



WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO POST-MORTEM

Post-mortem examinations are a very useful tool for helping to diagnose problems or disease on farm. Where external signs are vague or the first sign seen is death, changes inside the animal can point us in the right direction. Investigating early can help to prevent further deaths in the flock or herd, and aid in making plans for the future. Vet Megan Burgess explains a little more about what a PM can tell you and also the options we have at Severn Edge Farm.

We can do post-mortem exams on farm or in the practice. Initially we will examine the animal externally and internally, then we may discuss taking samples for testing if the cause is still not obvious. We can run certain tests, such as tests for fluke, worms and coccidia in house, but others may need to be sent away to our lab.

We are very lucky to also have the option of the APHA veterinary investigation centre in Shrewsbury. We can book animals in to be post-mortemed there, and any testing deemed necessary can be done under a set fee, sometimes making this a more cost-effective method than us having to send off individual samples for different tests. The staff there carry out post-mortems every day, so are very knowledgeable and have seen it all! Animals are only useful for post-mortem if they have been dead for less than 24 hours. Autolysis kicks in quickly in dead animals which can affect the appearance of tissues and the ability to get good diagnostic samples from them. The fresher the animal the better.

If you have an animal death and want to go down the route of a post-mortem examination, call us ASAP and we can get you sorted with the plan that we feel is best for you.

DON'T WASTE A DEAD ANIMAL – IT COULD BE HIDING VALUABLE INFORMATION

A key focus is the rumen, the largest stomach compartment. Its contents, consistency, and smell can reveal issues such as acidosis, bloat, or dietary imbalances. The reticulum is inspected for hardware disease (foreign bodies like wire), while the omasum and abomasum may show evidence of ulcers, parasites, or displacement. The liver is carefully examined for abscesses – often linked to ruminal acidosis – while the lungs are checked for pneumonia, abscessation, or parasitic infection. The heart may reveal signs of infection or trauma, and the kidneys can indicate metabolic or toxic issues. The intestines often provide crucial clues, with attention paid to signs of enteritis, parasitism, or clostridial disease. Additionally, lymph nodes are assessed as markers of systemic infection. In younger animals, the navel, joints, and evidence of scour-related dehydration are key areas of interest.

Samples are often taken for laboratory analysis, including bacteriology, virology, toxicology, and histopathology, ensuring a more definitive diagnosis where needed.

Ultimately, a thorough PME doesn't just explain a single loss – it can guide treatment plans, refine management practices, and prevent further cases, making it an invaluable part of herd health planning



STAFF UPDATE

We are delighted to welcome Holly Goulding to the team at Severn Edge Farm, Holly will be starting with us in September.

"I'm originally from County Durham and will be graduating from Harper & Keele Veterinary School in 2026. I'm super excited to be joining the team at Severn Edge and can't wait to meet the local farming community. I've always had a passion for farm veterinary work and I am looking forward to beginning my career in the Shropshire countryside. Outside of work, I enjoy exploring with my spaniel Archie and searching for the best lunch spots along the way"



Subject to Availability
OFFER ENDS
31ST JULY 2026



VASECTOMISED RAMS IN YOUR FLOCK

Getting the breeding programme right is fundamental to the performance and profitability of any sheep enterprise. Factors such as the timing of tugging, synchronisation of oestrus, and the proportion of ewes conceiving within the first cycle all influence lambing pattern, labour demand, and ultimately output. One management tool that is increasingly being adopted to improve these outcomes is the vasectomised, or “teaser”, ram.

A teaser ram is created through a routine veterinary procedure in which the vas deferens are severed or occluded, preventing the transport of sperm. Importantly, this does not affect testosterone production or libido, meaning the ram continues to exhibit normal mating behaviour. As a result, he actively seeks out and mounts ewes in oestrus, but without the risk of fertilisation.

The primary benefit of a teaser ram lies in his ability to improve control over the breeding cycle. Introducing a teaser ram 10–14 days prior to the fertile ram exploits the “ram effect”, whereby sudden exposure to a ram stimulates ovarian activity in seasonally anoestrous ewes. This leads to the induction and synchronisation of oestrus across the flock, particularly in early breeding systems or in ewes coming out of seasonal infertility.

From a practical perspective, this improves the proportion of ewes cycling and conceiving within a tighter window. When the fertile ram is subsequently introduced, a higher percentage of ewes are at an optimal stage of the cycle, resulting in improved conception rates and a more compact lambing pattern. A tighter lambing period brings clear labour efficiencies, enabling closer supervision during peak lambing, more effective colostrum management, and quicker intervention in cases of dystocia.

In addition to labour savings, reproductive performance can be enhanced. Ewes exposed to the ram effect often exhibit stronger, more overt signs of oestrus and improved ovulation rates. This can translate into higher scanning percentages and a reduction in barren ewes at pregnancy diagnosis. While results will vary depending on flock health and nutritional status, the use of teaser rams is widely recognised as a practical method of optimising reproductive efficiency.

Teaser rams also provide a management safeguard by eliminating the risk of unintended pregnancies. This is particularly valuable in systems where ewe lambs, replacements, or out-of-season groups may be present. By using a teaser ram initially, farmers can assess cycling activity without compromising breeding plans or introducing lambs at inappropriate times.

The downstream benefits of a more synchronised lamb crop should not be underestimated. Lambs of a similar age and weight profile are easier to manage nutritionally, respond more consistently to finishing diets, and are simpler to batch for sale. This uniformity can support improved growth performance and marketing efficiency.

From a cost-benefit standpoint, vasectomy is a relatively low-cost intervention when carried out under veterinary supervision, especially when weighed against the potential gains in fertility, labour efficiency, and flock output. To maximise effectiveness, teaser rams should be used strategically, allowed adequate recovery post-procedure, and ideally fitted with raddle harnesses to monitor ewe activity and cycling patterns accurately.

In summary, while a vasectomised ram does not contribute genetically to the flock, his role in stimulating, identifying, and synchronising oestrus can significantly enhance reproductive management. When used correctly, teaser rams offer a practical and cost-effective means of tightening lambing periods, improving fertility outcomes, and increasing overall system efficiency.

VASECTOMY DAYS & DEALS TO GO NUTS FOR!

We will be running **Vasectomy Week's** in practice

DATE: 15th - 19th June 2026 & 27th - 31st July

COST: £90+ vat each, or £80 + vat
if you are in the Flock Club

Rams must be pre booked and bought SEF Bridgnorth practice only.
****Price includes procedure and standard drug protocol****

We are able to perform vasectomies on farm where needed BUT these will be outside of the offer week.

Please call the team today and chat about what your chaps need.

Flock Club Members- remember you receive all year round discount on this procedure outside of the **NUTs Week**

SPECIAL OFFER



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