



## FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER - MAY 2020

### HYPOMAGNEAEMIA (STAGGERS) IN SHEEP

The cause of staggers is magnesium deficiency. Unlike calcium and energy deficiencies in sheep, there are no magnesium reserves in the body, the metabolism relies on a continuous intake.

#### CLINICAL SIGNS

There is a fast onset of dramatic signs with ewes often being found having convulsions and dying suddenly. The signs start with twitchy, staggering signs with the ewe being hypersensitive to touch and sounds, this progresses to incoordination, recumbency, severe tremors and death.

Staggers is usually seen in the weeks after lambing when we have the predisposing conditions.

#### RISK FACTORS

- A low magnesium level is found in pastures that are Potassium rich and have rapidly digestible protein. This happens in lush spring grass.
- Cold wet weather after turn out causing decreased feed intake.

#### PREVENTION

- High legume grasses incorporated into the sward helps increase magnesium levels as well as calcium.
- Magnesium Bolus.
- Spreading the pasture with magnesium.
- Adding magnesium flakes into water troughs.

#### TREATMENT

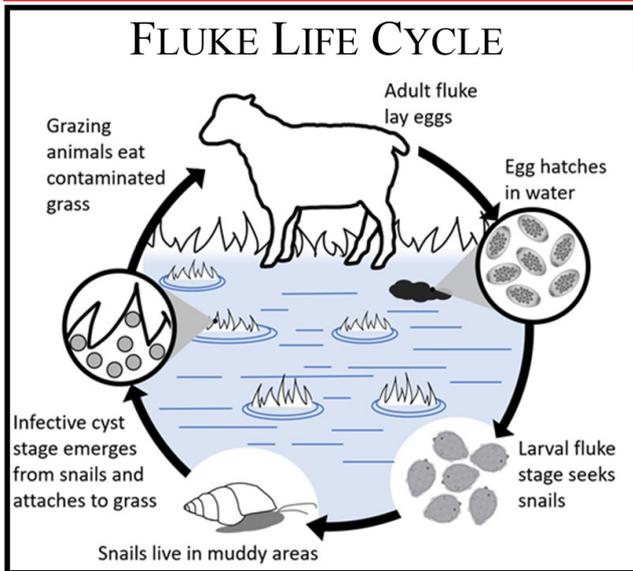
A subcutaneous injection of 25 % magnesium sulphate, 75mls per ewe is the volume recommended. Inject the solution in multiple sites, and massage to disperse and encourage uptake. Ensure a clean needle is used as abscesses are not uncommon in these injection sites.

TLC as recommended with the other metabolic diseases, provide warmth, shelter water and feed. In this instance the ewe will be unable to move to get her water and feed, so hand feeding is necessary.

For more information relating to metabolic diseases in sheep, please contact the surgery.



# PARASITE UPDATE



Here is a summary of the current situation combining National forecasts and the testing we are doing in our lab.

## FLUKE

The testing we did this year showed low levels of fluke with no significant levels until the end of November in the wettest grazing areas, however some hogs on moderately wet grazing had very low levels of fluke exposure last month. This shows it is important to do strategic testing on your flocks.

The wet weather in the last months (is that an understatement?) will have allowed fluke to continue their lifecycle. There have been no spells where it has been really cold enough to put the fluke into hibernation. This means grazing livestock could be still picking up fluke now. We have had a very late fluke season, but it may well continue longer through the winter than usual.

Our advice is....

## SHEEP

For those of you not testing, is to fluke dose 8-10 weeks after your last dose with a different product than you have used this season, keeping your drug resistance in mind. It is not appropriate to use a triclabendazole product at this time. After that our recommendation is to do a Faecal Egg Count 8- 10 weeks later to see if you still have fluke contamination. If sheep have been housed it would be sensible to sample them 8 weeks after housing.

## CATTLE

We would recommend a fluke egg count around this time of year to ensure you have cleared out the infestation before turnout.

## COCCIDIOSIS

This protozoal parasite overwinters in the environment, starting its lifecycle in warmer weather.

