

Beware Botulism!



There has been an increase in the number of cases of botulism nationally in recent years and we have seen three different farms all in the same village suffer cases recently.

Botulism is a disease caused by ingestion of the toxin produced by the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum*. The bacteria are widespread and their toxins can affect most animals and birds, including people. It is commonly found in the gut of poultry and wild birds and in the litter in poultry houses.

The majority of cases in cattle have been associated with direct or indirect contact with broiler poultry litter. This was the case in the outbreaks we saw recently.

It is believed that contamination of broiler litter with the carcasses of chickens that have died during production can render the litter dangerous for cattle.

Small fragments of carcasses can be transferred onto pasture by scavenger animals such as foxes, badgers or crows which gain access to this material after it has been stacked outside or spread on land

Clinical Signs: Botulism is characterised by a progressive muscle weakness. Affected animals usually go down and the outcome depends on how much toxin they have been exposed to; large amounts will lead to a rapid death, lesser amounts may be recoverable over a prolonged period. There is no specific treatment apart from nursing. Both of the heifers below were suffering with botulism. The one on the right was more severely affected and was euthanased. The one on the left recovered but was unable to stand for three weeks.



Control of botulism: Prevent cattle from coming into contact with broiler litter remembering that scavengers can transport carcasses some distance if the litter is stacked in fields.

Don't spread broiler litter on land that is to be grazed, or from which silage or hay is to be harvested in the same year.

If broiler litter is to be spread then it should be deep ploughed into arable ground straight away.

Please note that manure from laying hens may be spread on pasture, as there is no evidence that it presents a risk of botulism to cattle.

New Large Animal Office: By the time you receive this newsletter the new office will be up and running at Uttoxeter. Please help us to make it work by putting in any large orders in any of the following ways

Phone: 01889 567200

Fax: 01889 569821

Email: farm@glenthornevets.co.uk

The office will be open from 8.30am to 5.30pm every day. All day work will be coordinated from there, so it is better to call the office direct on the above number to request visits.

We hope that you will soon see an improvement in the service that you receive from the administrative and organisational side of our business. However, the staff in the office will be getting used to some new procedures so please be patient with us!!

One new feature is that we will book drugs directly to your account which will have the benefit of recording all batch numbers and

expiry dates at point of sale. This has become a statutory requirement and allows us to trace all drugs should we ever need to do so.

To aid accuracy, we will now have a barcode scanner, and this will accept the new barcode standard soon to be introduced by the pharmaceutical industry. These have all the important information in one simple box on the product

Also, in these environmentally conscious times we plan to switch to a near paperless office in due course. All data sent by Animal Health (formerly DEFRA and The State Veterinary Service) will be digitally attached to your clinical computer records. This ensures a good back up procedure, but will also mean improved ease of access for the vets right across the practice.

As many of you are aware John Kirk and James Russell set off on a triathlon on Sunday 8th July, an event which has been the focal point of a series of fund raising events over the last 2 years, for several charitable organisations. This last challenge involves a relay swim across the Channel, a 700 mile cycle ride then the ascent of Mont Blanc.

They would both like to thank those who have sponsored them so generously, and all those who have given support through the arduous training sessions.

To date they have raised around £7000, but ultimately expect this figure to rise to £10000 with collections during and after the event.

If you would like to help them, please ask at Uttoxeter or Tutbury, where details of the charities as well as sponsorship forms are available