

Newsletter Spring 2022

With reports coming in from the shoots that are almost universally positive, and it seems most had a pretty good season with reasonable returns, confidence for the coming season is already high.

After a turbulent 2 years, it seems at last we might be coming out the other side of the pandemic courtesy of Omicron. For all the isolations, vaccines, lockdowns and so on, the mutation of the virus has made the most difference and thank goodness for that. It is now time to pick up where we left off in 2019 and progress various initiatives that I wanted to work on back then; for more information on those see below.

An important part of the service we give entails working with Gamefarmers and Keepers to analyse the problems of previous years and construct plans to improve year on year. This takes a lot of time to do well, and with all your enthusiastic support the practice has grown over the last 15 years to a size and covering such a wide area that to fit it all in **I have decided to step away from a lot of my other work to focus completely on Gamebirds and Poultry** all year round.

Moving Premises

As part of that decision, and as through Covid the service I provide has largely moved to one that is peripatetic and/or from home, I have moved base to my home address (see the header for this).

I have also set up new emails for specific purposes only:

Email re Gamebirds: ThePheasantDoctor@gmail.com,

Email re. Prescriptions: prescriptionsSDV@gmail.com

Email should be reserved for non-urgent queries only. **I would ask that everyone who wants to discuss something urgently, or needs birds seen, uses the Mobile - 07766123105, with text and What's App acceptable.** Please do not use other forms of messaging if you want a same day response, especially at peak of the rearing.

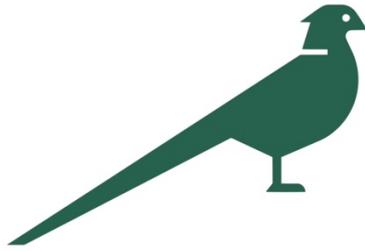
Tail Docking

Loosely Gamebird related; I am often asked about Tail Docking when on Visits and/or when passing. Despite stepping back from the Small Animal Clinic to focus on Birds I am still happy to do so but only if it fits in with the day. I cannot commit to being available if the Gamebird work is very busy at that time. My old practice is now known as **Chichester Vets**, and the team there are happy to continue to provide this service to Keepers and staff on all our registered shoots. You will need to provide evidence of working the dogs (this can be my confirmation for the Keepers, or a letter from a known Head Keeper), a copy of your shotgun certificate, and you must bring the pups back at 6 weeks for Microchipping by the practice. Due to a few non-payers I am afraid the Docking and Microchips must now be paid for at the time of the docking. Do also note that notice is sometimes required to fit people in on busy days, so if you are expecting a litter call the practice to inform them the pups are expected. Frustratingly every year we get calls for pups that are already on their last legal day to dock, with no paperwork etc in place – if you are not organised you will be turned away so plan ahead, register with the practice well in advance and get documents in place.

Trusted Game – the assurance your Gamekeeper needs

With a brief pause in 2020 for obvious reasons, I noted an increase in official visits (Trading standards etc.) through 2021 to interrogate client's premises and businesses. Most were on the basis of complaints from "anti" groups. Thankfully, through already close engagement with clients, rebuttal of complaints was not too difficult. However, it highlighted the fact that we all have to be constantly alert to challenge. Hence, I am very pleased to be part of the team who conceived and constructed TRUSTED GAME – the Health and Welfare Scheme for Gamebirds. I am hoping everyone on my books will get involved.

Formally launched in January the scheme aims to provide an inexpensive, accessible, and evidence-based auditing and standards scheme focused on Health and Welfare, with outcomes assessments and linked training, to support those who rear and release Pheasant, Partridge and Mallards



Trusted
Game 

Game Bird Health & Welfare Scheme assured by vets

TRUSTED GAME is unique in that it is based around the existing partnership between you and your Vet. Vets are already engaged with their clients on a day-to-day basis, and for many this will just be formalisation and/or enhancement of existing processes into what we hope will now quickly become a nationally recognised scheme. However, by demonstrating a commitment to the health and welfare of the birds, throughout their lives, then customers, the public and government can all "trust" in the process

Developed in part via trialling audits on some of our Game farming clients and Shoots through 2021 (thanks to those who took part), where key indicators of success and failure were identified, and by the Vets involved pooling their work and data and comparing that with existing best practice advice, we built the guidance from the ground up as specific to the needs of Gamebirds.

In most other farming sectors Vets are already closely involved in providing these schemes, and so you can be reassured that as the auditing and advice becomes part of your clinical record it remains confidential to you and myself (as your Vet). You will be provided with detailed reports, and copies of past clinical records, prescriptions, and advice given, along with templates for recording data that one is legally required to do on your sites. Along with formal records of training all provide evidence of responsible management and ownership of the process. The standards, being evidence based, acknowledge that there is no one size that fits all due to the diversity and nature of all those projects and businesses involved in Game.

We have been blown away by how quickly TRUSTED GAME has grown, with almost all the main Veterinary Practices signing up to provide the project within its first 2 weeks!

Clearly, it's going to take up a lot of time through this year to get the work done, so I will be starting visits early to fit in as much as I can, to free up the time needed when releasing kicks off. And of course, the Training Days need running as well (see below)

Costs: For those already subscribed to the retainer scheme this will involve just £120+Vat added to the annual fee to cover costs, as it will become part of the annual visit. For clients that are just registered and PAYG the scheme will cost £250+Vat. For most clients this process should be gone through annually, but for small shoots (less than 3000 birds) we are advising a 3 -yearly review.

