

# PCHS NEWS

Premium Cattle Health Schemes

2022 Issue



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**John Scholefield Editor**

PCHS, SRUC Veterinary Services, Greycrook, St Boswells, TD6 0EQ

T: 01835 822456 E: [pchs1@btconnect.com](mailto:pchs1@btconnect.com) W: [www.cattlehealth.co.uk](http://www.cattlehealth.co.uk)

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PCHS NEWS

# Welcome



Welcome to the 2022 edition of the **PCHS Newsletter**. We hope that you are safe and well as you start to plan for the future post pandemic!

Farming is experiencing a rapid transition. There will be a greater focus on rewarding good health and welfare and monitoring endemic disease for the foreseeable future. This will mean that health schemes and health planning will be more important than ever before. SRUC has been gearing up to support livestock keepers to farm more sustainably. SRUC is researching methane emissions from cattle and has created the carbon calculator 'Agrecalc'. Improving and maintaining cattle health is a vital part of sustainable livestock farming.

We hope that you find some useful information to help you manage the health status of your herd and we look forward to finally meeting you face to face at events over the coming year.

**Alison Braddock**

## What's in the word Accreditation?

Programmes like BVDFree England and Gwardu BVD are successfully helping to tackle BVD. Stock from these programmes however do not have Cattle Health Certification Standards (CHeCS) 'accredited' status. Please only purchase stock from (CHeCS) licensed health schemes if you need certified BVD 'accredited' stock.

To be sure that you are buying CHECS 'accredited' cattle make sure that you ask to see the certification of the animals and contact our health schemes office if you have any queries or require confirmation.

You can check PCHS members on our website if they have given their permission to be listed [Member resources | SRUC](#) Member databases of other CHeCS providers are available online too.



## Wanda Tilson Wedderlie Farm, Berwickshire

**Wanda, along with her parents John and Marion, breeds pedigree Aberdeen Angus cattle on their farm near Westruther in the Scottish Borders.**

Although the farm was purchased by Wanda's great grandfather in 1942, they inherited the Wedderlie herd that had been established in 1914 by Major W A Baird. Today the farm covers over 1,000 hectares of land, including 500 acres of rough grazing, 375 acres permanent grassland, 66 acres of temporary grassland, 58 acres of woodland and 60 acres of forage crops – starting at 800 ft above sea level and rising to 1,200. As well as the herd of 240 Aberdeen Angus breeding cows, they also run a flock of 1,650 Cheviot/Mule sheep.

Involved with the farm from an early age, Wanda strives to continue the legacy of the Wedderlie herd with a focus on improving commercial attributes. Although they have trialled other breeds of cattle, such as shorthorn and Romagnola, Wanda comments, **"Angus are best suited to our mixed livestock grass system. They thrive on the available grazing, go hand in hand with the sheep and look after themselves to a certain extent."** The herd is split 50-50 between spring and autumn calving, with a nine-week calving period and heifers being calved at two years old. Any bulls that are not to be sold for breeding are sold finished at 12 to 13 months of age (with deadweights typically between 390 and 400kg), while any heifers that are not to be retained in the herd are sold privately, with many going abroad, or are sold as stores.

Despite Wanda often judging stock at sales, and one of their bulls being the last Aberdeen Angus champion at the Perth Bull Sales, all of their cattle are now sold privately. Since 2013 Wanda and her parents have been producing a catalogue of Wedderlie bulls for sale, which is sent out on request. As well as their commitment to producing commercially oriented bulls, Wanda emphasises the importance to their business of retaining loyal customers, maintaining a good reputation, and anticipating and breeding for future market requirements.

The Wedderlie herd have been members of the Premium Cattle Health Scheme since 2003. After suffering a devastating BVD breakdown due to the herd being naïve, Wanda's family sought to protect the herd which are now BVD accredited, as well as being vaccinated. The herd is also in the Johne's Disease scheme and vaccinated against IBR.



**Wanda notes that since joining the scheme the stable health status of their cattle has increased the confidence of their customers, allowed them to export much more easily and reduced their overall use of antibiotics.**

Iain McCormick, who was the herd's vet for ten years, commented, "their attention to detail is second to none and nothing is overlooked, they're always looking for ways to improve which makes them great clients to work with. Wanda is an excellent stocks person; the temperament of their cattle is so good, being very quiet and used to people which is down to the way she handles them and that fact that she constantly walks through the pens talking to them.



From the health point of view, we implemented a very successful control programme for IBR, following an issue which caused various problems. They now have this under control with a robust IBR vaccination program, which is invaluable to their business as they export their progeny to the EU."

