

ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE NEWS

July 2019

The Animal Health and Welfare Officers from Argyll and Bute Council work across the area inspecting farms and dealing with complaints and queries in relation to animal health and welfare.

In the course of our routine work, we have identified a number of issues which may be common across Argyll and Bute. The information in this newsletter is provided so that you can take steps within your own business to address any issues which might have arisen.

BLUE TONGUE VIRUS

Blue tongue is a notifiable insect-borne viral disease that affects all ruminants, such as cattle, goats, deer and particularly sheep. It cannot be spread directly between animals and relies on the midge for transmission. The disease does not affect humans and there are no public health or food safety implications. A vaccine is authorised and available for use in the UK.

Midges carry the blue tongue virus. The disease spreads when infected midges bite an animal affected by the disease. The weather (especially temperature and wind direction) affects how the disease can be spread.

You can help to prevent the disease by practising good [biosecurity](#)

Symptoms of Blue Tongue

In sheep, the symptoms of bluetongue include:

- fever.
- reddening of the lining of the mouth and nose.
- swelling of the lips, tongue and gums.
- difficulty swallowing and breathing.
- a swollen, purple-coloured tongue (hence, the name bluetongue)
- lameness.

The following clinical signs may be present in cattle:

- Swelling and ulcers in the mouth
- Nasal discharge

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- Red skin and eyes due to blood collecting at the surface
- Swollen teats
- Tiredness

So you want to keep chickens in your back garden?

The Chicken House

Once your mind is made up that chickens are for you and you can take good care of them, the next step is to think about housing.

A chicken coop is probably the most expensive thing you will buy and there are many different designs on the market.

The Chicken Run

To keep healthy, chickens need to get outside. A chicken 'run' could be the back garden, or likewise a small fenced area or pen, whatever it is, it is always advisable to have the biggest run possible for your birds so that they can get as much free ranging as possible. There are many benefits to chickens in free range set-ups, the biggest being healthier, happier birds that cost you less to keep and produce more eggs.

The run needs to be secure – keeping the fox and other predators out whilst keeping the chickens in. If possible, bury wire netting at least 20cm into the ground to stop predators from digging under the fence and cover the roof of the run over.

Larger runs can have an electric fence where foxes are a problem.

The chicken run shown here backs onto open fields and there are many foxes around. It has 3 'strands' of electric tape looped back and forth – the first at low-level stops foxes digging underneath, the second is at fox nose height and together with the upper tape, stops the fox from climbing over.

Feeding Chickens

Chickens like all other animals need a balanced diet. During times gone by, many people fed their chickens on the household scraps and let them forage for as much as they could to get the rest. There are a number of people who tell me "My grandfather used to keep chickens and feed them www.argyll-bute.gov.uk



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on scraps alone, they'll be alright" but the reality is that most of the time, chickens won't be alright if fed only on scraps as they won't get the correct balance of nutrients they need.

Fortunately these days, there are feeds that have been created that contain the correct balance of nutrients, vitamins and minerals. If you want healthy birds and a good quantity of eggs, it is advisable to feed one of these formulated feeds. They are available as pellets or as a powdered mash.

The mash is slightly cheaper although the chickens will usually only pick the bits out that they want, leaving the rest to go bad so all in all it is usually better to feed layers pellets. Chicks or young growers will require chick crumbs and growers pellets.

Remember to allow enough feeders for your birds. There is a [pecking order](#) in chickens and sometimes the birds at the bottom will find it hard to get to the feeder if the others can stop them.

Common plants / foods that are poisons for chickens are avocado, potato plant leaves and rhubarb.

The most important factor though is that they should always have fresh water available and there should again be enough drinkers available for the birds at the bottom of the pecking order which may mean providing two water containers in different places.

You should [register](#) using the registration form within one month of keeping 50 or more birds on your premises.

You can choose to register fewer than 50 birds, or birds you keep as pets. The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) encourages you to register even if you do not have to by law.

By registering,

- APHA will be able to contact you if there's a disease outbreak (such as bird flu) in your area
- you'll help prevent the spread of disease and protect the national poultry flock.

Lyme Disease

How to prevent lyme disease:-

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If you camp, work, hike or play outside you could be bitten by an infected tick. Below are simple tips to prevent Lyme disease. Be Tick AWARE.

AVOID areas where ticks live. Ticks thrive in wood piles, leaf litter, long grass, beach grass, bushy areas, stone walls, and perimeters where the lawn meets the woods.

WEAR light-colored clothing to spot ticks more easily; long-sleeved shirt tucked in at the waist, long trousers tucked into high socks, closed-toe shoes, and a hat with your hair tucked in, if possible. Do not walk in the grass barefoot or in open sandals, even if it's cut short.

APPLY EPS-approved [tick repellent](#) (such as DEET or picaridin) and insecticide (such as permethrin) to skin, clothing, and shoes as directed.

REMOVE clothing upon entering the home; toss into the dryer at high temperature for 10-15 minutes to kill live ticks. Putting them in the washer, however, will not.

Protect your pets

If your pet, particularly dogs, goes outdoors they are at an increased risk for getting a tick bite. In addition, your pet can serve as a tick taxi and till unwittingly carry ticks inside your home, exposing you and your family. Ask your veterinarian about tick repellent products for your pets.

We hope you find this information useful. If you require any further information you can visit www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/animal-health-and-welfare, email animalhealth@argyll-bute.gov.uk or telephone 01546 605519.

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