



GAME BIRD NEWSLETTER – WINTER 2023-24

Sandhill Update

Firstly, what a year of change this has been for us all at Sandhill! Following a couple of difficult years for shooting, it has been a truly positive one which couldn't have been achieved without the support of our loyal clients.

We are now settled into our new premises at Barker Business Park, Melmerby, and enjoying the extra space and functionality of the building.

Last April we welcomed Becky to the Sandhill team. She certainly had to hit the ground running as it was a very busy summer, but she rose to the challenge, and with her cheery personality has quickly become an integral part of our team. To keep up with the growth of the practice we have just taken on another lab technician, Cat, who starts in February.

NEW for 2024 - Delivery and Collection Service

We are happy to announce we now have a Sandhill van to allow us to provide new and improved services to our clients collecting birds for post-mortem and delivering medicines.

This van will follow a planned route on pre-booked visits each day between May and August and will cover Yorkshire, Northumberland, Durham, the Scottish Borders, and Cumbria (further details to follow).



****JOB VACANCY** DRIVER WANTED** - The role will involve early morning collections with an early afternoon return to the practice. Expected to be 30-40 hours a week, Monday to Friday from May to the end of August. Please circulate this role amongst your wider team as we hope to find someone connected to the game sector.

Avian Influenza (AI) and the Game Sector

As you will be aware, AI has been unexpectedly quiet this Autumn and Winter. Cases in wild birds have also been very low. It is assumed that this is due to some degree of immunity in wild birds (documented in a number of species), reduction in wild populations and vastly improved biosecurity.

This is fantastic news for the coming rearing season. Not only does this give us all some confidence that we may be seeing the end of the outbreak, but it should mean the requirement for licencing is reduced or potentially avoided.

We are told that DEFRA will update the sector on the licencing for releasing on or around SPA's in late January.

However, AI has not followed APHA predictions over the last two years so things could change very quickly. AI is endemic in wild birds, so individual outbreaks are still likely, especially where biosecurity is poor.

- **Practice excellent biosecurity.**
- **Have a back-up plan in case things change.**
- **Continue to catch up responsibly** – although the 21-day isolation period is **no longer statutory**, quarantine is very sensible to help prevent all disease. We believe this measure helped to reduce Mycoplasma cases in 2023.
- **Control all other disease** – have a robust worming plan in place and ensure vaccination against Coronavirus in breeding birds.



Disease Update

It has been a hard Autumn and Winter for many sites with the constant rain. Several sites have battled with weather related stress triggering disease. In some cases large losses have occurred.

We have seen several cases of mature birds presenting as underweight with enteritis, often with findings we wouldn't expect at this age such as Coccidiosis and Hexamita.

Worms are an increasing problem and we have had sites struggling with birds of all ages, even on the rearing field which was a rare occurrence several years ago. Ensure you have a robust worming regime in place.

Despite Mycoplasma cases being lower throughout rear and release than in previous years, we have seen a surge of cases over winter. Almost all these cases have not shown any sign of Mycoplasma (bulgy eye) until now and likely result from stressed birds contracting the disease from infected wild game and other birds such as corvids. Treatment is not an option now and it is essential these infected birds are culled out and certainly not caught up.

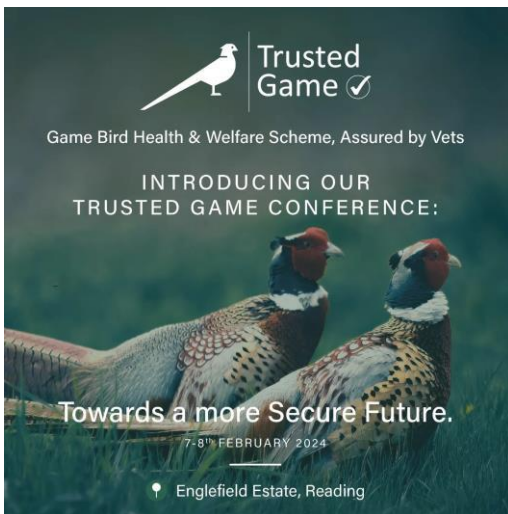


Spring Game Talks

**Topcliffe evening talk – Thursday 29th February, Topcliffe Village Hall.
Hexham evening talk – Thursday 14th March, Hexham Mart.**

Please RSVP to confirm your place.

Trusted Game Health and Welfare Scheme Conference



Trusted Game Health and Welfare Scheme will hold its first conference in February. This two-day conference near Reading features key representatives and international speakers, covering a range of topics vital to the future of game shooting.

To book your place please call the NGO office on 01833 660869.

AI and the associated regulations have put the game sector under the spotlight with the APHA and DEFRA. While game is captive it classes as poultry and therefore must follow poultry rules.

We need to show that we are policing ourselves and self-regulating. Initiatives such as Trusted Game or The Aim To Sustain Assurance Scheme are in place to facilitate this.

Please speak to us for more information.

Sandhill Chemical and Supplement Sales

We continue to offer a full range of disinfectants, detergents, supplements and water sanitisers.

Key Products:

Intra Hydrocare – Hydrogen peroxide stabilised with Silver Nitrate. In our experience this product is outperforming all other water line cleaners and drinking water sanitisers. Most Hydrogen Peroxides are not stabilised so only act for short distances down long lines.

Kilcox Extra – A cost effective multipurpose disinfectant that also **kills 100% of Coccidial Oocysts**. DEFRA approved and effective against viruses (AI) and bacteria.