As well as being a member of SRUC's PCHS Advisory Group, Wanda has also previously been on the Aberdeen Angus Cattle Society's committee and chaired the health committee.

The farm's achievements have not gone unnoticed, being awarded Scotch Beef Farmer of the year in 2014, the same year that they hosted a centenary open day to celebrate 100 years of the Wedderlie herd.

They are not content with resting on their laurels however – as well as continuing to breed with their focus on commercial characteristics, Wanda's aims for the herd include reducing the calving window to eight weeks, improving their overall fertility by selecting early born heifers as replacements and striving to become carbon neutral.

The catalogue of bulls for sale is available on request, with the most recent batch of bulls ready for early selection. More information is available at [www.facebook.com/wedderlieaberdeenangus](https://www.facebook.com/wedderlieaberdeenangus)

## Events

Despite the pandemic we were able to attend the Great Yorkshire Show, the Westmorland County Show, Borderway Agri-Expo in Carlisle and AgriFest South West in Exeter. It was great to be out and about again, especially to be able to meet so many of our members and others interested in our health schemes.

We hope to return to our full schedule of events in 2022, which (allowing for cancellations) will be as listed. We look forward to meeting as many of you as possible throughout the year!

**AgriScot** 9th February 2022, Edinburgh  
**NBA Beef Expo** 28th May 2022, Darlington  
**NSA ScotSheep** 1st June 2022, Dundee  
**Royal Highland Show** 23rd – 26th June 2022, Edinburgh  
**Great Yorkshire Show** 12th – 15th July 2022, Harrogate  
**Royal Welsh Show** 18th – 21st July 2022, Builth Wells  
**NSA Sheep Event** 27th July 2022, Malvern  
**Westmorland County Show** TBC (September 2022), Milnthorpe, Cumbria  
**Borderway Agri-Expo** TBC (October 2022), Carlisle  
**AgriFest South West** TBC (November 2022), Exeter



## Johne's Accreditation is Peace of Mind for Oxfordshire Dairy Herd

**For Chris Gasson and his family's 450-cow dairy farm in Oxfordshire, controlling Johne's Disease has meant peace of mind as well as higher value sales of surplus heifers.**

Chris is acutely aware of the importance of herd health. In addition to playing a key role in his family's 850-acre farm, which supports a milking herd of 450 Holstein cows and followers near Chipping Norton on the edge of the Cotswolds, he is an assistant in his local vet practice.

In 2000 the existing infrastructure and buildings were coming to the end of their lifespan. Chris says for the family it was a case of either get out of dairy farming or redevelop. They opted for the latter and increased cow numbers from 220 to 400 over a period of years through breeding all cows to black and white bulls as well as investing heavily in housing and a new parlour.

Chris was comfortable that the way they expanded the herd through home-bred replacements would keep disease out. "While there were financial implications to building numbers more slowly – which meant buildings operating under-capacity for longer – this outweighed risk of bringing in disease," explains Chris.

"We took the lack of clinical signs and confirmed cases to mean we continued to be free of Johne's Disease. But then in 2016 our milk buyer

challenged us to demonstrate we were free of both Johne's and the MAP bacterium," he says. "Obtaining Johne's Disease accreditation was the most robust demonstration of this we could get, so in 2016 we signed up for blood testing using CHeCS protocols through the Premium Cattle Health Scheme."

Chris says the family spent the next three years testing all cattle over two years of age annually to eventually qualify for Johne's Disease Level 1 status, the lowest risk level. "This means we are as close as we can get to Johne's-free. We still periodically buy bulls in, but always now from other accredited Level 1 herds. "Although we are on a retail-aligned contract which requires the cows to graze, we make sure there's no nose-to-nose contact with cattle on other holdings and double-fence where necessary. We don't spread muck on grazing ground and ask for contractors' kit to be clean before they turn up," he says.

"All this means we have peace of mind about Johne's Disease and the protocols to maintain our status. The benefits include us being able to sell excess cattle as 'Johne's free'. There's no



need to have separate calving facilities, or different routines for positive or suspicious cows; we can even feed calves with colostrum and milk without pasteurising it first."

Chris says the herd has also been tested as free of BVD. However they have been down with TB since April 2020 after having had 12 months clear previous to that. "It seems that these days, most dairy herds are in and out of TB so this becomes a way of life. We always try to do more but it's hard knowing what will work on your farm."

"By contrast it's clearer for us to see the cost benefit in Johne's control. This is why we went down the more committed route of blood sampling as opposed to milk testing, because it was the most efficient method of attaining accreditation for us."

