

PCHS NEWS

Premium Cattle Health Schemes

2023 Issue



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PCHS NEWS



Welcome to the 2023 edition of the PCHS Newsletter. We have experienced lots of political change recently with significant challenges ahead! SRUC will strive to support veterinary

practices and farmer members to produce healthy profitable livestock in a sustainable way! To that end we are delighted that Colin Mason, SRUC's Dumfries Centre Manager has been appointed President of the BCVA (British Cattle Veterinary Association) and Dave Wilson, Health Schemes Manager has been appointed President of the SVS (Sheep Veterinary Society). Here's to a successful term in office for both colleagues!

We hope that you find plenty of interesting content in this issue to help your enterprise including updates on FFRF and Defra's Animal Health and Welfare Pathway. Contact us if you would like your herd to feature in our next newsletter!

Alison Braddock

BVD Tag & Test Reminder

SRUC Veterinary Services work with a number tag companies (mainly for the Typifix and Quicktag type tags) to supply the testing for 'Tag and Test' purchases.

Help us to help you with BVD Tag and Test!

We process thousands of BVD ear tags each day! Unfortunately, we are receiving tags without the correct paperwork which may result in us having to charge the full price for BVD testing even though members have already paid the full tag and test price to the tag company.

So that we can process your sample correctly – please do two things:

1. **Submit an appropriate submission form which MUST match the make of your tags**
Our team need information about the tag company you have used and your name and farm address. The tag company should have sent you submission forms with their logo so we know which company we are invoicing if you have prepaid. A scrap of paper is unacceptable – you will be charged the full test price, so you end up paying double!
2. **To avoid delays, ensure postage is correct and use a padded envelope to avoid damage to tags and tags being lost in transit**

Please note: members with who have paid for tags only (no test), submission forms are available on our website www.bit.ly/PCHS_forms. This also includes a specific submission form for Caisley pay-as-you-go.

Annual Health and Welfare Review (England)

Testing of the fully-funded annual vet visits to farms have now started

We started testing the first annual health and welfare reviews in September 2022, and we'll steadily increase these by invitation before opening to eligible keepers in late 2022.

First farmers have had vets to visit their farms as part of Defra's Animal Health and Welfare Pathway offer. Livestock keepers in England can get funding for a vet or vet-led team of their choice to visit their farm and carry out an annual review of the eligible livestock.

This review will support improved understanding of health and welfare issues on farm. It will enable farmers to receive bespoke advice on their animals and signpost other financial support to improve health and welfare – whether to help remedy endemic disease in their herd or flock, or to improve animals' environments so they live a good life.

As part of the Pathway, the Government will initially offer cattle, sheep and pig farmers who are eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme funding for an annual visit from a vet of their choice to carry out diagnostic testing, review biosecurity and responsible use of medicines, and provide advice relating to the health and welfare of their animals. Testing of these visits have now started and the offer will be further extended over time to other types of livestock farmers.

“ It's not about evidence or pieces of paper, it's about having a conversation, understanding the farm, and its nature to support. ”

The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway will also include a disease eradication and control programme and Animal Health and Welfare Grants. The Disease eradication and control programmes will allow farmers to apply for financial support to enable them to



take measures to prevent and reduce endemic diseases affecting livestock such as veterinary advice, vaccination, or improvements to on-farm management. The grants provide capital investments in equipment, technology and infrastructure that support health and welfare priorities. Alongside the benefits to individual farmers, the industry as a whole will benefit. Reducing endemic disease will improve the health and welfare of the national herds and flocks and reduce the risk of disease spreading to individual farms. In addition, addressing endemic disease will help to improve productivity.

Healthier animals mean lower greenhouse gas emissions from farming, helping contribute towards net zero targets and improving the environmental performance of farming. The UK will be able to demonstrate its high standards of animal health and welfare, supporting the ability to trade

with the rest of the world and differentiate its produce in the domestic market

Chief Vet, Christine Middlemiss said:

"I want to see wide-scale adoption of the Annual Health and Welfare Review as part of normal business practice, enabling more farmers to focus on action to improve health and welfare in their animals, improving outcomes when it comes to endemic diseases and conditions – supporting animal welfare and reduced waste, antibiotic use and financial losses".

