

OVERVIEW

- **Lymphoma in twin Simmental cross calves**
- **Abomasal emptying defect in a Bagot goat**
- **Discospondylitis associated with *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* causing hind limb weakness in pigs**

DISEASE ALERTS

The following conditions were reported by SRUC VS disease surveillance centres in October 2025. Given similar climatic and production conditions, they could also be important this year.

Acorn toxicity in cattle and sheep

Acorns and oak leaves contain phenols and tannins such as gallic acid and pyrogallol that are toxic when ingested in sufficient quantities. Cattle and sheep are susceptible to these compounds which bind and precipitate proteins leading to renal failure. Some animals develop a taste for acorns and have to be removed from any fields where they are present. Pigs are relatively resistant to their effects.

Salt toxicity in pigs

Water deprivation followed by ad lib access with rapid, excessive drinking can trigger neurological signs including seizures, lethargy, head pressing, opisthotonus and blindness. Salt toxicity may be suspected based on history and clinical signs. Neuropathology findings of an eosinophilic meningitis confirm the diagnosis. Increased intracranial pressure can lead to flattening of the cerebral gyri and displacement of the caudal cerebellum into the foramen magnum.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The weather in Scotland during July was not as extreme as that experienced in parts of England and Wales. All areas recorded mean temperatures above the 30-year average with the exception of Orkney, Shetland and localised parts of the far north. The overall mean temperature of 14.5°C was 1.1°C above the 1991 to 2020 average. Rainfall equated to 69 per cent of average with the driest conditions (compared to average) in the south-west contrasting with average precipitation in the north-west. It was generally sunny across the whole country with 127 per cent of average sunshine hours.

CATTLE

Alimentary tract disorders

A three-month-old Charolais cross calf from a group of 40 cows and calves at grass was treated for suspected pneumonia. It subsequently developed diarrhoea and despite intensive treatment died five days after it became ill. Postmortem examination found numerous areas of mucosal ulceration throughout the upper respiratory and gastrointestinal tracts (Figure 1). Salmonellosis and idiopathic necrotising enteritis (INE) had both been confirmed in the herd during 2025 and were differential diagnoses in this case. *Salmonella enterica* serotype Dublin was isolated from intestinal content and lung. Marked loss of haematopoietic cells was detected on histopathology of bone marrow, which is typical of INE but can also be seen with salmonella septicaemia. However, ulceration of the upper respiratory tract as well as the gastrointestinal tract are also typical of INE, suggesting that salmonellosis was not the primary problem. Testing ruled out BVD viraemia giving a final diagnosis of INE. It is not uncommon for INE to be recorded in repeated years on the same holding suggesting that a currently unknown predisposing factor is present.

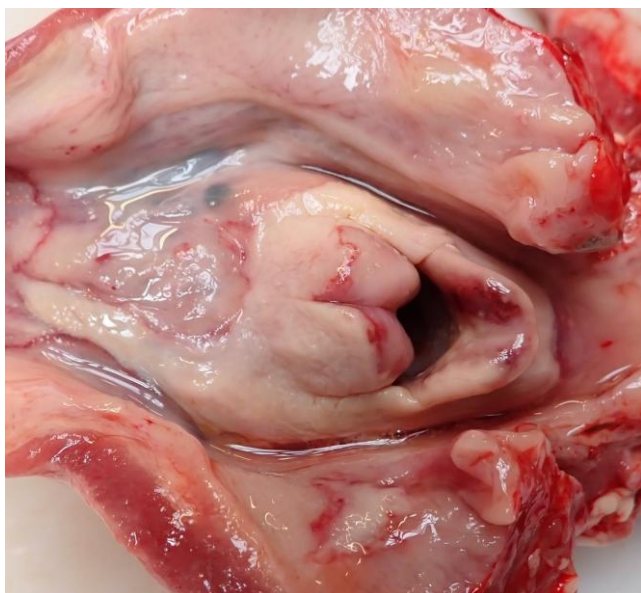


Figure 1 – Laryngeal ulceration as a consequence of idiopathic necrotic enteritis

Respiratory tract diseases

Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) was diagnosed in a dairy herd milking 120 cows with pyrexia and ocular and upper respiratory signs described. Milk drop was also reported. Nasopharyngeal swabs from three affected Holstein cows were pooled and proved PCR positive for bovine herpes virus-1 at a low cycle threshold value. A small number of purchased heifers had been introduced to the herd in May and June and were a possible source of virus.

