

Farming, Livestock and Dogs

Dogs and livestock have had a working relationship since domestication; however their relationship seems to be changing to one that has less mutual benefit.

Dog faeces are potentially a lethal substance that blights the countryside. There have been many instances in this village and others where condemnation of carcasses and offal at the abattoir (meaning the farmer receives no payment) has occurred due to the infection of lambs by tapeworm cysts.

The Life Cycle of the offending tape-worm is complicated but, essentially, the adult tapes live in the dog's small intestine shedding infected eggs or larvae onto the pasture of grazing sheep. The sheep act as intermediate hosts where larvae migrate from the gut of the sheep forming cysts in various areas of the body including the liver, brain and skeletal muscle. Any dogs eating infected carcasses are highly likely to become infected (this is particularly relevant as there is a new fad of feeding dogs a raw meat diet). Worming your dog regularly with an effective tapeworm medication is important but even dogs wormed regularly have the ability to transmit.

Dog faeces also harbour a microscopic parasite called Neospora; the dog is a symptomless carrier and will shed intermittently. Cows are infected for life by grazing contaminated pasture causing abortions of their calves. There is no reliable diagnostic test for dogs as they shed intermittently or effective treatment. So the message is most definitely bag it and bin it! If you have bagged it please remove it as there have been bagged poos hanging from trees and discarded in verges – take it home and let NSC take it away in your normal household waste.

Another problem that affects farmers is that of dog worrying. Please keep your dogs on leads when near livestock. It is against the law to allow your dog to worry livestock.

Please enjoy the permitted rights of way we are fortunate to have in the Parish but remember the land-owners' fields are primarily their place of work and not a walkers' playground.