Professor Jonathan Statham
Chair of the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England

Events 2023

It was fantastic to be out and about meeting and recruiting members in 2022. If you have an event that we could exhibit or speak at then please get in touch!



| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| NSA Sheep South West | 9th May | Honiton, Devon |
| NSA Welsh Sheep | 16th May | Newtown, Powys |
| Scotland's Beef Event | 6th June | Dalswinton, Dumfries |
| NSA North Sheep | 7th June | Ponteland, Northumberland |
| Royal Highland Show | 22nd – 25th June | Ingliston, Edinburgh |
| Great Yorkshire Show | 11th – 14th July | Harrogate, North Yorkshire |
| Royal Welsh Show | 24th – 27st July | Builth Wells, Powys |
| Westmorland County Show | 13th – 14th September | Milnthorpe, Cumbria |
| Borderway Agri-Expo | 27th October | Carlisle, Cumbria |
| AgriFest South West | 8th November | Exeter, Devon |



Cameron Maclver, Wester Coltfoot, Kinloss, Morayshire

Simmental has been the breed of choice at Wester Coltfoot – a mixed arable and livestock farm situated on the Morayshire coast – for nearly three decades. The farm's suckler herd was first established with the purchase of a batch of Simmental bulling heifers bought from the renowned Blackford Simmental herd with the Coltfoot pedigree herd being established in the early 1980's, with the purchase of two females from a herd dispersal.

Wester Coltfoot farmed by Cameron Maclver – Junior Vice President of the Royal Northern Agricultural Society and NFU Highland Regional chairman – has grown his pedigree herd of Simmentals from the initial purchase of two foundation cows from a dispersal in 1982 – to 20 pedigree cows.

Initially the farm was home to a herd of 140 Simmental cross suckler cows crossed with a Charolais bull. Autumn born calves were finished on a bull beef system with bulls achieving a daily live weight gain of 2.2kg. *'The Charolais/Sim cross left calves that were easily fleshed animals'* – Cameron Maclver. Spring born calves were sold store at approx. 12/13 months through Aberdeen Northern Marts Thainstone centre in April at approx. 450 – 480 kgs with bullocks averaging £1400.

As well as finishing homebred stock, a number of store cattle were bought for the finishing enterprise. It was during this time that the pedigree herd was side-lined due to the health restrictions. *'With buying in cattle for the finishing enterprise, we found this detrimental to the health status of the pedigree herd and found it difficult to keep within the restrictions of being in a health scheme, although we continued to breed pedigree stock*

and register animals with the society, we decided on concentrate on the finishing cattle.'

However a change in farming policy in 2019 resulting in seasonal grazing being discontinued saw the herd of 100 plus Simmental cross suckler cows reduced to retain only a dozen or so. This change in direction has seen the focus shift onto the pedigree herd, with plans in place to increase the herd to 40 pedigrees, as Cameron's son James has a real passion and enthusiasm for pedigree stock. James is currently employed alongside stockman Andrew Reid of AJR Farms, Ellon – exhibitors of this year's Royal Highland Show cattle champion – is gaining precious knowledge and experience of pedigree stock and stockmanship skills, which will be invaluable when building up the pedigree herd at Wester Coltfoot.



The herd is accredited free of BVD and is also in Johne's Disease scheme, with a Risk Level 1 status. Although not monitoring for IBR or Lepto a control programme is in place with plans to monitor both of these diseases in the future.

When asked about the Premium Cattle Health Scheme Cameron commented *'There was no point going down the pedigree route, if the health status is not there, also it is compulsory for the breed society sales. We chose to join PCHS, as we were already clients of the local SAC advisory office (Elgin) so it was natural progression for us to go to PCHS as our health scheme provider. Since joining the scheme and eliminating disease risk, we have noticed less health issues within the calves such as scours and pneumonia.'*

The Maclver's Simmental herd has achieved a number of successes in the show and sale ring

including Coltfoot Jennifer – first at the 2020 Scottish National Simmental Virtual Show and Coltfoot Katie – first prize at the Royal Highland Showcase in 2021. The dearest bull sold to date was at the 2021 United Auctions Stirling May sale with the first son sired by Rockytop Invader – the herd’s stockbull – selling for 6,500gns. The herd will have two bulls forward at the annual October bull sale held at United Auctions Stirling, with Cameron adding that ‘Both bulls will be vet checked and semen tested prior to the sale’.



