

Spetisbury Water Meadows

Over the years we have all enjoyed walking on the water meadows and have done so without hindrance from the landowner or tenant.

I'm sure we have all noticed that over the last couple of years the number of people coming from outside the village to enjoy the area has increased enormously and that has brought with it problems for the farmer who cuts the grass to provide feed for his livestock.

Dogs can carry a parasite called NEOSPORA CANINUM that produces cysts in the animal's gut and these are shed in the animal's excrement.

The cells of the parasite can then be picked up by other dogs that become infected. In infected dogs the parasite can cause abortions during pregnancy. It can also cause nerve damage and seizures in adult dogs. The infection can prove fatal.

This parasite can also be transmitted to cattle and sheep. Once infected the cow is infected for life and the parasite can cause abortion in pregnant cows. After having an abortion the cow may not be able to breed again.

Spetisbury water meadows are primarily farmed for the production of silage and hay for animal feed. When the grass is cut and collected it is unavoidable that dog faeces are also collected with it.

If when a bale is opened the smell of dog faeces is evident the bale has to be disposed of as a precaution at a cost of £25 a time.

If nothing is readily noticeable the bale will be fed to the cattle that may then become infected with the parasite.

With the increase of users on the water meadows the farmer has noticed, in the last 2 – 3 years, an increase in the number of abortions that his cows are suffering.

The farmer has no wish to stop people walking on the water meadows, but would ask that they remember that this is a working environment and that they keep proper control of their dogs and clear up after them to protect his livelihood.

In due course, information signs will be placed at various points on the water meadows to inform people, who aren't local, that they should collect their dogs' poo in the interest of their own dogs and the local farmer.