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24 hour
Dedicated
Farm Cover

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SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

2014

Pre-breeding Examination of Rams



The ram is the most important member of the flock, yet often most neglected. Not only does he contribute half the genetics to the flock, but his success as a breeder will go a long way towards determining the profitability of the whole enterprise.

Studies have shown that **10-15% of rams inspected are either infertile or sub-fertile** and even if several rams are run with a group of ewes one sub-fertile ram will result in a more spread out lambing time and probably a lighter crop as well as more barren ewes. A physical examination of rams and, if necessary, having a semen sample tested well before tupping time will help to pick out suspect rams and either allow time to correct problems or find a replacement tup.

Physical Examination

The physical examination of the ram involves a full clinical inspection looking for any signs of disease or ill health which may affect his suitability for breeding, taking special note of his body condition score and inspection of the '3 T's'- his teeth, toes and testicles. The process of sperm production in the testicles takes 6-8 weeks to complete and is very sensitive to a rise in testicular temperature so that any condition which makes him run a high temperature may make him temporarily infertile for a 2 month period. The ram should ideally be in a body condition score of 3.5-4 at the start of tupping time, if he is significantly fatter than this it may make him lazy and less keen to work and also if he lays down extra fat reserves around the neck of the scrotum can make the sperm less viable. If he is significantly thinner than body score 3 at the start of tupping time it is likely to affect the amount of semen he produces and therefore the number of ewes he can mate.



The mouth should be inspected for signs of overgrown, loose or missing teeth as well as sores in the mouth which can all affect how much he is able to graze. Evidence of cud-spilling should also be noted.

Arthritic tups should not be used for breeding and feet should be examined for overgrown hoof, interdigital growths, toe end granulomas etc. If necessary the tup can be injected with long acting antibiotics (which will not affect his fertility) to cure a condition but a ram with serious foot problems is not an animal to be relied upon through tupping time.

The testicles, penis and prepuce should also be inspected. There is a very high correlation between testicular size and sperm producing capacity so that rams with small testicles should be rejected. Although there will be variations between breeds, ram lambs should have a scrotal circumference of over 30cm and mature rams over 32cm. The 2 testicles should be of even size, firm consistency, freely mobile within the scrotum with a well defined 'button' on the bottom of each testicle. The penis should be freely mobile within the prepuce and when extruded should show no signs of sores or infection.



The vast majority of rams which pass a full physical examination will be fully fertile but if necessary a semen sample can be collected by electro-ejaculation to check the density and mobility of the sperm.

We are able to carry out a pre-breeding examination of all your tups on farm, collecting and evaluating semen samples if necessary or, for small numbers, tups can be brought to the surgery by appointment.

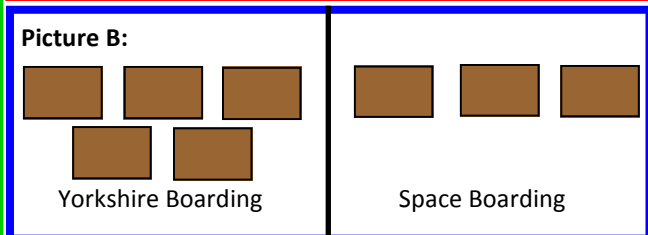
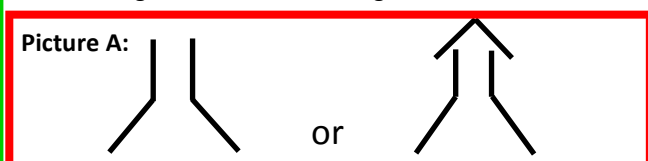
On Farm Housing and Ventilation Meeting

At our recent dairy cattle housing and ventilation meeting at West Thornber Farm on 5th August our guest speaker, Jamie Robertson stated that the 3 objectives of good ventilation in a cattle building were:

1. To control humidity and make sure there is not too much moisture in the building
2. To ensure an adequate supply of clean, fresh air into the building and remove stale air
3. To control wind speed in the building to avoid draughts.