The breeding herd has ran a closed system since the suckler herd was first established, nearly 35 years ago. Apart of stock bulls, the only females to have been introduced to the herd were in 2018 from the Woodhall dispersal and more recently the purchase of a cow with heifer calf at foot from the Annick dispersal sale held in September.

From a health point of view, Cameron commented ‘Health status is extremely important when purchasing animals; we look for a high health status better than ourselves. There is always a risk when buying in stock’. He would urge anyone looking to buy in breeding replacements, whether it be bulls or bulling heifers to really look into health status.

Alongside the cattle enterprise, the farm, which totals 430 acres, grows approx. 300 acres of cereals including spring malting barley and spring oats and a flock of mule cross ewes. Lambing starts on March 1st with approx. 50 ewe hoggs lambed to a polled Dorset for ease of lambing. Lambs are grass finished and sold off the farm in July, this year averaging 47kg and £120.

Sarah Balfour, SAC Beef Consultant
sarah.balfour@sac.co.uk

SIGN UP

Sign Up to the Future Farm Resilience Fund (FFRF)

The Future Farm Resilience Fund (FFRF) is a FREE service available to farmers and landowners in England. It provides business, environmental, and technical support and is fully funded by Defra. SRUC is one of those providing this support in conjunction with ADAS.

What help is available for farmers?

- Farmers and landowners can access a variety of services through SRUC funded through the FFRF.
- Carbon Audits and understanding results
 - Business reviews, business plan implementation, environmental credentials, building support.
 - Technical support including animal welfare, soil health etc.

What does this help look like on farm?

In the previous round of the FFRF, SRUC clients benefited from detailed Carbon Management Plans. For example, Will Case’s suckler herd in Cumbria looked at the use of manure and impact on productivity and carbon emissions. They are

now ready to exploit the up-and-coming Slurry Investment Schemes along with other grants.

Our Team is here to help!

The Team operates from the SRUC Kendal office and covers the whole of England. Simon Travis and Stephen Melbourne manage the day to day running of the service, supported by Linda Robinson and Amy Airey with Agricultural Consultant Marcus Fox.

Please call the Kendal office on **01539 769059**, or email kendal@sac.co.uk and someone from our team will be in touch!

The Future Farming Resilience Fund: an update – Future Farming (blog.gov.uk)

We will keep our Scottish and Welsh members updated too – watch this space!



**Simon
Travis**



**Stephen
Melbourne**



**Marcus
Fox**

YOUR VIEWS

Tell us your views on Johne's disease control

Kate Lamont is a social scientist based at SRUC who is currently working on a project* looking at Johne's Disease from lots of different perspectives including

what farmers can do to minimise the risk of Johne's on their farm setting. This includes getting the view of farmers and crofters and Kate would like to hear from members of the PCHS in Scotland.

Before Covid-19 restrictions, Kate had asked farmers across Scotland about Johne's and collated their views. Many farmers believed that all farms **"would need to be testing"** in order to manage Johne's Disease with some saying that **"you have to go as far as strict mandatory testing ... in order to eradicate diseases like Johne's"**. Others agreed but added that **"there needs to be government help with the testing to eradicate the disease"**. Other farmers needed to be convinced about the benefits of testing. One Highland farmer spoke of his fear of having **"to cull a huge amount of cattle"** which had initially put him off testing and taking part in a Johne's control scheme. However, this had not been required (and it is worth noting that as Johne's is not a notifiable disease and there is no mandatory slaughter, response to a positive test should be based on each farm's circumstances). A number of others felt that if farmers had more confidence in the testing process, **"this might encourage farmers to test"**.

