she went above and beyond, balancing her full-time role at Oakwood whilst supporting a neighbouring practice that was facing a particularly difficult period. As Emily juggled the two jobs over 5 months, her nominator said that she “raised the teams’ spirit to no end”, and at a time when they were “really up against it”.

**Congratulations on your win as the British Veterinary Association, Young Vet of The Year. How did you feel when you heard that you’d been initially named as one of only three finalists?**

In all honesty, totally shocked. I am a typical perfectionist vet, complete with all of the associated anxieties and imposter syndrome. I have always worked to do my best for my

colleagues, clients and patients, with no real desire for recognition other than knowing we did our best and got the best possible outcome so being nominated was a complete surprise!

**What initially attracted you to join the Oakwood practice?**

I never actually planned to move to Oakwood - I started offering to cover some routines and somehow never left. It was the best decision I ever made to take on the routines as I get to work with a great team of people that are friends as much as colleagues and provide a great support network. Mixed practices don’t always get the credit they deserve, and despite never wanting to grace the small animal clinic, having the team around is really nice even if the farm vets do end up as the butt of all the jokes!

**What was it that made you want to specialise in farm veterinary medicine?**

I was always destined for a large animal practice (I think my college lecturers would testify to the trauma of getting me through small animal!) I love population medicine, health planning and preventative work and am inherently very pragmatic, so farm animal medicine suits my way of thinking and wants in life. Plus, I really do love cows!



### What part of your job do you find most rewarding?

Nothing beats a good outcome on farm, either for me or watching a less experienced vet achieve something tangible for the first time. Those moments are what we all get up for on a cold day.

### What is the most difficult?

Learning to deal with bad outcomes has been hard as we don't get lucky all the time. Losing animals will always hurt, and I feel that the day it doesn't is the day to retire, but learning not to dwell on it is a skill that takes time. Finding TB reactors is also incredibly painful as the implications are so widespread and the associated devastation is very hard to comprehend.

### Do you have any tips for our farmers through the wintry months?

Keep smiling - spring will come, daylight will be back, and the weather may always be better next year!

### Is there anything you wish people knew about farm veterinary medicine?

There's so much more to being a farm vet than sticking your hand up a cow's arse!, but on a cold day, it is the warmest place to be!

### Do you have a special interest in one area of veterinary medicine?

Officially it would be feet! I have ended up as the Origin working group lead and VetPartners Special Interest Group lead in mobility, but I do love health planning and official vet work as well. I also do a lot of export work.

### What do you think is the best thing about working at Oakwood?

The team! Any organisation is only as good as the individuals within it, and at Oakwood they're all pretty special!



Pictured is (left) Jo Malone, CEO of VetPartners and (right) Emily Craven, BVA winner

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# It's Not All Doom and Gloom

CATCH – which stands for ‘Community Action to Create Hope’ - is an award-winning registered charity in Leeds, West Yorkshire.



**Based in Harehills, the charity has been working with adults and young people in the community for over 10 years. Currently deemed one of the most impoverished areas in the UK, with over half of the local children living below the poverty line, CATCH is a lifeline for their visitors and volunteers.**

The charity's most recent venture was an educational farm which was built entirely from the ground up by volunteers in the area, and solely using donations from local businesses. The farm's first residents are 4 young Anglo Nubian goats, although there is already talk of adding to the herd due to their popularity with the entire team at CATCH.

Ashley Marshall, practice principal and veterinary surgeon at Westpoint Farm Vets, was there from the start. From guiding the team on the best breed to introduce to the farm; down to help, advice and guidance on how to raise the 'kids'.

## **How did the relationship with CATCH begin?**

Ash [PC Asad Razzaq MBE, founder of CATCH - but known to all as Ash] contacted Westpoint through Twitter about a collaboration in setting up a small farm on their premises to be looked after by young people in the Harehills area of Leeds. This area has a reputation for a lot of serious crime and has a high level of poverty. They were looking at goats to start off with and wanted some veterinary advice and input.

## **How long have you been working with the CATCH team?**

We first went across to meet Ash and the team at CATCH in August, to have a look at the building that was being constructed by the young people, and to figure out how we could help with what they were trying to achieve. We had a look around and stayed for a chat afterwards, where they treated us to the most delicious homemade samosas!

## **What made you feel compelled to work with this particular charity?**

Vets have traditionally been part of the community, but as things modernise our relationship with the local area has changed. I felt really passionately about giving back to something nearby, where we could be physically involved on a regular basis and help to be a part of something that is changing lives and helping the local people. The things these young people have gone through and overcome was truly inspiring and really made me re-evaluate my own struggles and perceptions.

## **How have you supported the charity so far?**

So far, I have been out with groups of volunteers to look at goats, and help them to make the final decision on a group of 4 young Nubians which moved in a couple of months ago. I was there to make sure they arrived safely and have made sure that they are fully vaccinated. I also organised for them to spend a morning at Askham Bryan College looking at building design and discussing the best ways to feed and manage the goats. It was a great privilege to be invited





to their launch event for the SuperStars App as a representative for Westpoint Farm Vets, along with other companies and influential people, such as Leeds FC, Wickes and Leeds City Council. The app records hours volunteered at CATCH and the young people can work towards prizes and rewards. We are also sponsoring a reward for young people, that is based on a set of completed tasks with the goats.

**What has been the most rewarding aspect of working with the charity?**

Seeing the reaction of both the younger and adult team, to the goats has been really wonderful. The goats are bringing so much joy and are really helping people, some of whom are from violent pasts, in learning how to care for and look after these animals. On a personal level, being exposed to a group of people that I only read about or see on the news has been an experience that has brought me back to earth and made me check my privilege.

