



BLACKDOWN
FARM VETS



FARM VET FOUNDATION COURSE

A PRACTICAL, CASE-BASED PROGRAMME FOR
EARLY-CAREER FARM ANIMAL AND MIXED
PRACTITIONERS



SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2026

Farm Vet Foundations Course 2026

‘Progression through teamwork’

Blackdown Farm Vets are an independent, farm-only practice serving East Devon, Somerset and West Dorset. The course is built around the same principles as the practice: proactive, tailored support for modern farming, with an emphasis on practical decision-making, profitability, efficiency, animal health and welfare.

Who?	This course is aimed at new or recent graduates, early-career farm animal or mixed practitioners, vets returning to farm practice, and vets whose current caseload gives limited farm animal exposure.
What?	A structured 9-day course. Three teaching blocks, each run over three days, combines classroom teaching, on-farm practical work, case discussion and peer learning. The emphasis is on practical approaches, decision-making, investigation plans, treatment options, prevention and client communication.
When?	Block 1: Tuesday 01/09/26 - Thursday 03/09/26. Block 2: Monday 28/09/26 – Wednesday 30/09/26. Block 3: Monday 19/10/26 – Wednesday 21/10/26.
Where?	Based at the main Axminster Office of Blackdown Farm Vets: Dalwood Hill Nursery, Burrow Knap Way, Dalwood, Axminster, Devon EX13 7ES What3words: ///sorters.shrubbery.foot Teaching will take place in and around the practice area across East Devon, Somerset and West Dorset. Venues will include teaching rooms, farms and practical facilities, depending on the topic.
Why?	To build confidence in the common farm animal clinical and consultatory situations encountered in practice, while giving delegates access to develop a supportive peer group with experienced farm vet tutors.
Booking	Please fill in the form on the last page of the brochure. 01404 819150 hello@blackdownfarm.vet www.blackdownfarm.vet

Accommodation can be included for a fee. Attendance for the full course is encouraged to help delegates gain the greatest benefit from the teaching, practical sessions and collaborative learning environment.

Course Structure at a glance

The programme is designed around the problems a farm vet is most likely to meet: Sick animals, groups with poor performance, fertility visits, mastitis and cell count issues, lameness, beef and sheep work, and those species typically encountered with small holders.

	Dates	Core themes	Practical emphasis
Block 1	01/09/26 - 03/09/26	Day 1 - Postmortems. Day 2 - Infectious disease Day 3 - Youngstock	Post-mortems, Common Clinical Problems, Approach to the sick cow, Diagnostics, Infectious Disease and Youngstock
Block 2	28/09/26 - 30/09/26	Day 4 - Fertility Day 5 - Udder health Day 6 - Practical nutrition	On farm fertility management and investigations, Mastitis/SCC control, Diet and transition assessment
Block 3	19/10/26 - 21/10/26	Day 7 - Lameness Day 8 - Beef and Sheep Day 9 - Common small holder species	Herd approach to lameness, Individual lameness treatments, Suckler and flock health, Holistic approach to parasite control, Practical approach to Pigs, Goats and Alpacas.

Learning format

- Case-based teaching: frameworks for common farm animal problems.
- Small-group facilitated discussion with space for questions from recent cases or current practice experience.
- On-farm practical sessions where possible.
- Focus on communication: how to explain uncertainty, risk, cost, prevention and follow-up plans to clients.
- Delegate numbers: Places are limited to 10 members to help foster a high-interaction style course.

