



# Farm Vet News

January 2021



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*We wish all our clients a Happy and Safe New Year!*

## ♪ “You Need Hands” ♪ – Barry Ewens

*The role of the Farm Department Veterinary Technician is, to say the least, a varied one. With skill sets ranging from taking blood samples to mobility and body condition scoring to even occasionally milking cows and all that lies between, no two days are ever the same for the Vet Tech.*

We launched the Vet Tech service in 2013 with the objective of offering an affordable service specifically designed to be of benefit to our livestock farmers. From humble beginnings only being able to offer a handful of services it has steadily grown in to a busy and thriving part of our business, loved by farmer and smallholder alike.

Of the many Vet Tech services now available to our clients there is one which stands head and shoulders above the rest as the most requested and, without doubt, the most appreciated and that is “Helping Hands”.

The “Helping Hands” initiative was instigated by Barry, our Lead Vet Tech, who, having come from a dairy farming background, was more than aware that a farm runs on the barest minimum of staff and that at certain times in the farming calendar it would be incredibly useful to have an extra person around to help make the task in hand run smoother, especially critical times like during a TB test where another good person helping in the yard or working the crush could be the difference between a good day and a disastrous one! Barry was also aware of how difficult it could be at times to find an experienced person who was happy to come along and help out for just the hour or two they were needed the most and so it was from that thinking that “Helping Hands” was born.

These days “Helping Hands” has become so much more than just assisting farmers during their TB test; it has come to

encompass many other instances where an extra pair of experienced hands is greatly appreciated. Our Vet Techs have found themselves doing a myriad of on farm tasks under the umbrella of “Helping Hands”, from holding an alpaca while the owner trims feet, feeding calves, loading cattle on lorries, even checking round stock while the farmer’s having a day off – the list is endless.



The “Helping Hands” service is ever growing as both Practice and client find more and more ways to make use of this incredibly useful and flexible Vet Tech service. So if there are times when you feel you could possibly be struggling, **don’t**; pick up the phone and give Ashley a call on 07393 765672 and see what he can do to help you.

## Beef Benchmarking – Lucy Jerram



*We are excited to announce that we have been developing a working group for proactive beef farmers, with a number already signed up. Our aim is to improve our methods of measuring, monitoring and improving performance in beef suckler herds. Whilst a great many parameters including body condition score, infectious disease status, sire estimated breeding values (see our previous blog article on the use of AI in the beef herd) and trace element status can all be measured we have chosen to keep things “simple” to begin with. We are therefore focusing on fertility, calving and weaning rates. For interested farms, we will record the service periods for each group of cows and heifers (along with any PD results if available), dates of births of every calf born in each season, weaning records and culling/replacement rate.*

Increasing the fertility of your suckler herd will result in:

- Reduced length of calving period increasing the period for cows to return to cyclicity before mating.
- Reduced calving interval leading to more calves produced per year.
- Increased numbers and weight of calves weaned.
- Heavier, more fertile heifers at mating with the potential to reduce mating age.

Even relatively small improvements can make a significant difference to the bottom line and in an era where marginal gains are so important to farming survival this is especially important. Simply improving conception rates by 5% in a 50 cow herd could increase output by £2,000+ by combining the benefits of increased calf numbers and increased weaning weights.

Recording performance at herd and individual level is essential for managing fertility and can help to inform decisions made regarding which animals should be kept and which should be culled. This in itself makes it a worthwhile investment and reiterates the importance of keeping good records. It is easier for your veterinary team to help identify problems and investigate the cause if the historic herd performance is known and can allow a proactive, rather than reactive approach to herd health. Calculating the number of calves born in the first and second 21 day periods (oestrus cycles) can determine the success of the rest of the system.

