

January 2020

Sandhill Veterinary Services

Game Birds | Commercial Poultry | Pigeons



GAME BIRD NEWSLETTER

Medicine collection

Medicines can be collected from any of the below sites by appointment, following veterinary prescription/consultation.

Thirsk - Sandhill Veterinary Services
Y07 3RW

York - Bishopton Veterinary Group
YO19 5LL

Hexham - Scott, Mitchell Associates
NE46 3SG

In addition to this we are excited to announce that we will have a **Sandhill Van - medicine delivery and post-mortem specimen collection service** for the 2020 season! More details to follow soon.

Following expansion of the team at Sandhill over the last few years, we now usually have a vet at the practice Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5pm and Saturday 9am- 12pm. **This means we can carry out PM's at any time of the day by appointment.** Outside these hours we have a vet on call 24/7.

Practice meetings

This year we will be holding three identical meetings to allow for a better geographical coverage for our clients in Northumberland / Scotland and East Yorkshire.

Hexham - Scott, Mitchell Associates – Thursday 6th February. Hexham market NE46 3SG

Refreshments from 6.30 start. Hot supper provided. Please book your place by 31st January.

Thirsk - Topcliffe village hall – Wednesday 19th February

Refreshments from 6.30, 7pm start. Hot supper in the interval. Please book your place by 15th February.

Driffield – Rugby club – Thursday 27th February. In conjunction with **Northern Game Feeds.**

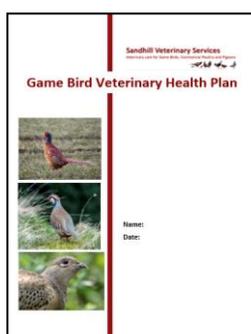
Refreshments from 6.30 start. Hot supper provided. Please book your place by 21st February.

Due to space limitations, places are limited to two people per site. Please call to book your place.

Game hatchery monitoring service

We were incredibly busy early in the rearing season in 2019 with some of the worst chicks we have seen for years. This problem was widespread across the country from hatcheries of all scales and sizes. Many of these problems can be reduced to some degree with improved hatchery management.

Therefore, we have developed a new service with a poultry hatchery monitoring team. Whether you have had issues or not, this service is aimed to work with you to look over your hatchery and processes, potentially identifying weak areas where improvement may be needed. Another aspect of this process is setting up a routine swabbing protocol for ongoing hatchery hygiene monitoring. We hope this service allows you to help make improvements, and subsequently increase performance and efficiency.



Veterinary Health Plans

We have had a good uptake of our health plans last year. For those of you with health plans (and anyone interested) we will sit down and review this last rearing season with you and update your plan before this year's season/discuss possible improvements.

The DEFRA code of practice for game birds recommends that all game farms/shoots have an active health plan and the British Game Alliance (BGA) also requires sites to have a health plan.

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Richard Byas B.Vet.Med., M.R.C.V.S., Laura Langstaff B.Vet.Med., M.R.C.V.S., Dan King BVMedSci BVM BVS., M.R.C.V.S

Washing and disinfection

Between rearing seasons we have a great opportunity to control disease in future seasons. Some bugs, such as Mycoplasma only live up to 4 days on surfaces and in the environment, but others such as worms and cocci can last for years.

Once sheds are emptied and mucked out (ideally straight after the season), it is **essential a detergent wash is used**. This breaks down the invisible grease layer over surfaces which will stop your disinfectant from working effectively.

Next sheds must be allowed to dry fully before a disinfectant is used. **This disinfectant must be active against coccidial oocysts** and administered as per the label.

You must always consider where your washings go after washing out a shed. If all the muck is blown outside the door with the shed in situ, it is very likely that there is a significant accumulation of infectious coccidial oocysts. This then means that when setting up the sheds in spring, you walk disease in to a perfectly clean shed and undo all your good work.

For advice on products and protocols please speak to one of the vets.

Breeding advice – Mycoplasma update



We have seen many cases of Mycoplasma (MG) over the last year, however, we do feel outbreaks are slowly reducing year by year. The cases we do see seem to be more isolated and where appropriate are responding to treatment rather well. We find as many, if not more problems in MG vaccinated birds and these cases do not seem to respond to medication nearly as well.

The key with respiratory disease is to act fast to get a diagnosis and then cull any affected birds. Treatment may be appropriate in some isolated cases, however treatment will never totally clear an MG infection, so birds certainly must not be bred from and ideally culled. Where an outbreak occurs in released birds ensure birds are culled out hard at the end of the season. Any birds left over will act as carriers ready to infect next year's poults coming in.

Vaccination is an incredibly useful tool for some diseases. But you must consider what you are trying to achieve.

- MG vaccination suppresses / masks clinical disease in chickens, but has no known effect on limiting disease transmission through the egg (as per the BVPA guidelines) or clearing MG. **It is for this reason we do not recommend the use of any MG vaccines.** We believe it is essential for breeding birds to show disease (if they have it) allowing us to test/treat/cull as required. By masking this disease we just run the risk of hiding MG throughout lay, but then setting infected eggs and amplifying the disease for another season.
- ART – live vaccination by eyedrop is recommended at catch up a minimum of 4 weeks prior to breeding.
- Coronavirus - live vaccination by eyedrop is recommended at catch up a minimum of 4 weeks prior to breeding.

Can you screen the birds for respiratory disease, particularly MG?

- Birds showing signs of disease – yes absolutely. We cannot tell what diseases are at play simply by looking.
- Screening healthy birds is not practical. The test sample size required to be sure a group of birds is negative for a disease is so great, that essentially every single bird must be tested to have any confidence in the procedure. The cost of this and the stress caused is unacceptable. We would need to know the status of every individual.
- Serological testing in gamebirds is being developed, although this will never tell us if the whole batch is TRUELY negative, it may allow us to make decisions based on its results. Additionally, as it takes weeks for antibodies to form following infection, the bird may be diseased, but not test positive for a number of weeks.
- **We advise you to be incredibly careful with the interpretation of these results.** Remember a negative result isn't always a negative.

The full article can be found in the January edition of the GFA's 'Game Farming' and on our website.

Sandhill Vets is on Facebook and Instagram – Thank you for your support!



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In addition to our newsletter, we provide weekly updates and alerts on our Facebook and Instagram page!

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