

April 2026

Bluetongue virus, to vaccinate or not?

We are receiving many questions about “should I vaccinate for bluetongue?” There has been a lot of speculation about its origins etc but the bottom line is Bluetongue is in Ireland and going by the experience of England over the past 2 years it will spread this year. Some estimate it can move 20km per day in certain conditions.

“Is it serious?” yes it can cause cows to lose early embryos so prove to be barren, or calves born with defects, especially the brain and they are known as “dummy” calves and are no good. In later pregnancy the calf may be aborted or it may survive. It may also cause

- fevers,
- crusty noses,
- lameness,
- dullness or depression,
- respiratory distress
- mouth lesions.

Although it seems to be mild in dry stock this could potentially be a problem in animals working hard, eg lactating cows.

We are strongly advising clients to vaccinate their stock for bluetongue, especially the higher risk groups.

Remember the vaccine can only be bought from the vets after a licence has been obtained from DAERA for its use. All animals which receive the vaccine must be recorded and the details passed to DAERA after vaccination.

For advice on the vaccine or to get the licence application contact our office.

A very good webinar on the effects of bluetongue can be found here:

[Bluetongue Webinar with vet Alan Murphy - YouTube](#)

https://youtu.be/chy75DEkMF0?si=vs292xb4d_X3oBww

Coccidiosis and Nematodirus in Lambs

Every year we see flocks in our area hit by the deadly combination of this worm and parasite. These lambs generally become very ill very quickly and are hard to cure, some are just found dead, while others have depression with scour. Watching for the first “dirty tail” is sometimes too late. Please ensure your lambs are adequately protected so as to prevent expensive losses or a drastic reduction in thrive. For Nematodirus Lambs should be wormed with a wormer which is active against Nematodirus (not all wormers are, usually a white drench is used). Lambs should also be treated for Coccidiosis usually around 6 weeks old depending on the farm situation. Speak to a Parklands vet for more information, as each farm is different and treating at the wrong time may mean the dose is lost.

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Turnout Checklist

Hopefully it won't be that long until turnout, we need to be thinking now about the things which need done to prepare for this.

1. Are all cattle vaccinated for **Blackleg, Blacks disease and Tetanus** etc. using a Clostridial vaccine like Covexin or Bravoxin?
2. Are they vaccinated for lungworm using **Huskvac**?
3. There are also effective worm control strategies available using drugs alone.
4. If we use a product like **Cydectin LA** correctly it can keep the cost of the dose the same as last year. Cydectin LA lasts for 120 days on average in the animal. If we treat all animals in the group at once within 3 weeks after turnout and keep them on the same pasture for the year without introducing untreated animals, then by the time the dose wears off, there are no worms left on the pasture and the cattle are safe to graze for the rest of the season.
5. Get all your breeding stock vaccinated for **Lepto** and **BVD** and perhaps **Salmonella** so that they are fully protected before Bulling against these causes of abortion.
6. Do you have **Botulism** in your area or where the cattle graze, consider vaccinating for this too?
7. For cows we need to protect against **Tetany**. The safest way to do this is by using the Magnesium bolus, however many people use lick buckets.
8. Some farms need to vaccinate calves against **pneumonia**, especially **Pasteurella** pneumonia at turnout. For more advice contact a Parklands vet.

Tetany or Staggers

Don't forget to protect stock against Tetany after turnout, especially cows in poor body condition or sucking big/greedy calves. Tetany is brought on by stress, or any type of change: change of diet e.g. turnout or change onto new grass, change in weather especially from settled to cold/wet weather,

any type of stress factor like handling/moving. It is due to a fall in the level of Magnesium in the blood which if left unchecked will result in rapid death. Animals are usually found flat out and are paddling their legs as in the picture, the body tends to be quite rigid with the head back. Magnesium is not stored in the body so constant daily intake is essential. We find the boluses are the surest method of preventing Tetany but licks, meal (which increases energy and has minerals in it) and even grass dusting can also be used. Discuss it with Parklands.

Prevent Pneumonia at Grass

While pneumonia is more common in housed animals during the winter, it can occur in animals at grass, particularly young calves. Last year saw a number of calves taking acute Pasteurella type pneumonia in the hot weather around May/June. The causes can be varied including lungworm, bacterial and viral infections. To minimise the impact ensure all calves receive adequate colostrum in first 4 hours of life (up to 3 litres depending on the size of the calf). Where possible keep younger more vulnerable animals in the most sheltered fields and during stressful weather aim to check them at least twice a day. Vaccination with an appropriate vaccine could prevent this problem. Prompt treatment of sick animals with long acting antibiotics plus an anti-inflammatory will maximise the chance of successful treatment.