

Risk of Nerve Damage When Injecting Livestock

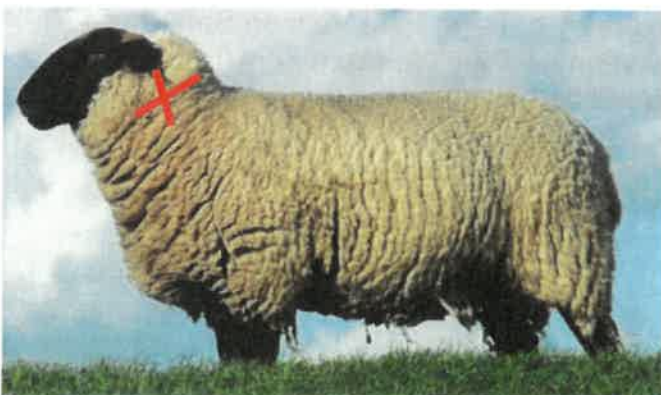
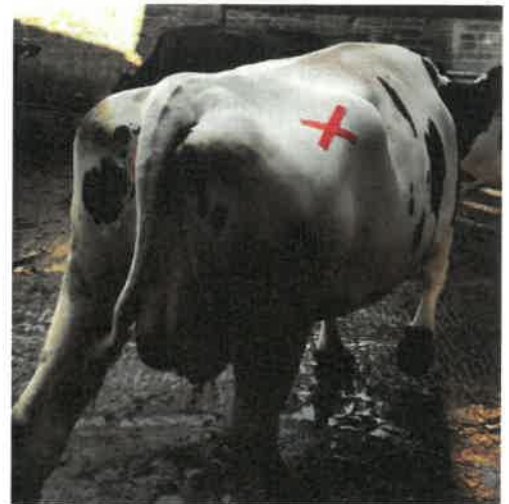
Kath Gray our new vet, has looked at recently published research by the University of Nottingham which highlights the risk of causing damage and lameness when injecting cattle and sheep in the muscle in the traditional way. 69% of all injections into the rump of cattle are within 5cm of the sciatic nerve. This is a very important nerve supplying the hindlimb. There is therefore a huge risk for accidental damage, which can cause pain, paralysis and lameness leading to welfare and productivity issues. This risk is similar in sheep and even greater in young cattle or those with a poorer body condition score, because the nerve is nearer the surface in animals with less muscle mass.

Most people regularly use the rump as an intramuscular injection site, which runs the risk of either directly damaging the nerve, or irritation caused by the injectable product inflaming it. A less common issue is that damage can also be caused by secondary issues such as fibrosis and abscesses in the muscle after injection.

The ideal and recommended place to inject is the neck, especially in sheep, but this area should only be attempted in cattle where animals are restrained well and safely. By using the neck as our main site, there is better dispersal of the injectable, as there are many smaller muscles that separate easily to accommodate the injectable and fewer major nerves.

In cattle (beef and dairy), where the only option is to inject in the rump region, the injection should be given in the area marked with a cross in the photograph below, and no more than 20ml should be given per injection site – which means up to 20ml each side if necessary. To find this site, a hand should be placed behind the hook bone (tuber coxae), and the needle placed behind the hand.

In sheep, it is recommended that intramuscular injections are given in the neck. This is partly due to the risk of nerve damage associated with injections into the rump, and to preserve the more expensive cuts of meat. The diagram below shows the ideal area to inject intramuscularly in sheep.



As this article mainly discusses the intramuscular injection technique, please free to ring Farm First Vets on 01873 840167 if you want further information on injection techniques, or any other issues.

PDs in Beef Cattle

Save both time and money by PD-ing beef cows earlier for more accurate results. Farm First Vets can PD (Pregnancy Diagnose) your beef cows from 35 days to confirm if they are in calf, this can improve efficiency by identify barren cows earlier or highlighting any fertility problems with the bull. Also, with early PD-ing we can predict more accurately targeted calving dates, helping you plan around calving times. The benefits of early PD-ing include:

- Early detection allows early recognition and treatment of problems
 - A bull not working
 - Nutritional causes of high barren rates
- Catching empty cows - Often more than 1/3rd of barren cows don't 'return to heat'
- Better fertility management
- Reduced costs of keeping barren cows
- More time to look after in-calf cows ... and you can plan your life around calving times.

We have special rates for this service and it is open to all cattle farmers. For a FREE initial discussion about how early PD-ing could help you, simply call us on 01873840167 or email us at info@farmfirstvets.co.uk.

Lungworm Risk

Early autumn is usually the peak time for cattle lungworm diagnoses in a normal year. We also know that in drier autumns or seasons where farmers are trying to make more use of autumn grass (like this year because of the summer drought) the number of lungworm diagnoses increase. It would seem likely that larval development on pasture could have been limited through June and July 2018 although this will be very farm and field specific. Weather conditions now of course, are much more suitable for larval development and spread on the pasture. Because of a reduced larval exposure earlier in the summer, cattle immunity to initial larval challenge could be less and the combination of a reduced immunity and higher autumn challenge could increase the risk of disease.

For animals that have not been vaccinated and are showing clinical signs of lungworm they will require treatment with an anthelmintic. Please speak to us for advice on which wormer you should use as the most appropriate wormer will vary depending on your farming system. In animals that are severely affected they will also benefit greatly from treatment with a NSAID (Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory) drug, for example 'Metacam'. Affected animals may also require antibiotic treatment for the prevention of secondary bacterial infections. Please speak to us for advice before administering antibiotic treatment.

Farm First 10th Anniversary Party

We would like to invite you to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of Farm First Vets on Saturday 17th November at the Hogs Head, Great Treadam, Abergavenny, NP7 8TA. From 7pm 'til late. Please RSVP by calling the practice on 01873 840167 as we will be having a hog roast.

The Team at Farm First – 01873 840167