The timing of treatment is critical to controlling the disease; treat too early and you will not kill the parasite and lambs will still get disease, late treatment will result in severe disease with irreparable gut damage and deaths in some cases. Our advice on farms where there is a known coccidiosis problem is to do faecal egg count from 4-5 weeks of age and treat when the cocci count rises.

## Nematodiosis

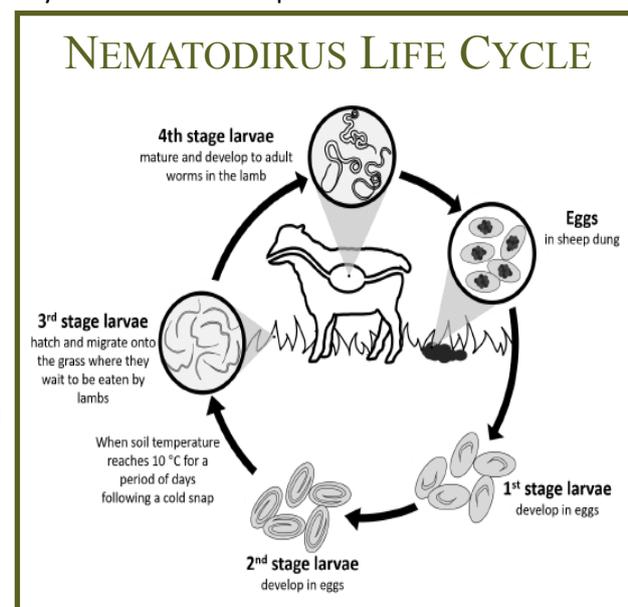
Nematodirus Battus is the worm that passes directly from one season's lambs to the next by surviving on the pastures over winter. The worms hatch out after a cold spell when the temperature reaches 10 °C. The mass hatching of worms causes disease in 6-8 week old lambs. There are forecasting stations situated all over the country giving us local predictions of when the peak hatch of worms will happen. You can keep up to date with these forecasts on the NADIS and SCOPS websites.

Our local station at Stoneyhurst is telling us that we are at **High Risk. We have already seen Nematodirus positive samples in the surgery so now is the time to dose if your lambs are 6-12 weeks old.**

## Parasitic Gastroenteritis, PGE.

These worms are the ones passed out by ewes around lambing time and multiply up during the spring and summer grazing period. I think of these as 'summer worms' as we usually need to dose for these parasites in June - September. This year we are already seeing increasing counts in our lab in February born lambs that are high enough to warrant dosing. This shows how important a faecal egg count in lambs is. We recommend sampling from 4 weeks old.

A very high % of summer worms are resistant to white drench, knowing what parasites are present and using a tailored drug programme is crucial!



## Blow Fly

Traditionally we see blowfly May-September when the weather is warmer and the greenbottle fly is able to lay eggs in decomposing fleece. With changing weather patterns in recent years, we have seen outbreaks from March through to December. There is a forecasting service for blowfly on NADIS and SCOPS websites.

# VACCINE ADVICE

Here are some questions to consider about your vaccination policies. Its something we do routinely but it is always worthwhile reviewing our practices to make sure we are making the best use of our vaccines and producing the best immunity we can.

Statistics that makes me feel this is all worth having a think about are:

- 61 % of lambs dying of *Pasteurella pneumonia* had been vaccinated!
- 26 % of these had not followed the data sheet, for example the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose had not been given, the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose given too late (8 weeks after the first, the 1st dose given when the lambs were too young (e.g Heptavac P Plus younger than 3 weeks of age).
- 30 % of the lambs had other stressors at vaccination time (worm burden, management procedure undertaken).



### HAS THE VACCINE BEEN STORED AT THE CORRECT TEMPERATURE?

Projects by vet students have revealed that a frightening number of farm fridges are not at the correct temperature for storage of vaccines (2°C—8°C). Have you checked yours lately?

Did you put your vaccine in the footwell of the pickup, put the heating on and go to check the youngstock away from home before putting it in the fridge?

Did you leave the vaccine on the wall top on a sunny day to go gather the next field of sheep or eat your lunch ?

Have you injected the vaccine in the correct place? e.g. under the skin, into the muscle.

### HAVE YOU GIVEN THE CORRECT DOSE?

Doses of vaccines vary, some are 1ml, some 2 ml. So always read the data sheet prior to administration.

