

News from the Farm Advisory Service:



Agri Culture Podcast - Kirsten Williams: Let Your Determination Grow Stronger

In this episode of Agri Culture, we are joined by Kirsten Williams, a livestock specialist from SAC Consulting who runs a farm business with her husband Ross. They have sheep, cattle and a turkey enterprise on their rented farm. They started as new entrants and worked hard to build up their business. Listen as Kirsten tells us how determination and hard work helped them succeed.

Find this episode by scanning the QR code below or by visiting www.fas.scot/sounds



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How to spot Q fever and what action to take

The disease Q fever is caused by the bacteria *Coxiella Burnetii* which can infect cattle, sheep and goats. It can also cause disease in humans, usually with 'flu-like' symptoms which can occasionally be severe and long lasting.

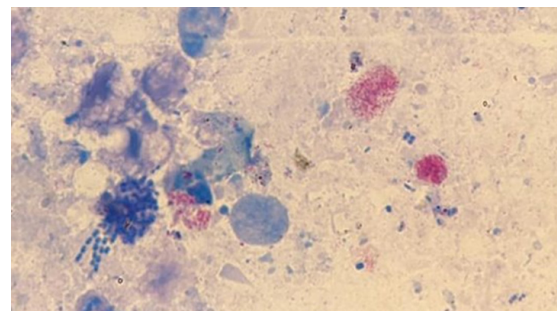
The main clinical signs seen in ruminants are abortion as a result of placental damage. Very often in cattle the abortions will be sporadic but with numbers adding up over time. In sheep and goats this may also be the case, however 'abortion storms' may occur - for example in a compact lambing period with close sheep-to-sheep contact.

SRUC Veterinary Services have diagnosed Q fever as the cause of a higher than expected still birth rate in dairy herds, particularly in heifers that are reared away from the main herd returning for calving. There are also reports of Q fever being the cause of more subtle disease in herds such as infertility.

Onward disease spread both to other animals and humans is most likely to occur at the time of birth, including still birth or abortion, with the bacteria shed in large amounts in the placenta and uterine fluids. This can contaminate the environment as well as spread directly and the bacteria can survive for long periods of time in the environment.

The dilemma of the disease is that:

- Clinical disease such as abortion is less common, although under-diagnosed.
- There will be sub-clinical effects that may vary from farm to farm.
- There is the potential for human disease which is likely to be under-diagnosed.
- Infection may be quite common, particularly in dairy herds.



Coxiella Burnetii organisms seen in red under the microscope

How do we see a way through this?

There are some sound guidelines available which are as follows:

'In order to harmonise the reporting of Q fever outbreaks in domestic ruminants, it is proposed that a herd/flock be considered as clinically affected when serial abortions have occurred, the presence of *C. burnetii* is confirmed by Polymerase Chain Reaction from animals having aborted, and when serology in affected dams is positive. Differential diagnosis with other abortive agents is essential.' (Sidi-Boumedine, K. et al., 2011)

For any herd or flock, abortion and still birth should be investigated in conjunction with your vet (every time it occurs it is an abnormal event). This is particularly important for still births in heifers where this outcome might easily be explained away as it is more likely to occur.

Basic testing for Q fever is carried out on all abortion submissions - PCR testing can be carried out as required and this approach allows for consideration of the full diversity of abortion causes. This can then be considered with your vet as part of the health planning process.

Disease Control

A diagnosis of Q fever should be reported which triggers a supportive advisory process from health professionals to help reduce the risk of human disease transferred from farmed animals.

As abortion will be the main clinical sign, investigate any late term abortions that might occur in your herd and flock. These are unexpected events that are best looked into to rule out the possibility of all infectious diseases including Q fever. Talk to your vet about the best means of investigating these abortions. Don't forget that negative results are good things as they help rule out infectious diseases as well as rule them in.

Finally if you are working with ruminants and are concerned about chronic flu-like symptoms, contact your doctor to discuss things further.

Colin Mason, SRUC Veterinary Services

Free events

At the Farm Advisory Service we run a range of events both online and in-person.

Visit www.fas.scot/events to sign up or contact the advice line and we'll help you get booked on.