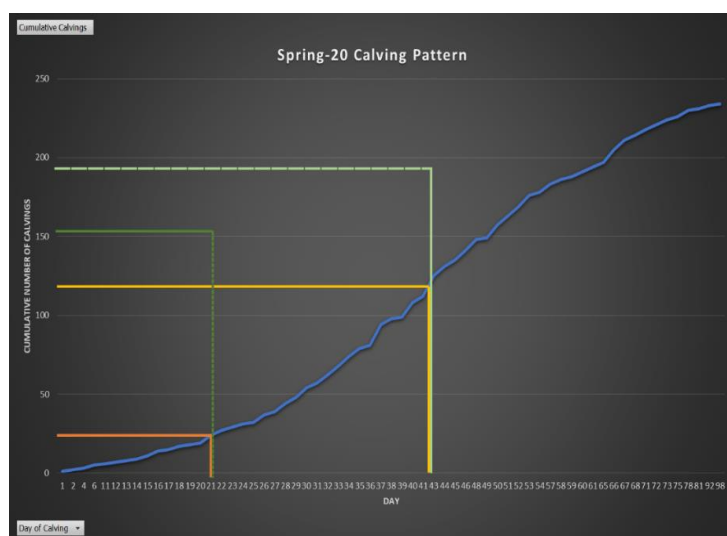


Figure 1

Figure 1 shows one farm’s prolonged spring calving pattern (orange=actual figures, green=target). Table 1 shows this same farm’s performance for the calving period and highlights that large improvements can be made to tighten the start of the calving block.

Calving Pattern Analysis		Target
Total number of calvings	234	N/A
%Herd calved in 1st 3wks	10%	65%
%Herd calved in 1st 6 wks	48%	80%
Total length of calving period	13.9	(weeks)

Table 1

Please let us know if you are interested in being involved by calling the office and asking to speak to Lucy (Beef Working Group). As more farms sign up, we will not only be able to compare your figures to national targets but also determine where you sit within the group. Lucy is hosting an online meeting before the spring calving period (provisionally Thursday 11 February) to compare our suckler herds. This will allow farms from across our whole practice area to log in and join in.

# Milksure Update

– George Lindley and Josh Williams

Many of our dairy clients may have been told that they require “Milksure” training or a “Milksure top-up”. We had a really successful uptake at the end of last year, with around 50% of dairies attending, and we are now able to offer training courses again.



Milksure is a training program for dairy farmers, as well as milk processors, centred on the avoidance of antibiotic residues in milk. It also covers medicine stewardship, storage, treatment protocols and how to reduce the risk of antimicrobial resistance. The Milksure course consists of two parts:

- Part 1 training provides a general overview of antimicrobial residues, testing methods and risk factors for antibiotic failures.
- Part 2 is specifically tailored to the individual farm, focusing on your medicine usage and risk factors, with a short quiz to assess understanding (this is completed with your vet).

The “Milksure top-up” is similar to part 2, aiming to build upon the goals set in the previous year and review the risk factors/management strategies.

There have been some changes to the way the Milksure scheme is coordinated, which clients need to be aware of. For those who have not completed a course, online registration is no longer required. Instead, please contact the practice to register your interest. Part 1 will be performed remotely as an online course and we will be publishing dates for these in January. Part 2 can be held on farm or online and is performed one-to-one by your routine vet. This will be organized after completion of Part 1. For those who require a “Top-up” – again, please contact the surgery to arrange. We expect the top-up to take around 1.5 hours. A certificate will be issued after completion of both parts of the stand-alone course, or after completion of the Top-Up course; a copy of which must be supplied to your milk buyer.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Josh or George.

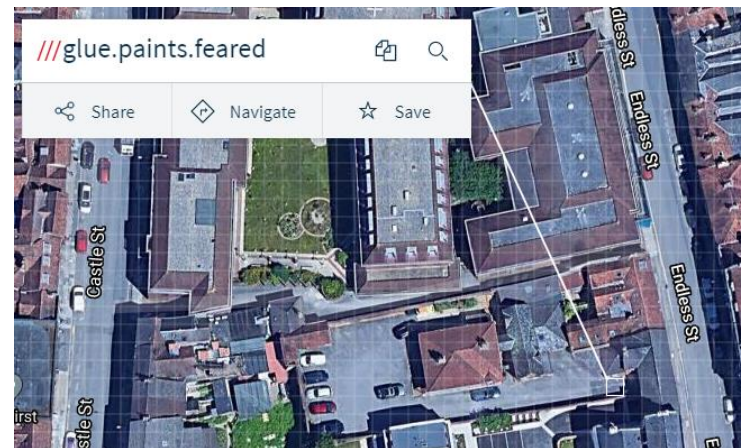
# What3words

– Jim Willshire

Our office has a running battle with getting vets to the right location to be able provide the services you need. One of the apps we’ve been trialling to see whether it can help is what3words.

What3words was developed to help roadies find music venues, but has recently been promoted by Farmers Weekly and the UK emergency services as a method of getting help to injured people in the middle of nowhere – so fingers crossed it should be plenty accurate for moving us around!

What3words divides the globe into 57 trillion 3m×3m squares and gives each square a unique combination of three words – for example, the door to the farm office in Endless Street is ///glue.paints.feared, whereas at Newton Wood it’s ///things.confronts.doll



The aim is that over time we update our address book with your individual 3-words, but in the interim (or if you have a particularly tricky location to find) please feel free to let us know yours when you phone in to book a visit.