Chris says blood testing works out around £4 per cow per year, and milk samples are £2 each so quarterly testing works out around £8 per cow per year. Both exclude sampling costs, which tend to be lower for milk samples as these are usually carried out on samples collected for milk recording.

**"Milk sampling is an excellent tool when managing a herd with MAP present on farm, however blood sampling has the edge when testing for MAP." Now they have achieved Risk Level 1 they are able to sell dairy and beef cross heifers at the lowest possible risk for Johne's Disease. "It's hard to put a price on that but it definitely makes them more attractive and saleable."**

Article appears courtesy of the Holstein Journal.



## Johne's Disease Scheme Update



Cattle Health Certification Standards (CHECS) exists to ensure all schemes operate to the same standards. This means that an animal from any scheme should be monitored for Johne's in exactly the same way. CHECS found that there was a disproportionate number of R1s across the schemes, indicating a difference in standards between scheme providers. The 2% rule change will have a positive impact on levelling up the differences between the schemes. The new CHECS rules will limit confirmatory testing of blood test positive animals to herds with a seroprevalence of 2% or less (or one animal).

CHECS management board has asked two independent experts to review the pending changes to determine the extent of any unintended consequences these rule changes may generate, so rule changes will be delayed until early summer of 2022. We will keep you informed of progress.

Useful link: [Review of pending changes to Johne's disease testing protocols – CHECS: Setting industry standards in cattle disease control](#)



## SRUC Farms

**SRUC has a substantial farming venture spread across six sites, located around Scotland. With this enterprise covering 4200 ha there are large stocks of cattle and sheep in addition to intensive pigs, and the cereals and grassland operations needed to support them.**

The farms' primary purpose is to support SRUC's research and teaching delivery within the three faculties that are responsible for academic delivery, as well as commercial returns.

Having 500 beef sucklers, 700 dairy cows, 3200 ewes and 200 breeding sows, animal health and health planning are critical factors in achieving successful outcomes. In normal commercial farming health is important in that it will drive profitability, but with the added requirement for supplying livestock for research and teaching, poor health cannot be allowed to compromise the delivery and outcomes of programmes for SRUC's internal and commercial clients.

Sophisticated health planning exists for all species on every site, which are drawn up and agreed with front line farm staff, as well as veterinary colleagues from within SRUC and the local vet practices that support each site. Replacement policy risks are managed, with the herds either being self-replacing or can be replaced within company. Males needed for refreshment of genetics are bought from known herds, with known health statuses.



*For George Baikie, who has overall responsibility for the farming operation, this is a huge plus and provides confidence in terms of the unit's ability to service the unique requirements on the farms in addition to their commercial activities.*

Cattle breeding in the dairy herd is entirely based on AI and a large proportion of beef cows are also on programmes that use AI as well as natural service. Cattle of both types being bred to specific genetic and increasingly genomic parameters, not only to give better commercial results but also to help refine research and academic conclusions.

The beef herd has been bred so that there are now 400 Limousin – Aberdeen Angus cross cattle with a stable microbiome, allowing for greenhouse gas emission studies to be carried out effectively – providing a level of uniformity that couldn't be achieved with buying in cattle from a number of sources, as they would have a wide range of gut flora in their microbiomes. A similar level of consistency is present in the sheep flock, however, the majority of the current research in the sheep is on worm resistance and the effects of worms on the efficiency and behaviour of sheep. To achieve this the flocks' lambs from November to February so that the lambs are inside and free of worms so that any trials can start with a clean slate. In terms of the dairy herd, a recent achievement has been their success in removing soya from the ration, not for fulfilling research work but to improve the farm's carbon footprint and to prove that it can be done without any reduction in the milk yield.

**All the cattle owned by SRUC are enrolled in the Premium Cattle Health Scheme**, with accreditation for BVD and Johne's Disease. The sheep flock are accredited for EAE, as well as regularly being tested for maedi visna, CLA, Johne's disease and OPA. The ability to manage "iceberg" diseases in all species is a massive advantage which has shown results over a relatively short time. With all livestock farming (and ruminants in particular) coming under increased scrutiny in terms of sustainability and carbon footprints, having healthy, productive and efficient animals is key to the ongoing success of the farms. For SRUC the ability to deliver scientific solutions to these issues is an important and underlying component of the ongoing purpose of their farms.



