



SMALLHOLDER NEWSLETTER

Welcome back! Busy times at the George have delayed our newsletter for a long time, but no need to worry, we are back!

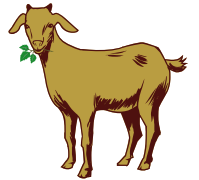


Introduction

We will be the main vets you will see in the future, feel free to give us a ring whenever you have any queries.



My name is Fien Coudenys and I have recently joined the George Farm team. I am excited to engage our smallholder clients more and offer new services going forward. I truly enjoy smallholdings and goats in particular have a special place in my heart! Outside of work I love hiking, exploring the area and I like to do a bit of arts and crafts. I look forward to meeting you and getting to know your animals!



I'm Ben Sellick, some of you may have already met me on previous Smallholders Group visits. After starting at The George in 2016, I realised the need for more engagement from us as your vets and so the Smallholders Group was born. Fien has shown great enthusiasm for smallholder work and she will be running the group going forward. She is well versed in catching unruly alpacas and tipping stubborn sheep, you are in safe hands!



I'm Joe Reskelly and over the past year have been fairly well involved with many of our fantastic smallholder clients and seen how rewarding our work can be with you all. It's great to see Fien setting up the renewed smallholders group and I'm glad to be part of it. A bit about me; the outdoors is my go to, be that in the sea for a surf or up a mountain on my bike or boots, I enjoy all aspects of Farm vetting with it giving a varied working week seeing big dairy clients for one call and a backyard goat the next. Looking forward to having a new revived group with you all.

I'm Joe Pescod, we may well have crossed paths already in the last couple of years! The variety and care you bring to your small holdings always makes working with you a pleasure and I look forward to continuing to do so.



Services offered going forward

We will be offering a new range of services going forward. If you're interested in any of these, please ring or email our friendly office team to get booked in!

Phone: **01666 823035** - Email: **smallholders@georgevetgroup.co.uk**

Smallholder visit

We'd happily book you in for a smallholder visit. This involves a vet visiting your holding to assess and discuss key management areas. This discussion would include housing, nutrition, body condition scoring, vaccination planning, parasite control and other important things!

Afterwards, a Health Plan will be made specifically for your farm in the form of a calendar including month specific reminders.

Costs: £185 plus VAT

Included:

- **Visit Fee**
- **One hour of vet time**
- **Tailor made Health Plan Calendar**
- **One Worm Egg Count**

Even if you have had a Health Plan made in the past, it is still very useful to review this and chat about any changes or questions you might have. If you've been lucky enough not to have had us out in the past year, this visit will guarantee we've seen your animals and you are able to get medicines for a 12 month period without having an Animal Under Our Care Visit first.

Sheep shearing



We are happy to announce we will be offering sheep shearing from 2023 onwards for our smallholders! This will be a service carried out by Toby, one of our Vet Techs. He can be booked on Wednesday's in both May and June to shear your sheep.

Costs: Visit Fee + £10 + Vat per animal (minimum of £30)

If you have over 20 sheep to be shorn, the price goes down to £8 + vat per animal.



Pregnancy scanning (goats and sheep)

From the end of October, we will also be able to offer a scanning service for small ruminants. This will be carried out by Joe Pescod and Keir Hamilton, who will visit your farm with their scanner and will be able to tell whether your ewe/doe is pregnant. With our current scanner we might not be able to give you an exact number, but we can at least tell you whether they are in lamb/kid. Very helpful to know for dietary management later on.

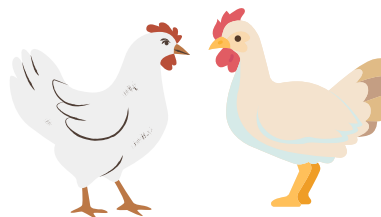
Costs: Visit Fee + Vet time spent on farm

Worming + vaccination assistance

Our lovely vet techs will also be able to assist with worming and vaccination of your animals. If you would like to have some help doing these husbandry tasks, please get in touch.

