



alnorthumbria farm vets

Newsletter

February 2026

Spring is well and truly underway, with many flocks beginning to lamb mid-February and early spring calving starting.

We have been seeing a few cases of pneumonia in cattle so would encourage you all to be vigilant, and keep up to date with vaccination programmes. We have been out blood sampling the Spring 2025 calf crop for BVD, as part of routine control measures on many farms. This involves blood sampling 5 calves per management group aged 9-18 months which must be homebred and unvaccinated.



The 5 Qs of Colostrum

Colostrum is vital to a new born animal as it not only supplies essential nutrients and energy but also supplies antibodies (also known as immunoglobulins-IgG). A common term associated with colostrum is the 3Qs which helps make sure that the right amount of good quality colostrum is given in the right time, but there are two additional Qs that can further improve colostrum delivery.

Sufficient quality colostrum fed quickly can:

- Stop lambs succumbing to watery mouth disease
- Halve the risk of pneumonia in calves
- Improve survival rate of piglets up to weaning
- Improve health, lower mortality and increase daily live weight gain
- Support the responsible use of antibiotics

Remember the three Qs:

Quantity

- Lambs: should receive 200ml of colostrum within two hours of birth. In 24 hours, a new born lamb must receive the equivalent of 200 ml/kg body weight in colostrum.
- Suckler Calves: Quantity depends on quality, but suckled calves should have consumed four litres of good quality colostrum within two hours from birth or equivalent to 10% of body weight. A second feed should follow of similar size within 12 hours of birth.
- **Quality:** This can be measured using a Brix refractometer. This measures the g/L of IgG (an antibody) indicating quality of colostrum.
- **Quickly:** Colostrum rapidly reduces in quality over the following 24hrs post partum as well as the newborn's ability to absorb the antibodies.



The Additional 2 Qs:

- **sQueaky clean:** This means alongside using clean buckets and equipment to store and collect colostrum its also important to ensure that colostrum comes from a healthy dam/ewe.
- **Quantify:** We can test calves aged 2-7 days of age for blood antibody levels as a marker for how successful colostrum provision has been for them. If you would be interested in this please speak to your nearest branch.

If there is not enough colostrum available for a lamb or calf then donor colostrum from a dam on the same farm can be used. Frozen colostrum must be defrosted carefully and never microwaved as this will destroy the antibodies. In the absence of suitable on-farm alternative colostrum then replacers such as Immucol or SCCL can be used—speak to us about the most appropriate option for your farm.



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Surrey Student Article

A Month in Northumberland - Linnea Waeppling

One of our students has written about her time on farms in Northumberland over the past month.

'As a final year University of Surrey vet student I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in Northumberland.

Fortunate enough to explore the country far and wide during our last year of the degree, it has been a privilege to explore the northern most area that the university collaborates with. Alnorthumbria vet practice has been great and extremely accommodating to the needs of myself as a student allowing me to further explore my future career and continue developing my skills that I have learned throughout university.

Despite being met with rather horrific snow chaos upon my arrival in Alnwick, I have had a lovely time. I have been able to explore the quaint village of Alnmouth, where I have also stayed for my month here, as well as Amble, Warkworth, Dunstanburgh Castle, Holy Island and of course Alnwick Castle, all of which were lovely places to visit and would recommend to all who come to visit the area.

It has been wonderful to be out on farm meeting the lovely clients of Alnorthumbria, all whom have met me with a smile and have been keen to get an insight into life as a vet student. Small chats go a long way for us vet students as it expands our knowledge about farm life, boosts our confidence and broadens our communication skills; all essential tools we will need in our future careers!

Being out on farm in January when you are beating cold temperatures, wet weather and keeping frozen toes alive, teaches us as students resilience but also gives us a real appreciation for the dedication and hard work that goes on behind the scenes every single day. It reminds us that farming is not just a job but a way of life, and being welcomed into that environment is something I am truly grateful for.

These experiences are invaluable in shaping us into confident, capable vets. I feel incredibly fortunate to be learning alongside such knowledgeable and supportive vets, farmers and members of the local community. I will certainly look back at my time with Alnorthumbria with a smile and remember that sheep skin insoles are truly the best investment I have made.'



Don't Forget to Use!

- **Clostridial vaccinations** - Heptavac P (or Bravoxin for certain farms) boosters in ewes 4-6wks pre-lambing.
- **Fluke Treatments** - Solantel from now on to kill fluke in sheep. Speak to us about fluke injections (only available from vets) to kill adult fluke in out-wintered cattle from now on, or for housed cattle not treated in the autumn
- **Stalosan** disinfectant/drying agent for lambing and calving pens
- **Calf scour vaccination** - Bovilis Rotavec Corona or Fencovis for spring calvers to help prevent calf scour.
- **Boluses** - Contact your local surgery for our range of lamb and sheep boluses ready for lambing.