Block One

Post-mortems, Common Clinical Problems, Diagnostics, Infectious Disease and Youngstock

	Course Tutuors	Synopsis
Day 1 09:30am 01/09/26	Lottie Birchall, BFV Nikki Bird, BFV Rachael Collins, APHA	Welcome & Ice breaker Post Mortem approach • Safe Working • Best practice for Sample collection, • Interpret gross findings • Writing useful lab submission forms • Afternoon practical session
Day 2 09:00am 02/09/26	Lottie Birchall, BFV Nikki Bird, BFV Jonah Dickie, BFV	Approach to the sick cow and common emergencies Medicines workshop Infectious disease • Using data to define the problem • Series of case studies • Identifying at risk population • Building differential lists and diagnostic testing • Economics of disease Evening talk on Communication and Motivational Interviewing.
Day 3 09:00am 03/09/26	Lottie Birchall, BFV Nikki Bird, BFV	Youngstock • Successful colostrum management • Pre-weaning nutrition • Disease investigation • Vaccination programmes • Housing and environment • Heifer rearing KPIs • Farm walk to discuss practical youngstock management

Block Two

Fertility, Udder Health and Practical Nutrition

	Course Tutuors	Synopsis
Day 1 09:30am 28/09/26	Will Goulden, BFV Nikki Bird, BFV Sam Bowker, BFV	Fertility • Making the most of a routine fertility visit. • Reproductive physiology in practice. • Using data to assess fertility on farm . • Monitoring performance for both Block calving and All year-round calving herds.
Day 2 09:00am 29/09/26	Tom Laycock, BFV Jonah Dickie, BFV Lottie Birchall, BFV Nikki Bird, BFV	Udder Health • Common mastitis pathogens . • Treatment protocols . • Approach to investigation. • Data analysis . • Practical on farm interventions, with farm walk included.
Day 3 09:00am 30/09/26	Stuart Gough, CMC Lottie Birchall, BFV Nikki Bird, BFV Tom Laycock, BFV	Practical Nutrition • Interpreting forage analysis. • Introduction to ration formulation. • Sense-checking dietary management. • Transition cow diet . • Farm walk to discuss assessing and monitoring nutrition

Block Three

Lameness, Beef and Sheep, Introduction to Holistic Parasite control and Common Smallholder Species

	Course Tutuors	Synopsis
Day 1 09:30am 19/10/26	Sam Bowker, BFV Lottie Birchall, BFV Nikki Bird, BFV	Lameness • Overview of anatomy of the foot • Safe foot inspection and essential kit • Lesion recognition • Treatment protocols • Detecting lameness: Mobility scoring • Managing lameness data and farmer engagement
Day 2 09:00am 20/10/26	Lottie Birchall, BFV Lucy Morgan, BFV Nikki Bird, BFV	Suckler herd health • UK beef industry • Profit drivers • Youngstock • Fertility • Nutrition basics • Practical herd KPIs Sheep • UK sheep industry • Proactive flock health planning • Fertility • Lameness • Preventing lamb losses • Engaging with sheep farmers Introduction to integrated parasite management
Day 3 09:00am 21/10/26	Lottie Birchall, BFV Nikki Bird, BFV Tom Laycock, BFV	Common small holder species • Camelids. • Goats. • Pigs. • Practical alpaca handling session.

Course Tutors



Samuel Bowker
MA 2nd VetMB MRCVS
Veterinary Surgeon and Director

Sam graduated from Cambridge in 2015 and splits his time between farm veterinary practice and involvement in his family's dairy farm, a 220-cow autumn block calving unit. His interests include proactive health planning, data-led decision-making, management of block calving dairy herds, improving lameness in dairy cattle and working collaboratively with the farm team to drive improvements.



Lottie Birchall
BVSc MRCVS
Veterinary Surgeon and Director

Lottie graduated from Liverpool in 2014 and has broad dairy, beef and sheep experience. She is particularly interested in calf health, dairy heifer rearing, suckler herd profitability and proactive flock health planning. She leads the Blackdown Youngstock Advisory Service and Suckler Herd Health Package.



Tom Laycock
BSc BVMS CertAVP(Cattle) MRCVS
Veterinary Surgeon and Director

Tom qualified from Glasgow in 2011 after gaining a degree in agriculture. His main interests include cattle fertility, mastitis, youngstock rearing, lameness and beef. Tom holds a Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice in Cattle and leads the Dairy herd health package for our All year-round calving herds.