### HAS THE SECOND DOSE BEEN GIVEN AT THE CORRECT TIME?

Some vaccines only need one dose for the initial course. Killed vaccines however need 2 doses. One dose will not work, it won't even give you half the efficacy.

The interval between doses varies between vaccines. Some are 2 weeks apart; some give you a 4-6 week interval. Going more than a couple of days before or after the recommendation does make a lot of difference to the efficacy of the vaccine.

### HAVE YOU GIVEN THE VACCINE TIME TO WORK ?

Maximum immunity will not be achieved until 2 weeks after the completed vaccine course (2 weeks after the 2nd dose). You need sufficient time for the vaccine to be effective in the risk period. A common example of where this goes wrong is when hogs going for wintering are Heptavac P vaccinated just before travelling. The second vaccine needs to be 2 weeks before they travel, the first dose therefore needs to be at least 6 weeks before.

### HAS THE BOOSTER VACCINE BEEN GIVEN ?

Heifers and hogs vaccinated as youngstock often go well over a year before they get their booster when joining the breeding stock. Their immunity will never be fully effective if another course is not given.

### IS THE ANIMAL YOU ARE VACCINATING WELL ENOUGH TO VACCINATE ?

Animals with a fever, pneumonia, scour, on a poor diet or immunosuppressed with ringworm for example will not respond to a vaccine as well as one that has no health issues.





### ARE OTHER MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES BEING DONE ON THE SAME DAY?

Castration, dehorning, tailing and administering other vaccines will all interfere with the development of immunity if they are carried out on the same day.

### HOW GOOD IS YOUR INJECTION TECHNIQUE?

Dirty needles and damp muddy conditions will all increase the risk of infection and abscesses. We see deaths due to blood poisoning from injection site reactions and the meat processing losses due to carcase damage is huge. Sterimatic guns are ideal to deliver vaccines safely and changing needles often is necessary.

### HAVE YOU READ THE DATA SHEET WITH THE VACCINES FOR ADDITIONAL ADVICE?

The advice that HeptavacP should be discarded 10 hours after opening is not so we can sell you more vaccine (honestly it is not!). The vaccine is completely inactive the next day after opening.

### HAVE YOU ASSUMED THAT YOUR WORK COLLEAGUES WHO ARE DOING THE VACCINATING HAVE DONE IT CORRECTLY?

If you have any questions about vaccinations or administration of vaccines, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

## PRODUCT NEWS

### BOVIKALC DRY BOLUSES



Many dairy farmers will already use calcium boluses at calving as an aid in the prevention of milk fever. Boehringer have now launched **BovikalC Dry Boluses** recommended to be used on high yielding dairy cows at drying off to aid in the reduction of milk production helping to reduce milk congestion in the udder and the associated discomfort. Discomfort from udder distention during dry off may cause reduced lying time with cows resting for shorter periods in an attempt to relieve pressure on the udder and also an increased susceptibility to mastitis.

For more information about **BovikalC Dry Boluses** at drying off or **BovikalC Boluses** at calving as an aid in preventing milk fever please speak to one of the farm vets.

## CLIK Extra and Neporex



Many sheep farmers apply **CLIK**, **CLIK Extra** or **CLIKzin** to sheep and lambs in the spring as a blowfly strike prevention. The products work by not allowing the blowfly eggs to hatch out and thereby preventing maggots from developing.

The same technology has been used in the development of **Neporex**, an insecticide spray which prevents the eggs of nuisance and biting flies from hatching. As a single fly can lay up to 500 eggs in its short lifespan a product that prevents them from hatching is a useful way of reducing the fly challenge on heavily infested farms.

Neporex is applied only to fly breeding sites such as bedding and manure heaps, it is not applied to fly resting sites (walls, ceilings etc) as it has no effect on adult flies. One treatment will prevent housefly breeding in a 10cm depth of manure. Re-treatment intervals will depend on influx of flies from outside.

For more information on the **CLIK** range of products or **Neporex** for environmental fly control or a quote for the **CLIK**, **Neporex** or **Spotinor** adult fly control for cattle please contact the surgery.



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