

# CPD meetings aid client relationships

A VETERINARY group in Northumberland is building better relations between farmers and their vets through a series of CPD meetings being held through the county.

Alnthumbria Veterinary Group, the largest practice in the north-east, has organised the sessions on the topic of how vets can do more for their sheep and beef farmers.

Partner Joe Henry said the sessions, which are a new offering from the practice, had been well-received and were proving to be popular with clients.

“Alnthumbria believes vets should be considered part of the farming team and that in some areas of the country, farmers are underusing the specialist skills of their vets.

## Do something about it...

“If a farmer comes in for a bottle of antibiotics because one of his animals has pneumonia, we shouldn’t just prescribe it to him, we should find out why the animal is sick, if its illness has been caused by farming practices, and if

so do something about it to prevent other animals getting sick for the same reasons,” he said.

Co-operation and communication between the vets and the farmer clients is essential when caring for flocks on a large scale.

For example, when it comes to worm control, vets can help reduce

**VETERINARY PRACTICE** reports on how a large group practice in the north-east of England is seeking to build better relations with its farmer clients

farmer input costs and build stronger links with their clients by ensuring anthelmintic drenches are used effectively.

“We encourage our clients to have a post-drench check every year to establish how much resistance there is on farm. We have found widespread resistance in some areas.”

“One of the newer wormers, Zolvix (Novartis), is useful in dealing with this. One use is for quarantine dosing when buying in sheep, and we would also treat for scab at the same time. Another use is in the more intensive farms in

mid – late season after they have had doses of other drenches. This wormer would be used to clean out resistant worms that have been left behind. With this product the policy is ‘every lamb once a year’. If lambs grow better with decent worm control, it is much more cost effective for the farmers,” he said.

“Getting the farmers to monitor growth rates is particularly important. If they are not hitting their growth rate targets, then we would check their trace element status, or whether they have a heavy parasite burden. Farmers have to measure what they are producing. The biggest expense for farmers with sick animals is not the cost of medicines and treatment, it is the fact that the animals won’t be growing.”

## Large area

The Alnthumbria practice covers an area from the Scottish border to the Tyne, and an area about 65 miles from east to west, with clients never more than 45 minutes’ drive away from one of its eight surgeries.

There are four main surgeries that deal with farm animals, in Wooler, Rothbury, Morpeth and Alnwick, which has recently undergone a multi-million pound redevelopment. The group has also just opened a state-of-the-art equine centre at Morpeth.

The practice has 28 vets, 11 of whom are partners. There are 13 small animal specialists, four equine vets, four farm vets and seven who have multi-species interests.

The coastal strip of the practice’s territory is good arable land, with fattening cattle, while



Joe Henry.

the central area is lowland sheep and beef, and the western area is mainly hill sheep.

Mr Henry explained: “There are several hundred farms on our books, but only six dairy farms because of the area we are in. We have about 20,000 suckler cows ranging from hobby farmers with five animals to

larger farms of 1,000 head; 20,000 finishing cattle; 900 dairy; 110,000 lowland ewes and 60,000 hill sheep.

“There used to be many more hill sheep but this has been greatly reduced because of changes in farming practices. Farms in this area tend to be bigger both in terms of acreage and numbers of stock, so there tends to be less labour input per stock unit, or in other words more stock for each person working on the farm.

“Because of this we need to put decent preventive measures in place. If a farm has thousands of ewes, you have to treat them on a flock basis. You might have one shepherd for 1,000 ewes, so individually treating lame ewes can soon become impossible if lameness rises above 2%.

“It’s important to have measures in place to reduce lameness on a flock level. Equally, drenching on a whim happens less and less and tends to be driven by faecal egg counting, lamb growth rates and grazing history as it is quite a big job to worm 1,000 lambs,” he said.

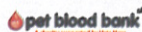
“A close relationship between farmer and vet brings advantages to both animal and farmer. We hope the CPD meetings will encourage all vets to adopt our approach and produce closer relationships between the two,” he said.



John MacFarlane, another of the partners in the practice.

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