Circulatory system disorders

A six-year-old Simmental cross cow was found dead and submitted for postmortem examination to establish the cause. It was the only loss from a group of 30 cows and calves at grass. Subcutaneous oedema was present submandibularly and extended along the ventral neck. There were serous effusions within the abdomen, thorax and pericardium plus interlobular emphysema in the cranial lung lobes. A large vegetative endocarditis lesion was found on the pulmonary valve (Figure 2)

but there were no significant findings on bacteriology which produced a mixed growth. A final diagnosis of pulmonary valve endocarditis and secondary cardiac failure was recorded. The source of the bacteraemia responsible for the lesion was not identified but the possibility of spread of infection from the uterus post-calving or secondary to a foot lesion was suggested.



Figure 2 – Endocarditis of the pulmonary valve in a Simmental cross cow

A three-month-old Simmental cross bull calf became lethargic and died two days later. It was being bottle-fed at grass along with its twin and enlarged peripheral lymph nodes had been observed in both calves for the previous two to three weeks. The submitted carcass was thin with markedly enlarged lymph nodes throughout. These were homogenous, pale and soft on section. The liver, kidneys (Figure 3) and spleen were also enlarged. Lymphoma was suspected and confirmed on histopathology prompting euthanasia of the second calf. Similar cases have been reported with lymphoma development in one foetus followed by spread to siblings via placental vascular anastomoses suggested as the possible pathogenesis.¹



Figure 3 – Lymphoma infiltrating the kidney (sectioned, foreground) and adjacent lymph nodes in a beef calf

SMALL RUMINANTS

Parasitic diseases

Three pet lambs died in the space of three days from a group of 16 at grass with access to lamb pellets. The practice detected a high worm egg count, and the group were treated with monepantel. The fourth lamb, a two-month-old easycare, died later that day and was submitted for postmortem examination. The group had been in the field for three weeks and a few were noted to be faecal stained. The carcase was in poor body condition and was generally pale with serous abdominal and pericardial effusions suggestive of hypoalbuminaemia. The abomasal contents were red/brown and watery with worms visible within. There was no evidence of diarrhoea. Approximately

80,000 nematodes were recovered from the abomasum of which 70 per cent were identified as *Haemonchus contortus*. The remainder were predominantly *Teladorsagia* sp which could account for the diarrhoea reported in some of the other lambs. The small intestinal worm burden was low. Haemonchosis was recorded as the cause of death, and it was advised that the field would be high risk for the remainder of the summer into autumn as large numbers of infectious larvae were likely to be present. The interval between anthelmintic treatment and death was too short to make a judgement on product efficacy.

Generalised and systemic conditions

The carcasses of two Highlander cross ewes from a flock of 650 were submitted following their death during or within minutes of shearing. They had been housed for 30 hours to allow emptying of the intestinal tract. Postmortem examination of both found an excess of stable foam in the trachea with ecchymotic haemorrhages on the mucosa and lung congestion with interstitial oedema giving a rubbery feel on palpation. Fibrous rumen content was scant and the large amount of fluid present was assumed secondary to the period of food restriction. No evidence of infectious disease was detected, and vitreous humour magnesium and calcium levels were within normal limits. Histopathology revealed diffuse alveolar oedema and congestion which is non-specific and could relate to agonal events. No definitive cause of death was reached but the findings could be explained by acute cardiac failure, with a stress related arrhythmia the possible cause of death.

Alimentary tract disorders

An aged Bagot nanny-goat from a herd of 12 was observed sitting in the sun while others were browsing or lying in the shade. Body condition was good however rumen fill was poor and there was evidence of abdominal pain.