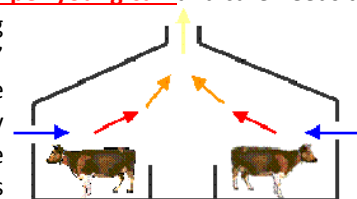
The most important factor to consider when looking at a building is to ensure that there are sufficient outlets for the air in the apex of the roof for the number of cattle being housed in the building. As a guide there should be **at least 0.1m² of outlet for each cow in the building**, so for a building containing 100 cows there should be at least 10m² of outlet. Jamie stated that in many buildings (including new buildings) the outlets were inadequate. When quizzed about the effect of rainwater entering the building through the outlets in the roof he said that this would be insignificant compared to the moisture produced every day by the cows (a dairy cow breathes out 10 litres of water per day on its breath and excretes 50 litres of water per day in urine and faeces) and it was far more important to concentrate on removing moisture from air which had been generated by the cows. Bacteria and viruses contributing to environmental mastitis and respiratory disease problems thrive in warm, damp conditions so having a building that will remove stale air and reduce humidity 365 days per year is vitally important and this can't be done without adequate outlets. If there were still concerns about rainwater entering through the outlets then it is possible to have outlets designed which will minimize water entering the building (as seen in picture A).

To achieve good airflow a building also needs air inlets and the inlet area should be at least 2 x and preferably 4 x the outlet area. The inlets along the sides of the building should ideally be above the height of the cows to avoid draughts blowing directly onto the cows. Where there are concerns about prevailing winds blowing gales directly into a building, gale breaker sheeting (25% porous/75% solid) or Yorkshire boarding (not space boarding) was recommended (See picture B). The inlets need to be below the level of the outlets (the steeper the pitch on the roof the better) so that air is sucked into the buildings through the inlets as the warm air given off by the cows rises and is drawn out through the outlets.



The principles of ventilation in calf houses are exactly the same although the size of the **outlet only needs to be 0.04m² per young calf** and care needs to be taken that the calves are generating enough heat to drive the 'chimney effect'

for stale air to be drawn out of the outlets while at the same time calves need to be kept warm. The lower critical temperature for young calves (the temperature below which they need to use energy out of their diet to keep warm) is 15°C and the lower critical temperature for a sick calf is 25°C. The use of calf jackets or infra-red heaters was discussed for keeping calves warm as was the use of fans blowing air into the building through a vented plastic tube (preferable to extractor fans).



For further information about ventilation of cattle buildings please visit our website www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk and click on the link or speak to one of our farm vets.

GISBURN AUCTION MART

We have now moved into our new unit situated at Gisburn Auction Mart. We will be attending the unit every Thursday 10am– 2pm.

During this time we can deliver parcels from the Settle office, collect samples, deal with any enquiries.

We are also offering on site Cell count testing. Our portable DeLaval Cell count machine allows us to test milk samples quickly and efficiently giving results in seconds.

Pop along to see us for a chat and a cup of tea.



John's Pedalo Challenge



At 6 pm on August bank holiday Monday, a blue, beaten up pedalo arrived at lock 1 of the canal in Leeds at the end of an epic 1.7mph, 127.5 mile journey that started in Liverpool on the previous Wednesday. After 6 days of frantic pedalling, including a "Super Sunday" of 15 hours effort, John Marriott and James Thurstan completed their sponsored pedalo challenge along the length of the Leeds Liverpool canal. They are raising money for the Yorkshire

Air Ambulance and Prostate Cancer UK, and at the time of writing the sponsorship total is £3,600. They would like to thank everybody for their amazing support and generosity so far, but also to say that it is not too late to donate! If you would prefer to pay on results now that the challenge is completed, feel free to donate at the surgery, on line at www.sponsorme.co.uk/jamesthurstan/man-up-pedalo-challenge.aspx, or read about the expedition and donate on facebook by searching for Man Up Pedalo Challenge, and following the donation link. The donation site will stay open until the end of September.