

NEWSLETTER March 2015

Sheep Abortions

Any group of sheep experiencing more than 2% aborting is likely to have an infectious cause of abortion present in the flock. Any aborting ewe, her lambs, afterbirth and subsequent vaginal discharges should be considered contagious to other ewes and to humans (*especially* women of child-bearing age) until proven otherwise. It is well worthwhile contacting us to have aborted lambs and afterbirths tested to determine the cause of the problem.

Enzootic abortion, Toxoplasmosis and Campylobacter are responsible for over 90% of all infectious abortions in sheep, Listeriosis, Salmonellosis, Border disease and others occasionally being diagnosed. We have already had diagnosis of Toxoplasmosis and Enzootic abortion in the practice in January and February. As well as abortions these infections can also be responsible for stillbirths and the birth of weakly live lambs.

Should Enzootic abortion be confirmed, there may be benefit in injecting in-contact ewes, which are still to lamb, with a long acting Oxytetracycline injection (Terramycin LA/Alamycin LA) to reduce further losses.

Abortion Vaccine

For anyone thinking of vaccinating hogs for Enzootic abortion, as they return from wintering, we have the option of ordering some short-dated Cevac Chlamydo-phila vaccine (exp. End March 2015) at a reduced price. The vaccine is available in 20 to 50 dose bottles and will result in a significant saving over longer-dated vaccine.

For more information please contact Anne or Kate at the surgery on 01729 823538.



Calf Jackets

The lessons we have learnt from running our own in-house research project, regarding the cost of rearing the replacement dairy heifer, are in line with numbers published in the farming press over the last few years.

Dairy and beef calves are both affected by the cold and when wearing a calf jacket can be expected to increase their growth rates by 200 grams per day.

200 grams per day equals a **12 kilogram heavier** calf at 6 weeks old when it goes to market. Which could be worth £50 to £80 at current market prices.

At Dalehead, we firmly believe that warmer calves in the first six weeks of life are healthier and more profitable. We are currently selling Cosy Calf jackets at £20.00+vat. These are a premium product at a lower price than anywhere else. Just in the cost of milk powder alone these will have paid for themselves long before you take them off the first calf.

Farm Safety

Farm safety is never far from our minds when we are on-farm handling animals on a daily basis. At this time of year with many farmers working long hours with calving and lambing and very little sleep, accidents are more likely to happen.

Calving cows: Some cows are more protective than others after calving and heifers can get very nervous and fractious after a calving. Be careful when tagging and navel dipping newborn calves.

TB testing: At this time of year when cows have been housed for a few months, being let out for TB testing can cause great 'excitement'. You, your animals and the vet are all at risk. Ensure gates and crushes are secure and in working order.

Snow/ice: We haven't seen the last of the ice and snow this year. Icy yards are not only a danger to the animals but also to yourselves.

Students: At lambing time many of you will employ vet and agricultural students to help with lambing. Take time to highlight any potential dangers, be it machinery, equipment, buildings or animals.

Tomorrow's farmers (i.e. children): This valuable workforce are most at risk. Although great at lambing, feeding calves, etc. Remember they are not as strong or aware as you might be.



Orf and Orf Vaccine

Orf is a highly contagious skin disease, primarily of sheep and goats, caused by a Parapox virus which can also infect humans. Orf virus can survive off the sheep in a dry environment (such as lambing sheds) for many years. This is why more serious outbreaks are usually associated with intensive sheep systems where there is a build up of infection in the lambing sheds. It is well worthwhile pressure-washing and disinfecting sheep buildings and hurdles/pens/troughs etc. prior to use, although it is still possible to have symptomless carriers of orf virus amongst the adult ewes which can re-infect the environment.

Orf virus gains entry into the body through breaks in the skin. In newborn lambs this often appears to be around the gums where the teeth are pushing through. The incubation period (time from picking the infection up to showing symptoms) is only a few days. In the milder form of the disease symptoms include blisters on the lips and corners of the mouth. In severe cases vesicles form on the insides of the mouth and throat. Invariably affected animals lose weight and don't thrive and may stop sucking altogether. Infection can pass to the teats of ewes with mastitis often being the costly consequence.