Mites in the coop! – by Fien Coudenys (MRCVS)

Red mites



Red mites are probably the most common ectoparasite of backyard poultry. The mites emerge at night and hide during the day and therefore are difficult to spot. Typically, owners report finding mites on their skin after entering the poultry house at night. These mites can be very irritating.

These mites don't typically cause feather or skin issues. The main symptoms of red mite infestation in your poultry house include restless chickens during the night (including excessive vocalization), lethargy, non-thriving and in extreme cases, pale wattles. The symptoms are mainly caused by the blood-sucking characteristics of the mites, which cause weakness and anemia.

It is very unusual to spot mites on the bird, since the mites primarily spend their time away from the bird.

Whenever you buy in new birds, it is best to quarantine them separately from your own group to avoid them bringing in mites and other diseases. These animals need to be treated for mites at the beginning and at the end of their isolation period before introducing them into your own flock.



Picture: Van Assendelft

Treatment options:

- Exzolt is considered to be one of the most effective treatments for red mites available. It is administered in drinking water at a dose of 0.05ml per kg. Give 2 doses 7 days apart. Only allow access to the medicated drinking water and make sure all is taken in within 24 hours.
- Don't forget about the environment! Make sure to thoroughly power wash the chicken house, let it dry and appropriately disinfect.
- Powder formula's containing Diatomaceous Earth Powder have proven to be helpful used both in the chicken house and on your hens.
- Alternative: ivermectin drops (2 drops per kg) or IM 1% = 0.02ml per kg

Hen: average weight of 2-3kg Cockerel: average weight of 3-4kg

Northern mites

Northern mites are becoming more and more common. They equally don't cause skin lesions, however, this mite spends its entire lifecycle on the bird, making them easier to spot and treat.

Treatment options:

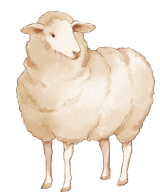
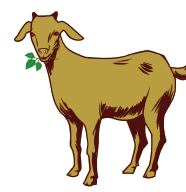
- Exzolt as mentioned above
- Ivermectin 1% IM or topical formulation three times with two weeks in between.

Other mites

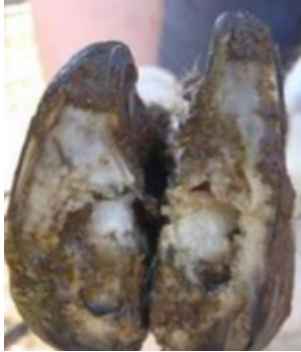
There are plenty of other mites out there that can cause issues such as scaly leg mite. If your chickens are not thriving as well as they used to or are experiencing feather issues please speak to your vet to discuss the different options.

Footrot and CODD in small ruminants – by Laura Hamer

Foot..What?



Footrot and Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD) are common bacterial infections causing lameness in goats and sheep. These diseases can have a huge impact on the productivity and welfare of the animals.



Footrot is best described as inflammation within the interdigital region of the toe, while CODD is localised to the top of the hoof and is often associated with an ulcer. These diseases can present together.

Both diseases can be identified with **lameness** and a **foul smell** from the foot. Additionally, Footrot presents with grey scum between the toes whereas CODD presents with hair loss around the top of the hoof.

How do Sheep and Goats get Footrot and CODD?

Both diseases are easily transmissible. Bacteria are typically shed from the hoof of an infected animal into the environment, where it spreads amongst the flock. It is therefore important that animals are treated fast to prevent transmission.

What is the best form of treatment?

Antibiotics and pain relief are typically the best form of treatment.

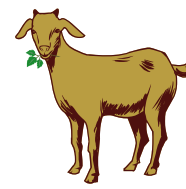
- Pain relief such as Metacam will help with pain management.
- Administration of antibiotics can be applied topically to the foot (using oxytetracycline spray) and/or administered systemically (injectable antibiotics).

How do we prevent it?

Prevention is really important to keep lameness rates low within the flock. This can be done with simple management changes.

