November 2026 Newsletter

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CROSS COUNTIES FARM VETS

CCN in Cattle and Sheep:

What is CCN?

CCN is short for Cerebrocortical Necrosis. The disease is also know as Polioencephalomalacia or Thiamine Deficiency. CCN is an acute neurological disease which if left untreated, can result in death. While all ages can be affected, it is more common in cattle between 6-18 months old and sheep under the age of 1 year. The disease is usually sporadic, but outbreaks can occur, with greater number of cases happening in summer and autumn. We have recently seen a few cases across the practice.

What causes CCN?

The causes of CCN are not yet fully understood. In cattle, it has been associated with calves that have been on poor, dry summer pastures for some time, animals with a high content of sulphur in their diet and those on a high concentrate diet. In sheep, CCN is most commonly seen 2 weeks after being moved to lush pasture or in lambs on poor pasture in late summer. A rapid change from a forage-based diet to a high concentrate diet can predispose to disease. These changes in diet can lead to an increase in the thiaminase-producing bacteria (the enzymes that breakdown Thiamine). Thiamine (also known as Vitamin B1) is essential for glucose metabolism that supplies the brain with energy. Thiamine deficiency results in brain swelling and necrosis of the cerebral cortex.

What are the clinical signs?

- Aimless wandering, incoordination or circling
- Rigid stance or arched back
- Recumbency
- 'Stargazing' – head pushed back and up
- Nystagmus (involuntary eye movement)
- Paddling movement of the limbs
- Blindness
- If left untreated it can result in a coma and death.

CCN can look like other neurological conditions so if you suspect it, please contact us to discuss the case further.

What is the treatment?

Treatment for CCN is more likely to be successful if it recognised and treated early.

- Vitamin B1 injection. This can be given intravenously and intramuscularly. Animals may respond to 1 dose if caught early but it often needs to be given up to 5 times, every 3 hours.
- Steroids – This helps reduce the swelling in the brain.
- Supportive care – Ensure the animal is in a well bedded pen with access to water and forage. Remove concentrates if currently being fed them

How to prevent it?

- Ensure diets have adequate levels of fibre, especially if moving onto lush pasture
- Avoid feeds and water with a high sulphur content where possible or if needed, introduce these slowly
- Take care when transitioning animals from a high forage diet to a high concentrate diet. Slowly introduce concentrates before increasing them.

Wishing Alex all the very best in her next chapter!

After 10 years with the practice, we're saying a fond farewell to Alex as she moves on from her role as Clinical Director to take on an exciting new challenge as a BDD. Over the past decade, Alex has been a huge part of the team, sharing her knowledge, dedication and passion for farm animal health and welfare with both colleagues and our farming clients. She has played an important role in shaping the practice into what it is today, and we're incredibly grateful for everything she has contributed over the years.

While we're sad to see her go, we're also incredibly proud to see her take this next step in her career. Alex, thank you for the hard work, support and memories over the last 10 years. You've been a valued part of the team, and although you'll be greatly missed, we're excited to see what the future holds for you!

Good luck in your new role, Alex





Pneumonia in cattle



As we are starting to bring cattle back into housing across the counties it is worth looking ahead at some of the risks this may bring, such as respiratory disease. In this article we will look at what can be done both as prevention and in the face of an outbreak.

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs which leads to a large amount of inflammation and damage leading to difficulty breathing and if left untreated, death in some cases. In the majority of pneumonia cases a primary viral pathogen such as IBR, BVD, RSV or PI3 cause the initial damage and weakens the immune system. Following the initial damage bacteria such as Pasteurella and Mycoplasma will then invade the cells resulting in secondary infection and more severe disease.

However, pneumonia control is about more than just the diseases present as there are two other main areas which influence pneumonia risk.

The three main risk factors of pneumonia:

Disease challenge:
IBR, RSV, PI3, BVD, Pasteurella, Mannheimia, Mycoplasma and many more

Stress:
Movement/transport
Housing
Diet change
Castration/disbudding
Weaning
Management changes.

Environment:
Weather
Ventilation
Bedding
Stocking density

Whilst you cannot prevent all risk factors of pneumonia there is lots you can do to reduce the risks on your farm:

Diseases present:

Perform sampling to learn which diseases are present on your farm

Vaccinating prior to risk periods such as housing (there are many vaccines available so please speak to your vet about the best product for your situation).

Stress:

Whilst many of the stress risk factors can't be avoided actions can be taken to minimise the impact. Minimising multiple stressors happening simultaneously, for example delaying weaning until after housing or vice versa.

Environment:

Ensure housing is fit for purpose, with good ventilation that is appropriate for the age of the animals.

Keep an eye out for condensation or cobwebs on roofs and walls, ammonia smells or stale air and cattle choosing to crowd around one specific area.

Stocking density should be calculated and based on the size of animals, ensuring they are not overstocked.

Our team are always more than happy to come out and look at a calf shed and give some advice on stocking and ventilation.

In an outbreak the most important thing is to act early. If you notice one or more cattle with respiratory signs or becoming significantly unwell early treatment and separation is key in recovery and reducing spread through the group. Even a mild pneumonia can cause scarring which reduces growth rates and production.

If you are experiencing a pneumonia outbreak, please contact your vet promptly to allow for identification of the problem and appropriate treatment. A full plan and review can then be conducted if required this will cover treatment plans, vaccination and a housing assessment.

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Badger Vaccination Field Force

defra
Department for Environment
Food and Rural Affairs

Get involved

TheBadger Vaccination Field Forceisdeliveringfarmer-led, fully-funded badger vaccination atscaleacrosspartsof England. The goal is to create a healthierbadgerpopulation that is less susceptible to contractingandspreadingbTB, ultimately reducing the risk to cattle.

The project is managed by Farmcare Solutions, with recruitment of local Delivery Partners from the farming community to assist with vaccination activities.

Participation is free for farmers and landowners, with the only requirement being provision of access to your land.

Farmers, landowners and members of the local farming community can also register as Delivery Partners, and will be paid to undertake vaccination activities.

For more information and to register your interest, scan the QR code to visit our website



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Badger Vaccination Field Force

Find out more

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Landowners

Formore information and to register your interest as a landowner or occupier:

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Delivery Partners

Formore informationand to register as a Delivery Partner, to assist with delivery of vaccination activities:

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