One farmer described how distressing it was when their bull **"just melted away in front of us"** as a result of Johne's Disease. Others mentioned that they had found it **"hard to take"** when they were faced with having to **"get rid of a good cow"**. Some farmers described the timescales involved in dealing with the disease as **"frustrating"**, both in trying to deal with it in their herd and for the beef industry as a whole, where a disease like Johne's **"takes time to eradicate"**.

There was a range in views from farmers about how to respond to Johne's Disease. One farmer said that for **"Johne's – a hard line is needed. There should be a test every year to identify disease and if the result is conclusive, the animal goes"**. This view was shared by many farmers who were keen to eradicate the disease, however, there were a few others said that they were not concerned about Johne's and never tested. Farmers who were committed to controlling and eradicating Johne's Disease, and who were going to some expense in doing so, were frustrated by the fact that others were not **"pro-active in looking for Johne's"**. One farmer said that **"there are farmers who are working hard. It is not fair for them"**.

Many farmers said there was a need for **"more clarity about the transmission of Johne's, followed by better guidance about how to avoid Johne's"**. Clarity **"about what is Johne's disease-free and where Johne's comes from"** would help farmers feel more confident in the status of their herd and that they were doing all they could to keep clear. Some farmers found the advice they got about Johne's confusing and said that **"guidance needs to be very clear about what is required, not complex"**.

Kate would be interested to hear about the experiences and views of farmers and crofters, including how being part of a health scheme impacts how farmers deal with Johne's. Please contact Kate on T. 01463 246080, E. kate.lamont@sruc.ac.uk

*The project is funded by the Scottish Government's Strategic Research Programme (SRUC A2.4 Case Study A).



NEW UPDATE

Johne's Disease Update

The rules for the Johne's Disease scheme are still under review through CHeCS. We will update all PCHS members by email as soon as any changes to the rules are confirmed.



George Caldwell

SRUC's head of Veterinary Services George Caldwell retired in June 2022. Having began his career with SRUC as a VIO in 1987, then subsequently being appointed as manager of both the St Boswells disease surveillance centre and SRUC's health schemes, before taking on the role as head of Veterinary Services in 2017, George's impact upon the organisation over the years has been particularly significant. Since his retirement, Anne Seaton, Jill Thomson and Ralph Seaton have been leading Veterinary Services on strategic matters and working closely with the Veterinary Centre Managers on operational issues.

However, George's expertise will not be lost from SRUC, as he has returned in October 2022 in a new role as Professor of Ruminant Animal Health. This new role will involve ensuring that his expertise in Veterinary Services informs the development of curriculum within SRUC's new School of Veterinary Medicine.



Post Green Farm Partnership, Lytchett Minster, Poole, Dorset

Chris Lees began farming at Post Green Farm in 1976. Although the farm had been in the family since his great grandfather bought it in 1880, Chris's father was the first to actually farm the land, before Chris took on the responsibility after finishing university having graduated from the University of Edinburgh with a degree in agricultural science. Starting out with a herd of dairy cattle, a small suckler herd and extensive corn fields, all of which were organic since 2001.

From a total of 600 acres (200 of which was heatherland), Chris increased the scale of all three enterprises, reaching a total of 1,500 acres including rented land. However, after making the decision to simplify the farm and to focus on the suckler herd, the Lees stopped dairying in 2008 and finished growing corn in 2010, with the farm now consisting of 400 acres of rotational grazing and 300 acres of heathland and rough grazing.

The suckler herd is currently made up of 130 cows, with all of the progeny being taken right through to finishing, resulting in anywhere between 350 to 450 cattle on the farm at any one time. Having started with dairy crosses from their own dairy herd, the Lees moved into Aberdeen Angus and Welsh Blacks which they purchased from a dispersal sale of an organic herd in Wales, and then moved to using mainly Limousin bulls. However, more recently the decision was made to switch to using entirely Stabiliser bulls, Chris commented, *"we hadn't been selective enough with the breeding stock that we had in the herd and wanted a wider range of heifer calves to get the traits that they wanted, particularly easy calving and fast growth rates. I also liked the Stabilisers for the group's fixed view on improvement."* The Lees also keep ten longhorn cows which graze the heatherland all year round, calving in June/July and their calves being taken to go in with the commercial herd the following Easter. The heifers in the main herd also graze the heathland, only being brought in to calve in February/March at two to three years of age, while the cows are brought inside in January to calve between March and May. Chris states that his aim is to only keep the