Gamekeeper and Rearing Field Training Days

Much as my Spring Keepers Meetings were very popular, with over 120 attending the last in 2019, for this season the plan is to hold a number of small group meetings to progress training initiatives developed by the British Veterinary Poultry Association's Gamebird Working Party (of which I am part) that all Gamebird Vets have been tasked with providing. Please do come along to those as they should have something for everyone. The courses have been endorsed by both the TRUSTED GAME scheme and the BGA (Now known as British Game Assurance).

Clients have generously offered venues for these events, often Shoot Rooms or similar so do note that places have to be booked as space is limited at each venue

Each event will run from 10am to 1pm. Events are shown by nearby town and postcode due to GDPR rules – exact details will be provided when you book

The events are Free of Charge for staff working for shoots and rearing fields subscribed to our retainer scheme; for those who are just registered shoots we are asking for a £30 donation to go to the GWCT and the GWT Charities that are so important for the industry.

Dates and Venues:

Rearing Field Modules

- 15th March – BN18 Arundel, West Sussex
- 18th March – RH8 Oxted, Surrey (M25 easy access)
- 21st March – GU28 Petworth, West Sussex
- + Another in April venue TBC

Shoot/Releasing Module

- 29th March – CT3 Canterbury, Kent
- 1st April – RH17 Haywards Heath, West Sussex
- 5th April – RH8 Oxted, Surrey (M25 easy access)
- 8th April – TN17 Goudhurst, Kent
- 13th April – GU28 Petworth, West Sussex
- 19th April – BN18 Arundel, West Sussex
- 22nd April – RH17 Haywards Heath, West Sussex
- 25th April – BN18 Arundel, West Sussex
- 27th April – BN7 Lewes, East Sussex



Please email or message me to book in – emails please to thepheasantdoctor@gmail.com

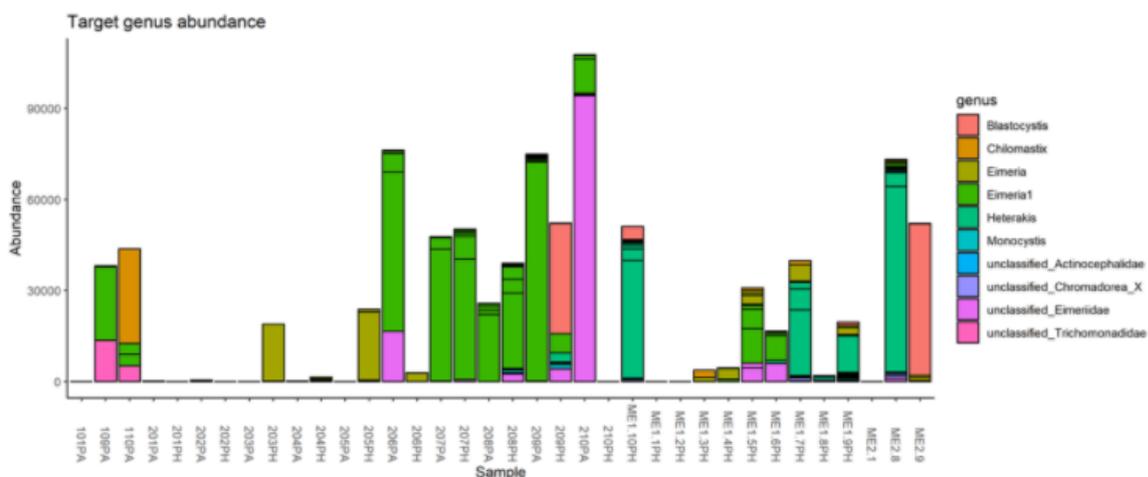
If demand outstrips supply in an area there is a little room to add events, and please also for the moment do not attend with a cold and/or Covid symptoms; if in any doubt please do a lateral flow test before attending. We can always fit you in at another event when recovered

Research Update

As many will know from previous newsletters, I am very keen to establish the science behind the diseases that affect Gamebirds, and have been working for some years now on projects with the University of Surrey. Thanks again to all those clients who kindly allowed us to sample birds through 2019/20/21. We profiled the bacterial microbiome in 2019, enabling a better understanding of changes through the first 12 weeks of life, and this has led to spin off projects analysing detail that could prove very useful to us working in the field.

As one example, we have investigated resistance to Amoxycillin in Gamebirds by looking at Gene markers for resistance, and shown the impact of antibiotic use, as well as the decline in some of these gene markers with age, immune system development and the changes in the microbiome. We want now to look at similar work for many of the other antibiotics we use.

Through 2021 we did a lot of work on profiling the protozoan infections and worms. Fascinatingly we have raised more questions than answers over what we are actually treating when Hexamita occurs, and so we need more samples from clinical cases – These will be taken from actual disease outbreaks only in 2022, and we will be asking you to allow us to take samples if you are unlucky enough to get this disease.



The Chart above shows some data from samples collected in 2021, with genus reference points for the findings.

BASC & NGO Game Management evening, 30th March at Plumpton College

If you would like attend a more general talk about the Research Projects and the Trusted Game concept, then I will also be speaking at this meeting as one of the guest speakers. Contact BASC SouthEast to book or follow the link: <https://events.basc.org.uk/events/game-management-evening-plumptoncollege-eastsussex/> Cost is £5, with proceeds to the Gamekeepers Welfare Trust

Lastly to wish you all a good rearing and releasing season, and I will see most of you soon.