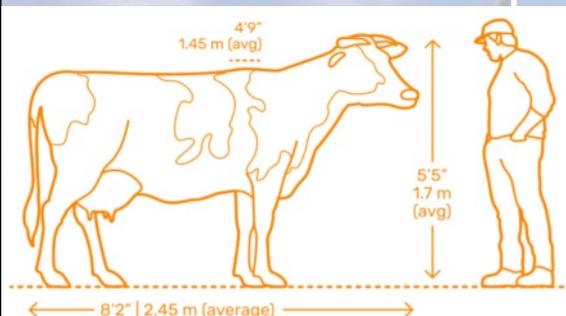


Covid 19 - an update on social distancing

Currently TB testing still remains a government priority. There has been a small increase in testing windows to allow all tests to take place if veterinary staffing levels are less than usual. There is also provision to extend testing windows ONCE if a test has to be delayed in case of illness.

The advice given to us has been to test all animals we can safely. If we're unable to test some animals without keeping a 2 meter distance, we've been advised not to test these animals and record the test as incomplete. For Officially TB Free herds only (ie routine herd tests, not for those under restrictions) there is a temporary exemption for animals under 180 days. These should still be tested if possible, and will still need a pre-movement test to move off the holding.

To help with social distancing, especially when testing young calves, here are some ideas which may help:



Nobody is going to carry a tape measure around with them. 2 metres is roughly a cow's length.



If there are only a few calves, halters could be useful



Temporarily penning calves tightly allows us to test without manual restraint



This farmer painted lines 2 meters apart along the race so workers could establish safe working distance more easily.

Sheep scab

Sheep scab, caused by the mite *Psoroptes ovis* leads to major economic losses to the UK flock and impacts sheep welfare. Attempts to control the disease through legislation began in the late 1800s, but by 1992 eradication had failed and disease control was deregulated. In England and Wales, it remains a legal requirement to treat infected animals and all others in the flock. Local authorities have the power to enforce treatment.



Sheep scab is spread by any contact with live mites. This is usually through direct sheep-to-sheep contact, but as adult mites can survive for up to 17 days in the environment, this enables indirect spread via rubbing posts and fences. Shearing combs and cutters, and contaminated clothing can also harbour and spread mites. In rare cases, scab can infect cattle.

Clinical Signs



The adult mites live in the skin surface where their faeces cause an intense allergic reaction. Females lay eggs which develop into adults over 10-14 days. They cause clinical cases most commonly on fully fleeced or poorly shorn animals. It can take 40-50 days after infection before signs are seen. The first visible signs can be restlessness, rubbing against fence posts, stained areas of wool and loose tags of fleece. Later stages of infestation have more obvious clinical signs and the mites spread outwards from the edge of the skin lesions. There is intense rubbing of the shoulders and larger areas of wool are lost. There can be open, bleeding wounds and secondary skin infection. The distraction caused by intense itching reduces feeding and there can be a rapid and significant loss in body condition.

Clinical signs of sheep scab must be investigated to differentiate them particularly from louse infestation. Falsely attributing the clinical signs to lice contributes to the continued spread of scab. Sheep scab and lice can occur together.

Other diseases causing itching include bacterial and fly-bite dermatitis, ked and forage mite infestation, rain scald, lumpy wool and scrapie. To confirm sheep scab, skin scrapes from the edge of a crusting lesion can be examined under a microscope to identify the mite. This test confirms a current infestation and all sheep in the affected group must be treated.

Treatment

There are only two types of treatment available to treat or prevent sheep scab. They are plunge dipping with the organophosphates or injecting with avermectins.

Organophosphate dips are only effective against sheep scab when applied by correctly plunge dipping. They are not effective when used in sprays. Dips kill scab mites within 24 hours and have residual action for several weeks. They provide ongoing protection from re-infection if sheep are returning to the same infected pastures or commons. Dips also control blowfly, lice, keds and ticks.



Operators must have a formal certificate of competence achieved at an approved training course. We do have details of a local mobile dipping service - please ring the office if required.