Lucy Morgan
BSc BVetMed CertAVP(Cattle) MRCVS
Veterinary Surgeon and Director

Lucy qualified from the Royal Veterinary College in 2002 and has extensive experience in farm and mixed practice. Her interests include fertility, mastitis, surgery, bull/ ram fertility, and infectious disease control. She holds a Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice in Cattle and has an interest in small ruminants, being the practice lead on sheep work.



Nicola Bird
BVetMed MRCVS
Veterinary Surgeon and Director

Nikki graduated from the Royal Veterinary College in 2016 and combines practical dairy farming knowledge from a herd of 230 pedigree Holsteins, with broad experience in farm and mixed animal practice. Her interests include genetics, calf health, preventative medicine and cattle fertility. She is trained in bovine embryo transfer and coordinates the practices marketing

Course Tutors



William Goulden
BVMS DBR MRCVS
Veterinary Surgeon and Director

Will has worked as a farm animal vet since qualifying from Glasgow in 2014. He completed the Diploma in Bovine Reproduction in 2022, with a dissertation based around improving communications between farmers and veterinary support staff. He is interested in fertility management and housing as a driver of improving health and performance.



Jonah Dickie
BVM BVS MRCVS
Veterinary Surgeon

Jonah graduated from Nottingham in 2022 and spent three years in farm animal practice in Wiltshire before joining Blackdown. His main interest is dairy herd health, especially nutrition and data-driven decision-making to improve productivity, efficiency and welfare. He is currently pursuing a Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice with a focus on Cattle and dairy nutrition.



Rachael Collins,
Veterinary Surgeon and Veterinary Investigation Officer

Rachael qualified from Glasgow in 2006. After 2 years of mixed practice, she joined APHA Starcross. She completed a MSc in Veterinary Microbiology in 2019. The majority of her work comprises of post mortem examination and investigation of disease outbreaks in livestock species with the aim of detecting new and emerging disease threats to the UK.