calves through one winter, aiming to finish everything only on grass and silage at 18 to 20 months old. Chris made the decision to join PCHS with their dairy cows to reduce the disease in their herd in order to help improve their milk yield. Having seen the benefit

in the milk yield Chris made the decision to carry on with the health schemes after finishing with the dairy herd with the understanding that keeping disease under control would translate into yield benefits in terms of growth rates, and they have since gained accreditation for BVD while also vaccinating for Leptospirosis. Chris also added that keeping on top of diseases such as BVD and Johne's disease is also important for maintaining the cows for breeding, being conscious to not overfeed them before bulling but that any disease burden could reduce their body condition too much.

TB is a major concern in South West England, with the Lees having been placed under TB restrictions in summer 2021 and being free again as of Autumn 2022. In order to further protect the health of the cattle, the herd is mostly closed, breeding all their own replacements other than buying in bulls, which are always from accredited herds and low risk TB areas. Since moving to Stabiliser bulls Chris now aims to only purchase these from one farm, although all of them are dealt through the Stabiliser cattle company.

The Lees' dedication to organic farming and conservation is also a contributing factor to the decisions made for the farm and is something that Chris speaks passionately about. The farm benefits from CSS and HLS grants, which, although Chris admits do contribute significantly to the farm's profitability,

Continued over

aren't the only reason that they decided to go organic – *"it has to stack up financially, but for us it is primarily an emotional choice. It wouldn't make sense for us to do it otherwise."* The farm is currently undergoing a carbon audit, to help them meet their goal of becoming carbon positive in the future. Chris adds, *"I suspect that for across our land including all of the trees we are at least carbon neutral, but not yet for the grassland."*

Chris and Clare have also taken a number of steps to diversify the farm, as well as renting out land for solar panel sites and a caravan park, some of the old farm buildings are now home to two cafés, a garden centre, several craft shops and a cookery school, across two sites. In terms of further diversification and innovation Chris adds that having been inspired by dairy farms starting to sell milk from the farm gate, he would like to one day be able to offer something along the lines of

a self-service vending machine stocked with frozen beef products from the farm's own cattle. Looking to the future, in addition to the goal of becoming carbon positive, Chris intends to try calving their heifers at 2 years of age but remains conscious of what is financially beneficial versus the increased management required, as well as bearing in mind the simplicity of their system and what is most natural for the cattle. Chris and Clare have also recently taken on some more land with the aim to increase the size of the herd because of the fact that their son is soon due to come and take over the management of the business and carry on the work that the family has put into creating a natural and sustainable farm.

www.thebarncafedorset.co.uk
www.thecourtyardcraftcentre.co.uk
www.thecowsheddorset.co.uk

Colin Mason



PCHS vet and centre manager of SRUC Veterinary Services Dumfries disease surveillance centre, Colin Mason, has been announced as the next president of the British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA). Colin has been involved with BCVA for many years and this new role reflects his ongoing dedication to BCVA.

Colin commented; *"There is a lot to do in the role in the coming year, including supporting the roll out of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway and developments in the CHECS Health Schemes which hopefully will provide many opportunities for vets and farmers."*

Meet the Team



David Wilson
 Veterinary Manager,
 SRUC Health Schemes
 MA BVMS DSHP MRCVS



Alison Braddock
 Marketing and Business
 Development Manager
 BSc (Hons)



Colin Mason
 Veterinary Centre
 Manager, BVM&S, BSc
 Cert CHP, MRCVS



Tim Geraghty
 Veterinary Centre
 Manager, BVMS, MVM,
 Dip ECBHM, MRCVS



John Scholefield
 Marketing and Business
 Development
 Officer, BA



Helen Carty
 Veterinary Centre
 Manager, BVM&S, Cert
 AVP (cattle), MRCVS



Health Schemes office team, based in St Boswells.