- The infection spreads rapidly in a damp, warm environment therefore regular bedding changes can reduce spread.
- Checking bought-in animals for any signs of the disease before mixing them with the herd.
- Formalin or copper sulfate footbaths can help reduce both footrot and CODD. However, it is important not to footbath lame sheep as this will increase the risk of spread. Each foot should be submerged twice for maximal efficiency.
- If you have ongoing issues, vaccinating against footrot is an option by using FootVax which will stimulate immunity against the disease. Ask your vet for advice.
- Unfortunately, in severe cases with no response to treatment, putting the animal down might be the best option for welfare and reducing further spread within the herd.

Worm Egg Counts! – by Meghan Burgess



Parasites!

Heavy worm burdens affect animal welfare and productivity, causing signs including diarrhoea, anaemia, respiratory disease, reduced food intake and therefore reduced growth rate. Instead of worming routinely, WEC are a helpful tool to avoid unnecessary treatment and reduce resistance.

What's that?

Worm Egg Counts are tests we can perform on faecal samples to indicate the number of adult worms in the gut. For monitoring purposes, a mixed sample of animals in a group should be sufficient. If individual illness is present, an individual sample might be required. The fresher the sample, the better!

WEC before treatment

- Gives information regarding pasture contamination
- Determines the need to treat
- No treatment required if low!

WEC reduction test post-treatment

- Determines if product is working to reduce the worm burden
- Tool to identify any potential resistance
- Collected one or two weeks post treatment, depending on the group of wormer used

Guess and win one free Worm Egg Count! (sheep/goat only) - I used to lamb lots of ewes when I was over in Ireland, and I would always weigh them if I had a chance. How heavy do you think the heaviest lamb I have ever pulled from a ewe was? Please let me know your guess by emailing your answer to smallholders@georgevetgroup.co.uk before 20/10 and I will get back to you! Fien



Our vets can advise you on when to take this sample and how to interpret the results!

What is anthelmintic resistance and why has it increased?

Anthelmintic resistance is the genetic ability of a worm to survive a worming treatment. Resistance is confirmed if over 5% of the worms survive treatment. Due to over-reliance on anthelmintic drugs, repeated whole flock treatments and poor treatment timing, resistance is increasing in the UK.

What else can we do to help slow resistance

1. Using parasite forecasts and performance indicators such as **body condition score** and **daily weight gain**.
2. **Quarantine** new animals – keep out of contact with other sheep and treat with a group 4 anthelmintic (Zolvix). Where possible, keep new animals isolated for at least three weeks. You can coordinate this with treating for scab, a disease that causes itching and condition loss. Recommended quarantine treatment includes Dectomax + Zolvix.
3. **Don't 'dose and move'** – leave animals on the same pasture for 4-5 days after treatment, then move.
4. Ensure animals are not over-stocked.
5. **Rotate pastures** where possible, putting animals on 'clean' pastures where no sheep, goats or alpacas have grazed for the previous year. If co-grazing with cattle, be aware that goats and alpacas are susceptible to both sheep and cattle parasites.
6. When dosing animals, ensure to **give the right product, at the right dose rate** (avoid underdosing, weigh and dose for the heaviest animal), by the right route. Check your dosing gun is working correctly.

Goats and alpacas do not develop a meaningful immunity to worms, therefore will need dosing throughout their lives. Whilst sheep and cattle can develop immunity, some adults will still become sick as a result of worm burdens so faecal egg counts are key in determining the need to treat. The dose of drug may differ between species – check with your vet that you are dosing correctly as goats and alpacas often need a greater amount than the sheep dose.