# SAHPS – NEW HEALTH PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT MOBILE APP FOR BEEF FARMERS



- Record production/health data and share the information immediately with your vet
- Record medical treatments and create an e-medicine book
- Record movements/births/deaths and sync with BCMS
- Use the app offline and sync with SAHPS desktop and BCMS later



Special offers are available for existing SAHPS clients and SRUC's Health Schemes members. For more info visit [www.sahps.co.uk](http://www.sahps.co.uk) or email us [enquiries@sahps.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@sahps.co.uk)

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## Glenrinnes Farms

Glenrinnes Farms is part of Glenrinnes Organic Estate located in the heart of Speyside's whisky country. The estate is family owned, becoming an accredited producer of organic livestock in 2001.

The organic hill farms extends to over 4,500 acres of hill and rough grazing with a suckler herd of 160 commercial cows mainly Simmental, Shorthorn and Aberdeen Angus crosses running alongside a herd of Pedigree Shorthorn cattle.

The herd have been members of the Premium Cattle Health Scheme since November 2007. The herd is currently BVD accredited and John's Risk Level 2 (since 2019) and are working towards John's Risk Level 1 status after a strict culling process was introduced within the commercial herd.

The pedigree herd at Glenrinnes consists of 35 cows all calving unaided in the spring with the herd achieving 85% calving within the first nine weeks. The herd is managed single-handedly by stockman Glenn Dean who describes the Shorthorn's as 'great mothers with a quiet temperament, producing lively calves, that soon get up and suck.'

Initially the farm joined the Premium Cattle Health Scheme so pedigree bulls and heifers could be sold at the premier society sales however the herd is run commercially alongside the commercial cows sharing handling facilities etc. so the decision was made to also include the commercial herd into the health scheme for ease of management and a focus on improving herd health.

Estate manager Alister Laing and stockman Glenn Dean plan to monitor for IBR and Leptospirosis in the future after seeing the benefits of being part of a cattle health scheme. Since becoming BVD accredited and testing for John's the herd has become overall a healthier herd with cows in better condition and maintaining condition scores throughout the season.

"We have noticed better herd performance with increased fertility and better conception rates since testing for John's" said Glenn. "The cows themselves are in better condition and milking more

which is contributing to them producing a better quality calf."

The calves are sired by Charolais and Shorthorn bulls with a Simmental bull used to breed heifer replacements. The aim for the future is for the herd to breed all their own replacements to protect the herd health status and reduce the risk of potentially buying in and introducing an infectious disease, so a Limousin bull has recently been purchased to breed replacements alongside the Simmental bull.

The commercial herd is mostly spring calving with calving starting in March. A small number of cows are calved in the autumn. Calves are sold as suckled calves straight off their mothers on farm to a local organic finisher. The farm has plans to finish a small batch of calves each year on farm using a rotational grazing system to produce organic finished beef.

Herd health status is something which is important at Glenrinnes and when buying in stock bulls, only bulls from herds within a CHeCS approved health scheme are considered, with Alister stating that 'we look for herds who have a health status the same as our own or better.' With more emphasis being placed on herd health at cattle sales and buyers of heifer replacements actively looking for heifers with a health status the farm plan to sell a batch of bulling heifers each year at breeding sales.

*'Customers are looking more closely at health status when buying heifers as replacements, in particular looking to buy from herds who are John's testing and/or accredited free of the disease. Buyer confidence is something which is important to us when selling our stock' – Alister Laing.*

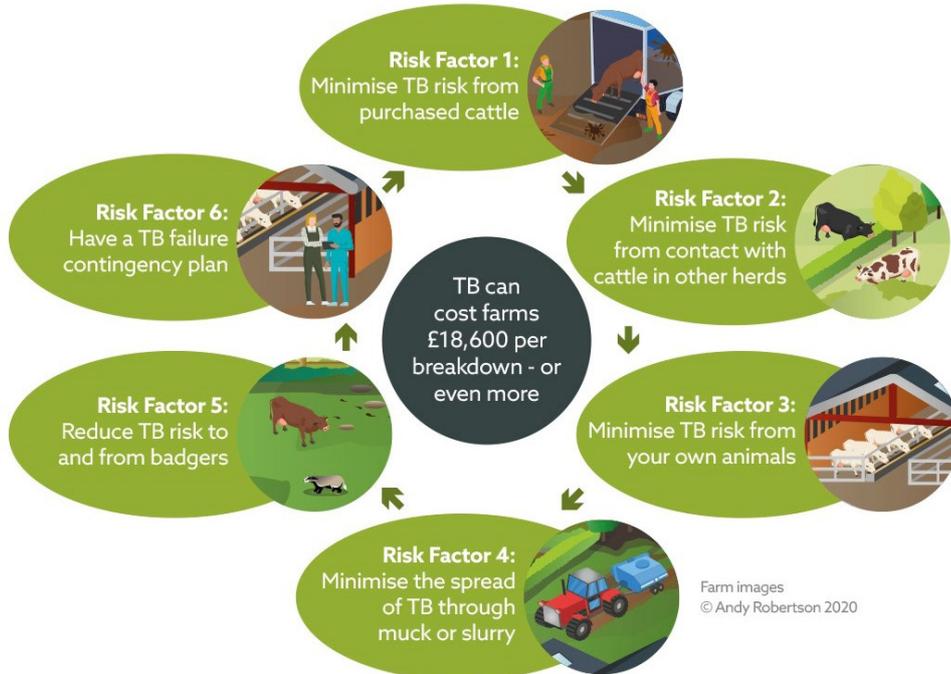
Alongside the beef enterprise the farm runs a flock of 1,600 ewes comprising of a pure blackface ewe and a mule flock. In addition to the traditional enterprises of a hill farm, Glenrinnes ventured into deer farming in 2019 capturing hinds from the hill and has since gradually built the herd up to 250 breeding hinds.