Optimising Farmland Habitats for Biodiversity & Production Webinar

Online, 26th February, 7:00pm - 8:00pm

Join us for an evening of field margins and hedgerows, where we will discuss their value, tips on creating and enhancing these habitats and how result-based payment schemes can help improve them for wildlife and farm resilience.

Sustainable Beef Systems - Fertility Webinar

Online, 27th February, 7:30pm - 8:30pm

Join us for the final webinar of our Sustainable Beef Systems series, where we will focus on fertility. Suckler herd fertility is key to improving cow margins and profitability. Speakers from SAC and Moray Coast vet group will discuss AI and synchronisation, bull fertility and provide advice for after spring calving.



Argyll Women in Agriculture - Ewe Ready for Lambing?

Tiree, 2nd March, 11:00am - 4:00pm

Come along to our interactive lambing event to help you prepare for the busy time of year ahead. We'll have a refresher on nutrition, followed by a practical afternoon of lambing, castration, injecting and conditioning scoring ewes.

Climate resilience case studies

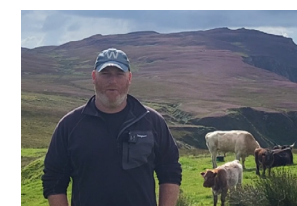


With a changing climate pattern and weather unpredictability, we have followed three innovative farmers throughout the year to see how they are modifying systems to improve their climate resilience.



Joe Baker is based at Windshiel Farm in the Scottish Borders, farming organically over 500 acres with light to medium soils. His climate strategies include growing multi-species swards under his arable silage, giving the new sward a microclimate under the growing crop, as well as cover to prevent weeds. In addition, he is growing lucerne for a high protein pre-lambing feed and direct drilling forage rye to pasture to build a bank of winter forage, allowing for minimal ground disturbance and moisture retention.

Robert Marshall, Kincaigie Farms, Aberdeenshire is farming over 2,500 acres in light Deeside soils. He has moved from traditional spring cropping, to incorporate more winter cropping into the rotation to allow for improved sowing conditions, establishment and to allow crop cover through the winter. These include winter oats, rye and beans. The rye giving a high yield of straw, energy in the grain and a deep root for drought resistance. Meanwhile the beans offer home grown protein, N fixing and a deep root to thrive in the dry ground.



gazing of the hill, which has assisted with delaying winter feeding.

In contrast to the drought resistant crops that Joe and Robert are growing, Stuart Lammont manages the 2,000 acre RSPB hill farm Kinnabus on Islay. The rainfall is high, and this extensively managed conservation focussed farm has two key challenges; sustainable fluke control and overwintering cattle to reduce winter costs. Through a project with Moredun, Stuart has taken up a test and treat approach for fluke which has substantially reduced the product used, with biodiversity and resistance mitigation benefits. He has used No Fence collars to enhance the winter conservation



Kirsten Williams, SAC Consulting

To see vlogs and more information on the climate resilience strategies for the three farms, please visit: www.fas.scot/article/climate-resilience-vlogs/

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service (FAS) is funded by the Scottish Government, providing information and resources aimed at increasing the profitability and sustainability of farms and crofts. Grant support, a full programme of events, a subscription service for crofts and small farms, and a range of articles and publications form the core of this service which is designed to provide integrated advice for farmers and crofters across Scotland.



National Advice Hub
T: 0300 323 0161
E: advice@fas.scot
W: www.fas.scot

If you need more advice on any topic, the Farm Advisory Service has a range of support and help available:

Advice line

For free telephone advice on a wide variety of topics including cross compliance, water framework directive requirements, climate change and other technical issues call us on **0300 323 0161** or email advice@fas.scot. The advice line operates between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Bespoke Advice and Grants

FAS can also help you to increase the profitability and sustainability of your farming business through Scottish Government grants including Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMPs) – worth up to £1,200.

The ILMP will identify opportunities and cost savings for your business, based on an independent and confidential assessment of your business by an experienced farm business adviser of your choosing. As part of your plan you can choose to benefit from up to two further specialist advice plans.

Online

Our website contains articles, videos and much more at www.fas.scot



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