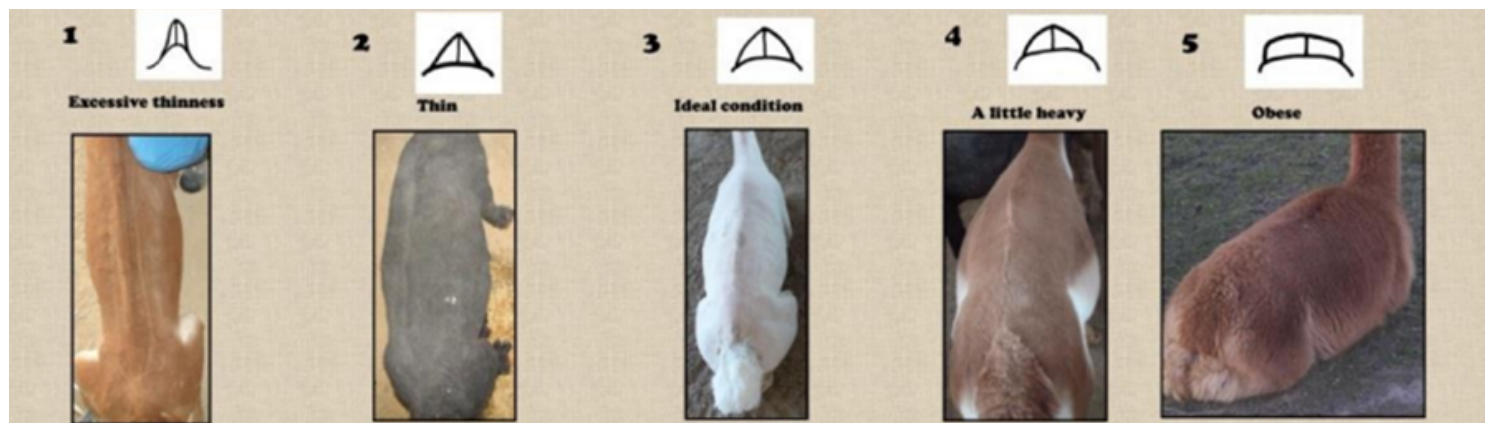
Body condition scoring, what's the score? – by Laura Brown

A simple way to keep an eye on your alpaca's health and wellbeing is to use a technique called 'body condition scoring' (BCS). BCS allows you to gauge the amount of fat coverage your alpaca has over 2 specific body areas and allocate them an overall score without the need to purchase expensive weighing equipment! It is useful to know your alpaca's BCS as it is a quick way to check how suitable their current diet is while also acting as an early detection system for underlying diseases.



BCS is based on a **sliding scale from 1 to 5**, with very skinny alpacas scoring 1 and obese alpacas scoring 5. We ideally want to maintain alpacas around score 3 throughout the year, this is especially important with breeding animals as being near either extreme of this scale increases the risk of infertility, difficult births, and poor lactation. We recommend that you score your alpacas quarterly, or monthly if you're breeding them. Write the scores down so you can easily detect any changes and discuss them with your vet.

It will take a bit of time to get comfortable scoring your alpacas and the vets at The George would be more than happy to take you through the process on your next visit – just ask!



The quick guide to an alpaca BCS assessment:

It is important to get hands on when scoring your alpaca as due to their impressive fleece a visual assessment can be misleading and make it hard to score the animal's true size.

The main area we focus on is midway along the back halfway between the neck and the tail. Place the palm of your hand across the backbone with your fingers running down the sides of the spine. In an alpaca with an ideal score of 3, your hand should form a slight triangle with your fingers sitting at 45 degrees. If the backbone is clearly sticking out then this indicates your alpaca is underweight (score 1-2), alternatively if your hand lies flat this indicates that your alpaca may be overweight (score 4-5).

The second area we check is over the ribs. Run your hands down the sides of the alpaca and see how easy it is to feel them. If the ribs are protruding and very easy to feel this suggests the alpaca is underweight (score 1-2), if the ribs are easy to feel but not protruding this is ideal (score 3). If you cannot feel the ribs at all this suggests the alpaca is overweight (score 4-5).

It should be noted that Suris will score differently to Huacayas as they store more fat along their backbone as well as alpacas at different stages of life e.g. adolescent, mature, and pregnant animals. It is therefore important to recognise what is a normal BCS for your animals and monitor changes from there.

Body condition scoring works similar for other species so we're happy to guide you along the way.

Any queries, please get in touch with our friendly office team. We look forward to meeting you!

Phone: 01666 823035 Email: smallholders@georgevetgroup.co.uk