Sarah Balfour, SAC Beef Consultant  
[sarah.balfour@sac.co.uk](mailto:sarah.balfour@sac.co.uk)

# CHECS Entry Level TB Scheme

The latest addition to CHECS' health schemes is an entry level scheme for bovine TB – focusing on biosecurity basics to help farmers reduce the risk of breakdowns in their herds.

## TB: know your biosecurity basics



CHECS launched its TB Herd Accreditation in 2016 to help farmers protect their herds against the disease. However, CHECS and the British Cattle Veterinary Association (BVCA) have now developed the new TB Entry Level Membership, allowing cattle farmers to adopt a baseline standard of 'no regrets' biosecurity measures without some of the more challenging measures included in full TB Herd Accreditation.

The aim of the biosecurity measures is that farmers shouldn't require large financial investment. Entry Level allows vets and farmers to discuss biosecurity and disease transmission pathways, and implement a tailored plan for the farm that can be reviewed and amended as needed. This proactive strategy should reduce the risk of infection, duration of breakdowns and re-infection. TB Entry Level Membership is based on six risk factors, with the farmer and their vet choosing at least one option from each risk factor. The options are all set around practical biosecurity measures, which are based on evidence of transmission routes.

From August 2021, farmers already in CHECS TB Herd Accreditation who come to renew would also have to enrol in Entry Level Membership. For new farmers joining, Entry Level Membership can act as a step along the way towards the full scheme.

The CHECS TB programmes are especially advantageous if you are:

- In the High Risk Area (HRA) or Edge Area but have a low-risk holding
- In a 6-monthly testing area
- Selling livestock and want your low-risk status recognised
- Buying livestock and keen to minimise the risk of introducing TB
- Already engaged in other CHECS disease control programmes
- Looking for a systematic, supported way to reduce the risk of TB in your herd
- Keen to build on Government and industry efforts to control infection

[Click here to download the application form for the TB Entry Level Scheme.](#)

# Farewell Julie

Having worked at SRUC Veterinary Services for over 25 years, our Health Schemes Client Manager, Julie McDiarmid, retired in September 2021.

Many of our PCHS members will have spoken with Julie on the phone at some point and she has been instrumental in the running and development of the health schemes over the years.

Julie will now have much more time to dedicate to beekeeping and visiting remote parts of Scotland and we wish her all the best for the future.

*Pictured: Health Schemes office team, based in St Boswells: (from left to right) Louise, Charlotte, Susan, Kirsty, Lisa, Louise, Charlotte, Hilary, Rachel.*



## Annual Herd Test Paperwork and Labels

Due to changes at BCMS we now require members to add PCHS as an agent on either BCMS or ScotEID before we can send labels out. We will contact you nearer the time of your annual herd test to provide instructions for this. Please only contact us if you are testing imminently and haven't received the instruction from us.

## Meet the Team



**George Caldwell**  
Head of Veterinary Services  
BVM&S, MSc, CertCHP,  
Dip ECBHM, FRAGS, MRCVS



**David Wilson**  
Veterinary Manager,  
SRUC Health Schemes  
MA BVMS DSHP  
MRCVS



**Alison Braddock**  
Marketing and Business  
Development Manager  
BSc (Hons)



**Colin Mason**  
BVM&S, BSc,  
Cert CHP, MRCVS



**Tim Geraghty**  
BVMS, MVM,  
Dip ECBHM, MRCVS



**John Scholefield**  
Marketing and Business  
Development Officer BA



**Helen Carty**  
BVM&S, Cert AVP  
(cattle), MRCVS