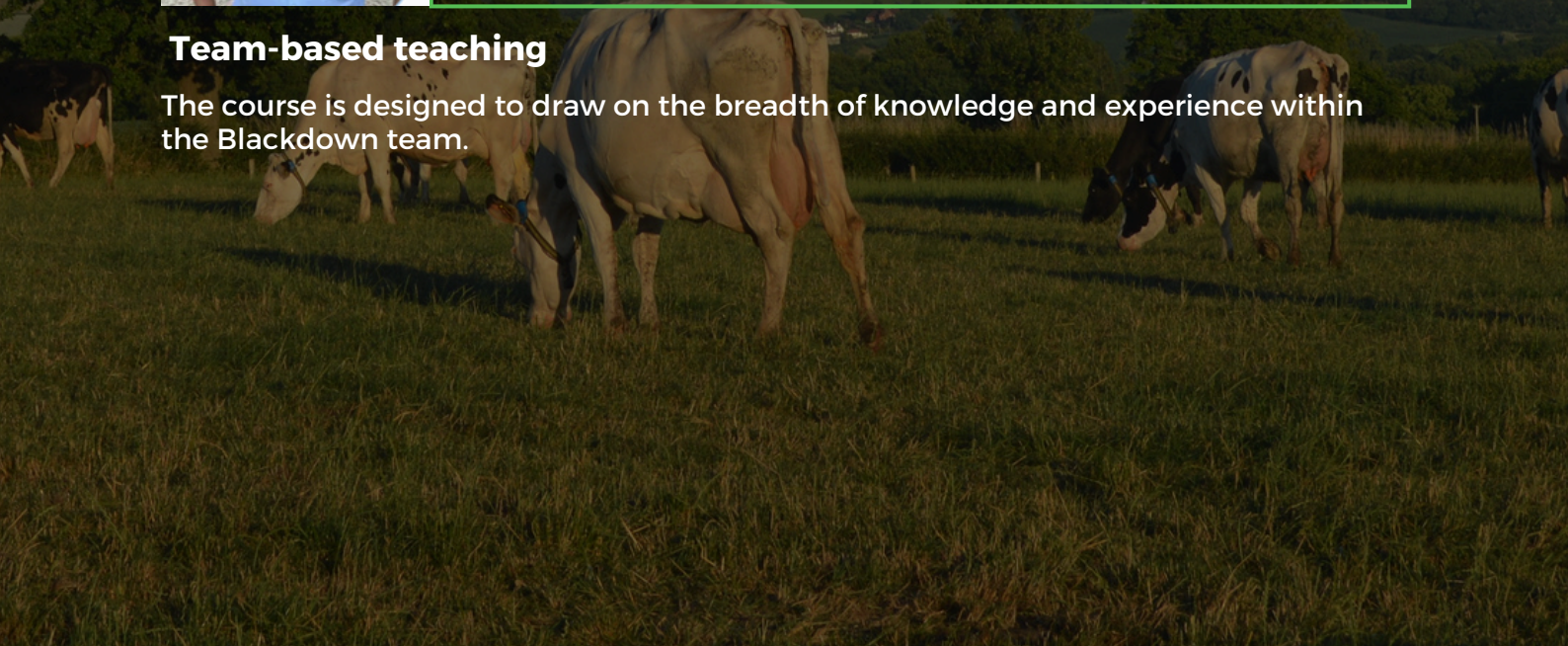


Stuart Gough,
Veterinary Surgeon and Ruminant Specialist

Stuart qualified from Edinburgh Veterinary College in 1993. With over 30 years experience as a farm-focused veterinary Surgeon in Cornwall, Stuart is currently a Ruminant Specialist for the Crediton Milling Company.

Team-based teaching

The course is designed to draw on the breadth of knowledge and experience within the Blackdown team.



Practical Information

What Delegates can expect	Suggested Kit List
• Practical, farm-relevant teaching rather than lecture-only CPD. • Frequent case discussion • A supportive environment where early-career questions are welcomed • Networking with other delegates at a similar career stage.	• Clean farm waterproofs and wellies • Notebook or laptop for case records and templates. • Any specific PPE will be provided by Blackdown Farm Vets • Transport will be needed between accommodation and the course. Please let us know if you do not have a vehicle.

Accommodation and meals

- Lunch and refreshments will be provided each day for all delegates, and if the accommodation option is selected this will include breakfast
- Accommodation (at The Lordleaze Hotel, Chard) and meals can be arranged for delegates where required. This will be booked for 2 nights for each block. If any further accommodation is required (e.g. the night before the first day of each block) then we ask that you please arrange that yourselves.
- Shared accommodation and meals are intended to support networking, peer support and informal discussion across the programme.
- Delegates should indicate dietary requirements and accommodation needs on the enquiry form.
- Please note, we will provide at least one evening meal / activity per block





Registration Form

Name	
Practice/ Organisation	
Address	
Email	
Telephone	
Invoice Contact	
Dietary/ access requirements	
Role/ Year Qualified	

Choice	Course Block	Dates	Details	Price (+VAT)
☐	Full Course	All Dates	All 3 blocks	£2475
☐	Full Course + Accommodation	All Dates	2 nights per block, Breakfast included	£3045
☐	Block 1	01/09/26-03/09/26	Post Mortems, Infectious Disease Youngstock	£825
☐	Block 2	28/09/26-30/09/26	Fertility Udder Health Practical Nutrition	£825
☐	Block 3	19/10/26-21/10/26	Lameness, Beef and Sheep Common SH species	£825
☐	Accommodation per block		2 nights, Breakfast included	£190
			Total	

Please note that a 15% discount is available if more than one vet from a single practice would like to attend the whole course.

CPD Booking Cancellation and Refund Policy

Please be aware that cancellation charges apply according to the notice provided:

- No fee will be charged for cancellations made 14 days or more before the event date.
- Cancellations submitted between 7 and 14 days prior to the event will incur a charge of 20% of the total event cost.
- If a cancellation is made within 7 days of the event, the full event fee will be payable.

Method of Payment

Payment should be made in £ sterling, preferably by BACs, to: Blackdown Farm Vets Limited quoting the Delegate name and FVF as reference to Sort Code: 09-02-22, Account number: 11000521.