## COVID-19

We would like to reassure all of our clients that we are open for business as usual. We are taking preventative measures to reduce the risk to both our staff and to you as our clients and to ensure that we can continue to provide our usual service to you:

- We will be practising social distancing and would like to remind you to be mindful of the 2m rule.
- We ask that you please phone ahead with all drug orders so that we can have them ready for you to collect.
- Our door is open; when visiting the office please wear a face mask and enter after using the hand sanitiser provided.
- If you are isolating, please make staff aware so that we can make suitable arrangements with you.

***Thank you for your support and understanding.***

**MilkSure✓**





## Upcoming Events and Courses

### Milksure Course (date TBC)

### Beef Benchmarking 11 February 2021

### Responsible Use of Medicines

24 February 2021, 10-12pm  
28 April 2021, 12-2pm

Please contact the office to register: 01722 333291 (1).

All courses will be held online for the foreseeable future, but we can deliver practical courses tailored to your farm (eg: foot trimming, calving refresher, DIY AI) – please contact us if interested.

## Webinars

The following webinars are available on our website:

### Bovine Respiratory Disease Prevention

### Colostrum Management in Beef Calves

### Block Calving – to Estrumate or CIDR?

### Getting Lambs to Grow Backyard Pigs

Please visit

[www.endellfarmvets.co.uk/  
events](http://www.endellfarmvets.co.uk/events)

for more information, as well as full versions of all our previously published blog articles.

## Flock Health Club

Our Flock Health Club is open to all sheep and goat farmers; its main focus is not only for the prevention of disease and to promote health and productivity in your flock, but also to improve the relationship between vets and sheep/goat farmers. A greater involvement on-farm, whether small or large, allows farmers to receive more cost-effective veterinary advice. It allows like-minded, enthusiastic farmers and vets to share information and insight into the latest developments of the industry. Farming is continually changing and we want to facilitate your progression in flock health, knowledge development and business profitability all while meeting the demands of the evolving industry.



### Benefits Include:

Quarterly vet-facilitated meetings and newsletters, including one practical workshop

- Topics covered by external speakers
- Benchmarking flock performance and financials

15% off VET TIME of both pre-booked (blood sampling, ram pre-breeding examinations, post mortems, vasectomies etc.) and emergency work. (Visit fee not included.)

Selected seasonal offers on drugs and services

Access to our vet techs as helping hands (vaccinations, worming/pour-on, ear-tagging, body condition scoring etc.).

A free annual Flock Health Plan/Review. (Visit fee not included.)

Membership of the Flock Health Club is £18.75 (ex. VAT) per month; if you are interested in becoming a member, please contact the practice to request a membership form for you to complete and return to us.

## Avian Influenza Update

New housing measures to limit the spread of bird flu (avian influenza) came into place on 14 December and are ongoing. Following these guidelines is not simply a task for commercial poultry keepers but also for people with any number of captive birds in back gardens or roaming farmyards. The majority of cases have been classed as 'highly pathogenic' which means infected birds are likely to suffer from severe disease and high mortality; there is a very low risk to human health at this time. All infected birds are culled in accordance with notifiable disease control rules. There have been 16 outbreaks across the UK in the past two months with at least three of these in backyard flocks; our nearest outbreak is in Gillingham, Dorset.

The housing measures mean it is now a legal requirement for all bird keepers to keep birds indoors, or behind netting and follow strict biosecurity measures. Keeping poultry and other captive birds separate from wild birds is the key to reducing disease spread and includes minimising direct and indirect contact including feed and water. Biosecurity measures include cleaning and disinfecting all equipment and clothing, changing footwear and clothing before entering bird enclosures and reducing the number of people who have access to your birds.



*Blue discoloured comb of an infected chicken on the left compared to a normal chicken on the right.*

Anyone finding dead wild birds should call the Defra helpline on 03459 335577 (option 7) to report these while keepers should report suspicion of disease to APHA on 03000 200 301. The main signs of 'high pathogenic' avian influenza are swollen head, blue discolouration of neck and throat, loss of appetite, coughing, gasping, sneezing, gurgling, diarrhoea and death. Signs tend to be less severe in ducks and other waterfowl than in chickens. We know how hard it can be to keep captive birds entertained so we recommend providing environmental enrichment in the form of perches of different materials and heights including straw bales, novel food or blocks for pecking and dustbathing boxes. For more information on all bird flu related issues we suggest spending some time on the gov.uk website.



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