

## July 2023 Newsletter

### Poisonous plants - Cormac White

With most stock all out now and with the dry weather keeping grass in short supply, it is important to be aware of any plants that stock may decide to nibble on that can be toxic in both the short term and the long term. Some plants can cause signs of ill health within a matter of hours and ultimately can lead to death with a period of 24 hours, whilst others may cause more long-term chronic effects on animal health and productivity. It is also important to be aware that differences exist in terms of species susceptibility; certain plants affect certain species (cattle, sheep, goats) worse than others. Most of the toxic compounds that exist in these plants have no specific treatment; prognosis for animals affected by these poisonings can be poor, so avoiding exposure is vital in managing this from an animal health point of view.



**Water Hemlock/Dead Man's Fingers** grows along ditches and hedgerows and the extremely toxic tuberous roots can become exposed following episodes of dry weather. Roots will also be exposed where ditches have been dredged. Cattle exhibit seizures and death rapidly ensues. *It is important to note that spraying it initially makes it more palatable to cattle so allow for it to die back before reintroducing cattle to the area.*

**Poison Hemlock** is like water hemlock, yet it does not possess the tuberous roots and contains a slightly different toxin. It typically grows in hedgerows and along ditches and areas of woodland. It causes an *increased heart and respiratory rate along with incoordination and eventually seizures and death*. It affects a wider range of species including goats, pigs and wildlife. *Spraying prior to seed stage (typically May and June) will limit the issue in following years.*

**Yew** is an evergreen ornamental plant and with lockdown there have been cases of people dumping garden waste containing clippings of this plant. *It causes rapid cardiac arrest in stock and 0.5% of an animals' bodyweight is all that is needed to cause death.*



**Ragwort** is a plant that all should be relatively familiar with. Whilst sheep and goats are relatively resistant to the effects of ragwort, cattle certainly are not. Ragwort causes liver damage which can cause a *rapid disease process involving severe diarrhoea, jaundice, red urine, incoordination, and aggression; or a slow chronic disease process involving weight loss, bottle jaw and photosensitization*. Typically, cattle will avoid ragwort, however it is particularly high in minerals so *mineral-deficient cattle will seek it out and those with a lack of access to other forage*. **Cattle cannot distinguish ragwort from other plants in silage** so cutting fields should be managed appropriately to avoid issues. *A single plant in a bale of silage can be enough to cause clinical signs* with 3kg fresh weight of ragwort constituting a lethal dose. *Cutting fields should be sprayed in the autumn prior or where there are only small numbers of plants these can be pulled*. It is important to remember that cutting ragwort plants encourages them to become perennial weeds.

**St John's Wort** contains a toxin which fluoresces in UV light which when it travels through the blood vessels of the animals skin reacts with sunlight causing *photosensitization which appears as reddening, hair loss and inflammation typically at the whiter parts of the animals coat - sunburn*. Animals should immediately be *brought inside out of the sunlight*. *Anti-inflammatories such as Dexafort (if not pregnant) or Metacam will help.*



**Rhododendron** is a particularly toxic garden plant to cattle, sheep and goats with 0.2% of an animal's bodyweight being enough to kill an animal (140g for a 70kg ewe!). Typically, animals exhibit signs of vomiting, diarrhoea, colic with decreased heart rates and ultimately death.

### Meeting on Calf Health and Rearing

We will be holding a meeting on calf health, where we will be discussing colostrum management and Johnes control, demonstrating the work our Vet Techs are carrying out regarding disbudding and growth rate monitoring, and discussing the importance of nutrition and growth rates.

The meeting will be held at Bickenhall farm, Bickenhall, Taunton, TA3 6TX at **11am on Tuesday the 8th of August**.

Lunch will be provided.

Please call the office to book on if you are interested in attending.

### Honiton Show Art Competition

The art competition is returning for our annual stint at Honiton Show, with the theme being "On the Farm" so get creative and get arty. Please drop entries into any office or even bring them with you on the day. Prizes for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>! It will be great to see you all again!

## New product - Bovigen Scour

Bovigen Scour is the new alternative to Rotavec Corona. It is a single shot broad spectrum calf scour vaccine that protects against three major causes of scour. The vaccine works by actively immunising pregnant cows and heifers and providing passive immunity to their calves via colostrum.

It comes in both 5 dose and 30 dose bottles. 30 dose bottles are only ordered in via request.

Bovigen is £1 cheaper per dose than Rotavec in the 5 dose size, and 25p cheaper per dose in the 30 dose size.

### **VERY IMPORTANT**

The dose for Bovigen Scour is 3ml, not 2ml like Rotavec.  
**If you only give 2ml of Bovigen it will not work!**

If you would like more information on this product please call any of our offices and ask to speak to a vet.



## How Bovine Tuberculosis impacts the health and wellbeing of farmers

The Farming Community Network (FCN) is conducting some new research to better understand the impact of bovine tuberculosis (bTB) on UK farmers' health and wellbeing.

As part of this research, they will be running a survey from June until mid-August. If you would like to get involved and have your say, please visit this website: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/3HG5YFG>

The FCN want as many farmers as possible to fill it in so that they can gain a wealth of data from across the whole of the UK. It should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

The results of the survey will help FCN to better understand how farmers and farm families perceive the threat of bTB, helping us to support those at risk or affected by a bTB breakdown.

This research builds upon a study conducted by FCN in 2009 'Stress and Loss – a report on the impact of Bovine TB on farming families'.

bTB has affected most of our farmers at some point, and it is important to speak up and have your say so that more help can be given if it is needed. If you have 10 minutes of spare time we would appreciate it if you could fill in this survey. Thank you.

**FCN** | THE FARMING  
COMMUNITY  
NETWORK

## Cool bags

We have given out over 200 cool bags that have not been returned. If you have one or more of our cool bags we would greatly appreciate it if you could return them at your earliest convenience. Thank you.



## **Commercial Sheep Meeting- Funding and Worms** **“UNDERSTANDING WORM RESISTANCE- WHAT IS ANTHELMINTIC RESISTANCE, HOW COMMON IS IT AND HOW DO WE MANAGE IT?”**

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> July at 1pm**

**Kindly Hosted By Mr Brian Woodland @ Lower Ivyton Farm, Broomfield, Somerset.**

THIS EVENT IS **FREE TO ALL CLIENTS** AND IS KINDLY BEING SPONSORED BY ELANCO ANIMAL HEALTH.

We will also be discussing the Sustainable Farming Incentive – Animal Health and Welfare Pathway Funding  
**Food and Refreshments will be provided**

**Please contact any of our branches today to book your place today OR to become a member of the Sheep Discussion Group.**