CATCH is incredible. Ash and his team provide a safe and stable place for young people to grow and develop. They work with local companies to provide life experiences and opportunities for people that would commonly become involved in crime and violence.

For more information or if you too would like to help visit: [CATCHleeds.co.uk](https://catchleeds.co.uk) or call **0113 235 0614**



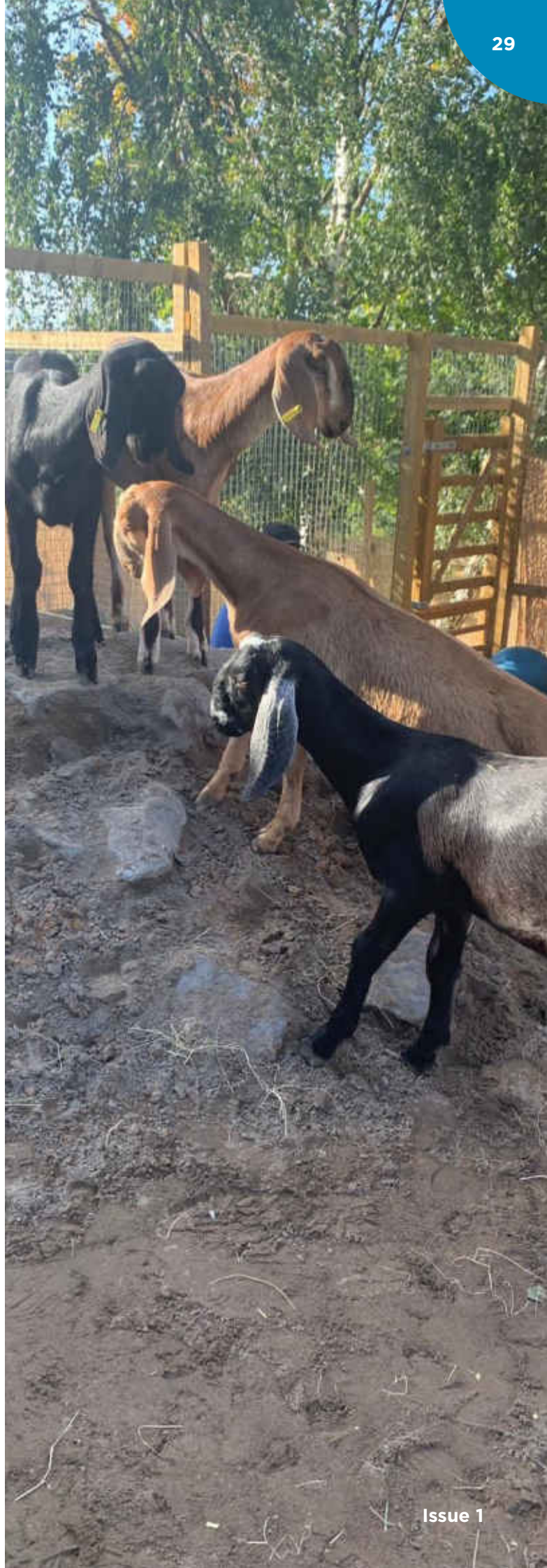
@CATCHLeeds



@CATCHLeeds



@catchleeds





# In the news...

With so much going on in the world right now, 2020/2021 has had many serious issues to report. However, there is always the need for a little humour, and our porky pals never fail to entertain us. We're sure you won't be 'boar-ed' by these..



## Hogging the Spotlight: One Pig's Claim to Fame

Greek news reporter Lazos Mantikos, was trying to report live on serious flooding in the town of Kineta. His broadcast was repeatedly interrupted due to a sizable sow, that was chasing Lazos and nipping at his 'hocks'. As it cut back to the studio the presenters could be seen doubled over, snorting hysterically. Some might say they were 'hogging' the laughs.



## Pigs in Space!

Not muppets - but real pigs are on the moon right now - I kid you not! Nit-pickers would insist on calling them tardigrades; tiny, pig-like invertebrates, but believe me, it's a pig Jim - but not as you know it! They are Moss Piglets, the most indestructible creatures on the planet. They can survive cooking, drowning, freezing, squishing, line-dancing and radiation. So, when the Israeli Luna probe crashed into the moon scattering piglets everywhere, scientists are in no doubt that they are still alive and thriving!



## Party-Going Pigs?

Drug dealers were forced to crack open their piggy banks after wild boar in Tuscany sniffed out £17,000 of cocaine. The feral hogs destroyed and partly devoured the class A drug which was discovered strewn across the Valdichiana valley. The destruction of the stash by the passel of hogs led to the incarceration of four wanted felons. Italian police have praised the pigs, although some were left disputing that the criminals were just trying to 'bring home the bacon'.

## First Aid Pigs

Pigs may not always wear a cape but there are numerous tales of humans owing their lives to their fearless fatteners.

Take Lulu for example; this courageous critter took matters into her own trotters when her owner had a heart attack. Lulu rushed out of the house (definitely qualifies as an essential journey) and lay down in the road to attract attention – she could have become pressed ham at any moment – but she only had thoughts for her beloved owner.

## Algie the Pink Floyd Pig

Pink Floyd were famous for flying huge, inflatable pigs during their concerts – but “Algie” (their firstborn) unwittingly created a national incident – and publicity beyond Pink Floyd’s wildest dreams!

Algie, a forty foot helium balloon was to be flown over Battersea Power Station for their new “Animals” album. Health and Safety was paramount and a trained marksman was employed to shoot Algie out of the skies if he misbehaved – however the marksman neglected to turn up for day two of the stunt and Algie took this opportunity to break free. He quickly rose to thirty thousand feet, entered the path of aircraft and upset several airline pilots. Many flights at Heathrow Airport were cancelled before Algie voluntarily made his descent that night.

# VetPartners Farm Practices

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