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It failed to improve with symptomatic treatment and was euthanased on welfare grounds. Postmortem examination revealed copious brown fluid within the rumen and impaction of the abomasum with firm, dry mucus coated content. The history excluded a dietary cause, and neurological dysfunction was considered possible. Abomasal emptying defect has been reported in goats but is not common.² Feeds high in indigestible fibre and inadequate intake of water have been suggested as risk factors but neither applied in this case.

Nervous system disorders

Two, two-month-old Texel cross lambs grazing separate fields presented in lateral recumbency with opisthotonus during a 48-hour period. Menace reflexes were absent. Both were in reasonable body condition and fully clostridial vaccinated. Treatment with oxytetracycline was ineffective. The first lamb was from a group of 50 ewes and 87 lambs that had been in the current field for one week. The second was from a group of 52 ewes and 92 lambs that had been set stocked since mid-May. The brain of lamb one appeared slightly yellow and two small areas of the cerebrum fluoresced under ultra-violet (UV) light. There was more extensive cerebral fluorescence in lamb two and a suspicion of cerebellar coning. Cerebrocortical necrosis (CCN) was suspected and confirmed on histopathology which detected marked multifocal laminar polioencephalomalacia in both cases. The trigger for CCN was not clear. Concentrates were not being fed and the only commonality was administration of a cobalt drench three days before the first lamb became ill. It was postulated that this may have altered the rumen microbiome in some way changing the balance of thiamine/thiaminase.

A two-year-old maiden homebred Texel cross gimmer was found in sternal recumbency with

its head tucked into the left flank. It was the only animal affected in a group of 68 gimmers that had been moved to the current field two weeks before. The owner commented that grass availability was poor and that similar cases had been seen in this field over the previous five years in different seasons. Treatment with penicillin and vitamin B12 was not effective and concerns were raised over possible plant poisoning. The ewe resisted attempts to straighten the neck but withdrawal, menace and pupillary light reflexes were normal and there was no evidence of facial paralysis. No abnormalities of the brain and proximal spinal cord were observed with no cerebellar coning or fluorescence under UV light. There were no significant findings on culture, but histopathology detected a marked multifocal to coalescing nonsuppurative myelomeningoencephalitis with microabscesses which was especially severe from the cervical spinal cord to the mid-brain. These findings were consistent with a diagnosis of listeriosis with involvement of the spinal cord considered to account for the unusual presentation.

PIGS

An eight-month-old large white cross gilt was submitted for investigation of hindlimb weakness. It was one of a group that had arrived on an outdoor multiplier unit seven weeks earlier. A number of animals with swollen hocks were noted at this time but had since resolved. More recently several pigs had become weak or stiff on their hindlegs and required euthanasia. Postmortem examination found that the end plates of the apposing lumbar and sacral vertebral bodies were disintegrating (Figure 4) with expansion of the intervertebral disc and osteophyte production ventral to the lumbosacral joint. The findings were consistent with a diagnosis of lumbosacral discospondylitis and a pure, profuse growth of *Streptococcus*

dysgalactiae was recovered from the lesion. The source of infection was not clear.



Figure 4 – Lumbosacral discospondylitis associated with *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* in a gilt

Three landrace cross gilts with a similar history of hindlimb ataxia and proprioceptive deficits were submitted from a second holding. The first was also diagnosed with lumbosacral discospondylitis with *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* cultured in mixed growth with *Escherichia coli*. The second had chronic septic arthritis of the hock and *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* was also isolated from this. The third had septic arthritis and osteomyelitis of the second phalanx of the left hind foot from which *Trueperella pyogenes* was cultured. *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* is a common finding in pigs culled for lameness, particularly younger animals.²

References:

- 1 Fry LM, Snekvik K, McBride R, Parish SM. Sporadic juvenile lymphosarcoma in a set of triplet calves: haematopoietic chimerism or chance *Vet Rec Case Rep* 2016;4:e000339. doi:10.1136/vetreccr-2016-000339
- 2 Edwards GR, Nevel A. Abomasal emptying defect in two British Toggenburg goats. *Vet Rec*; 2008;162, 418–9
- 3 Jacobson M, Berglund M, Pettersson M et al. Pathological and bacteriological findings in sows, finisher pigs, and piglets, being culled for lameness. *Por Hea Man*; 2025: 11(1), 49 – 62