Orf lesions will usually heal within six to eight weeks. Because orf is a viral infection, antibiotics (sprays and/or injections) are only of use in treating secondary bacterial infection of the lesions. **Remember to wear gloves when treating lambs with orf lesions.**

Orf vaccine (Scabivax or Scabivax Forte) can be used on young lambs to limit the clinical impact of orf in a flock. Because it is a live vaccine, Scabivax should only be used in flocks with a previous history of orf infection. Lambs can be vaccinated (scratched) from a very young age (as soon as they are dry and have suckled). However, if indoor lambs are being vaccinated this should be ideally done as they are turned out to reduce environmental contamination of the lambing sheds with vaccinal virus. Lambs should be vaccinated on the hairless skin between the top of the foreleg and the chest wall (not on the inside of the thigh on the back leg).

In young lambs the vaccine is administered as a single line scratch. Between seven and ten days after vaccination, a random sample of the flock should be examined to make sure there has been a satisfactory vaccine 'take'. The vaccine takes four to eight weeks for full immunity to be established. In a heavily infected environment it is still possible for reduced lesions of orf to appear in young lambs while the immunity to the vaccine is being established.

This year there have been manufacturing difficulties and supply problems with **Scabivax Forte** (the vaccine which you will have been using in the past few years) but we have been able to secure supplies of **Scabivax** (essentially the same vaccine but with a different applicator). We currently have plenty of vaccine in stock with a good shelf life (exp: End July 2015) but to guarantee your order, please phone the surgery well in advance with your requirements.

Please note that once collected from the surgery, we cannot take back and credit refrigerated items including Scabivax.

Clostridial Disease in Sheep—Vaccination

Clostridial diseases are an ever present risk in virtually all of UK flocks. Other than tetanus and botulism, clostridial diseases generally cause rapid collapse and death. Treatment is rarely successful so **prevention** is key with this disease. The disease causing bacteria are found in the soil as well as in the gut of healthy animals. The bacteria forms resistant, long lasting spores so it is **never** safe to assume freedom from the disease.

Vaccination

There are several vaccines available to prevent Clostridial disease (some including Pasteurella protection ->'P') for example Covexin-8, Bravoxin-10, Heptavac and Heptavac **P**. Breeding sheep require two injections of vaccine four to six weeks apart. The second injection or annual booster should be given one month prior to lambing. This time is tailored to provide optimum levels of antibody in the ewe's colostrum at the time of lambing. In subsequent years, only one pre-lambing 'booster' injection is required to protect both the ewe and her lamb.

The protective immunity supplied in ewe's milk to the lamb will protect the lamb for approximately 12 to 16 weeks. Lambs being kept over 16 weeks for breeding or fattening should be vaccinated against Clostridial disease (Ovivac- **P**, Covexin-8 and Bravoxin-10) Rams should also be vaccinated and given annual boosters.

Worming Adult Ewes around Lambing Time

During the summer months worm larvae, ingested by sheep off the pasture, develop into egg laying adult worms within about three weeks. However, the faecal egg output by the ewe is limited by the immunity that she has developed to gutworm infections.

In the winter months worm larvae ingested by the ewe don't complete their development straight away but become inhibited L4 larvae in the stomach wall. They lie dormant until activated in the spring around lambing time to become egg laying adults. This combined with a lowering of the ewe's immunity, around lambing time, results in a significant rise in faecal worm egg output from two weeks before, until six weeks after, lambing. This can result in a substantial increase in pasture contamination and increased worm challenge for growing lambs.

The most important time to consider worming adult ewes is around lambing. Whichever wormer is used, it is important that it is effective against the inhibited L4 larvae that ewes can be carrying at this time of year.

Other considerations to bear in mind are whether to use a wormer with a persistent action so the ewes can help clear the pasture of overwintered worm larvae and further reduce the challenge to young lambs (such as with Cydectin drench) or whether a combined fluke and worm or worm and scab treatment should be considered.

To discuss which products may be most appropriate for you or to develop a worm and fluke control plan for your flock please contact the surgery on 01729 823538

Please check your details

Please check your address details are correct on your bill, if not, can you let us know. This ensures that our vets can get to you promptly when you need a visit. If you have recently changed your mobile or have an email address we can add to your data base, please let us know that too. We would like make sure all our details for you are up to date and correct—thank you.