



GAME BIRD NEWSLETTER – Spring 2020

Sandhill Update

We are delighted to announce that Laura and Dan have joined Richard as Associate Partners of Sandhill Veterinary Services.

COVID – 19

Over recent weeks it has become clear that the COVID-19 outbreak is having a significant impact on the shooting industry. We are well placed to support our clients over this difficult time. We are pleased to say that we are fully functional and able to provide veterinary care to our clients, as key workers, supporting the food industry. At present there are no problems with medicine supplies although in some cases they are taking slightly longer to come from our suppliers.

We have implemented the necessary measures to reduce transmission of COVID-19. We ask in the first instance that all birds for PM or any samples are booked in by phoning reception in advance. On your arrival, please notify us by phoning again from your vehicle. Further instructions will then be given.

Sandhill van service

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we are unable to run the van service as we had planned.

We are, however, able to offer a sample pick up and medicine delivery service using a courier. This means we can receive birds for post mortem and get medicines out during this challenging time. Please contact us to enquire how this service may work for you.

Hatchery monitoring service

Following the large numbers of poor chicks in 2019, we have developed a service with a poultry hatchery monitoring team. Due to COVID-19 some elements of this service have been put on hold for this year.

This service includes:

- Regular testing of swabs for hygiene monitoring – [available now](#)
- Egg break out PM to identify causes of poor hatchability – [available now](#)
- Hatchery visit to identify potential improvements in your system – from 2021

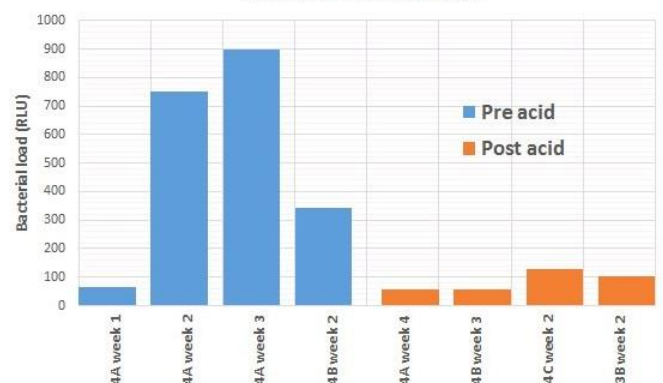
Water testing – quality audits

Good water quality is paramount to bird health. We carried out extensive water quality audits last season and found some very variable results.

General guide:

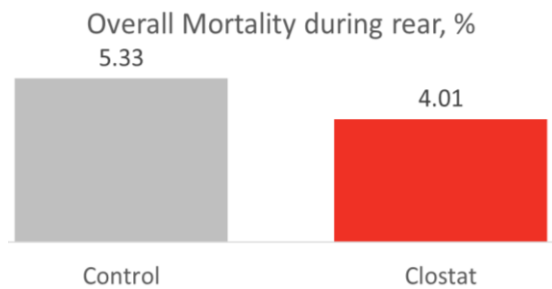
- 1) Test your water** (bacterial level and pH) at source and at the end of each line.
- 2) Sanitise water.** We recommend acidification to pH 3.8-4.2.
 - It is vital you know your starting pH and monitor acid levels
 - Low concentration Chlorine or Hydrogen peroxide products may be used in drinking water
- 3) Clean lines between seasons** – flush out with a strong Hydrogen Peroxide product, allow to stand and flush again.

Bacterial contamination of water lines over time, with and without acid.



Clostat Probiotic trial

Clostat is a probiotic for poultry and game. It is designed to be administered throughout rear to promote gut health. Our trial in 2019 across 70,000 pheasant poults showed; in comparison to a control, Clostat treated birds had:



- 25% reduction in mortality
- 52% reduction in antibiotic use
- 4% improvement in growth

Clostat can be administered through the water and in feed.

The first 2 -3 weeks are most critical for establishing a healthy gut

- Treatment should be started in water at the high dose (200g/1000L) to front load with 'good' bacteria
- If feed contains Clostat then we still recommend putting Clostat in water at 50% to ensure uptake.

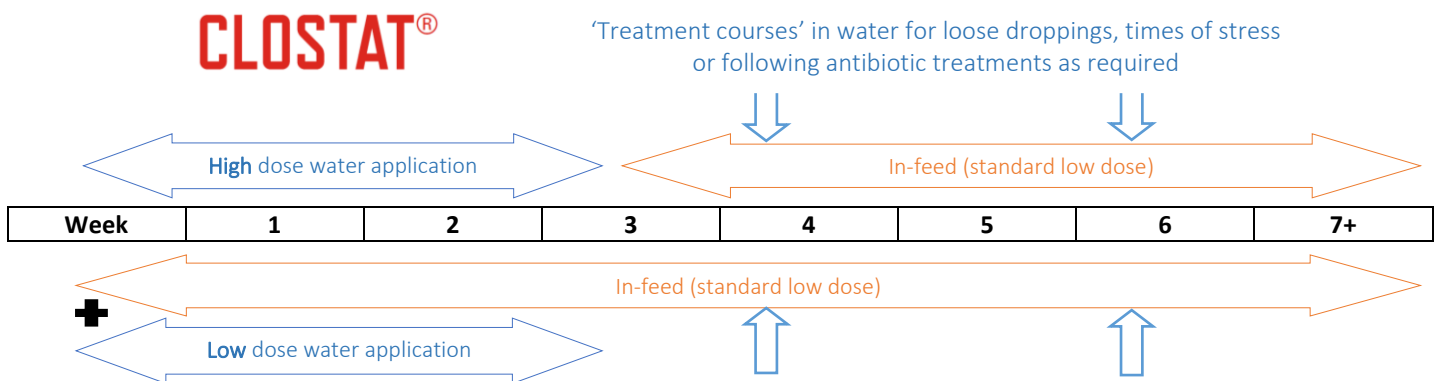
As water intakes increase, in-feed application may prove easier long term.

From 2 -3 weeks a lower maintenance dose is required throughout rear.

Administration in feed and water may be used together, for example in feed at the standard dose, then topped up in water for two weeks in order to start birds off at the combined required high dose.

Clostat can be used with acids, sanitisers and can be administered through a dosatron. The product is safe and cannot be overdosed. Clostat can be used at the same time as antibiotic treatment.

Treatment of a pheasant poult to 7 weeks would cost between 0.5 – 1.5p per poult.



Grouse update

Worm counts last autumn were generally low with most moors not needing to medicate birds or if they did then only certain areas of the moor required medication. Worm egg counts on caecal pats this spring have given similar results.

Over the past few years, we have seen young grouse with a similar history of mortality in young birds / birds being lost from broods. No single clinical condition has been identified as the cause and in many, no obvious clinical disease was present. Most of these birds had tapeworms present but as similar levels of tapeworms are regularly seen in birds in good body condition, these were not thought to be the cause of the problem.

It is likely that a variety of stresses were responsible for these losses. Many people felt that the losses were primarily due to lack of nutrition available to the young birds at critical times due to Heather Beetle and weather conditions. Another stress that we have not been able to quantify is disturbance to the birds due to the number of walkers on the moors. It will be interesting to see what happens this spring with hopefully fewer people on the moors. Will birds rear their young more successfully?

Sandhill Vets is on Facebook and Instagram – Please follow us for regular updates!



Sandhill Game Vets



Sandhill Game Bird Services