

FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER - JULY 2021

JOIN THE MARCH

Sheep flocks often suffer from an increase in lameness during the summer months – hence our adoption of July as Lameness Month to focus on measures to bring peace of mind and prevent problems developing when the flock may not be easily accessible.

The run up to weaning is an ideal time to identify and note problems before any disease becomes more established. Check sheep's feet regularly, as sheep with early stage footrot or contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD) have been known not to appear as being lame.

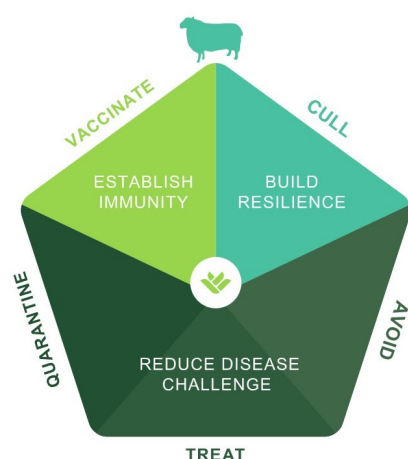
At weaning time, mark any persistently lame ewes for culling, and if flock replacements are home-bred, make sure breeding is only from sound ewes or ewe lambs that have not been lame. Most sheep lameness in the UK is caused by the bacteria *Dichelobacter nodosus*, which can appear as scald or as footrot. If allowed to progress, it causes significant discomfort and welfare concerns due to the obvious pain. Becoming more widespread is CODD, caused by a treponeme bacteria, it has a progressive nature and in its later stages can cause severe lameness. These are the two most important causes of lameness in UK sheep; they may be two different diseases yet are strongly associated in their infectivity and transmission routes. Footrot is certainly a risk factor for CODD, so by keeping this widespread disease under control will help reduce the impact of CODD in the flock.

Recent work has looked at management practices that can reduce the levels of lameness found in a sheep flock. This includes the development of an industry accepted framework, the FAI Five Point Plan (5PP), to establish best practice for managing lameness in sheep. Across the sheep farming community there is real momentum behind the 5PP and many have confirmed that by implementing it and sustaining it helps to keep flock lameness incidence down to 2% or less.

Vaccination is an aid to treating footrot and preventing lameness by stimulating immunity. Vaccination should be on a whole flock basis and timed to be given just before increased disease risk. It has also been demonstrated, in mixed infections of footrot & CODD, that managing footrot with vaccination has enabled more successful treatment and control of CODD. In many flocks an additional benefit of controlling footrot through vaccination with **Footvax** have reduced the incidence of scald in their lambs.

Culling persistently infected sheep, especially at the start of a control programme, brings a reduction in lameness as these animals are "constantly shedding" infection.

Avoid disease transmission by paying attention to good hygiene, minimising the gathering of sheep, using footbaths for disinfection and stopping trimming infected feet.



Treating within 3 days should be the foundation of any protocol to reduce infectious lameness, both for welfare and infection control. Affected animals should be isolated for monitoring and to reduce disease spread.

Quarantine, a standard biosecurity procedure, should be for a minimum 4-week period. If any sheep shows signs of lameness during quarantine, isolate them and treat appropriately before being introduced to the flock.

Lameness remains a significant welfare and economic issue for sheep flocks in the UK. Adopting the Five Point Plan in its entirety has been shown to give the greatest chance of reducing lameness by a combination of standard farm practices that decrease the level of risk. Conversely, it has been seen that by dropping any one of the five management practices, there is often a resulting increase in the prevalence of lameness in the flock – that's why it is called the **Five** Point Plan.



TRACE ELEMENT DEFICIENCIES IN GROWING LAMBS

The clinical signs associated with trace element deficiencies in sheep are often gradual in onset and usually present as poorly grown lambs in late summer/early autumn. There is considerable interplay between worm burdens, trace element deficiencies and quality of nutrition and it is important to consider all issues.



Cobalt Deficiency (pine)

Cobalt has an important role in the production of vitamin B12 by rumen bacteria. Cobalt deficiency occurs where there are low soil cobalt concentrations which may be further complicated by worm burdens which cause diarrhoea, thereby interfering with absorption of vitamin B12 from the gut.

Clinical signs of cobalt deficiency are most commonly seen in mid to late summer and include lethargy, reduced appetite, poor quality wool with open fleece, small size and poor body condition despite adequate nutrition.

Cobalt deficient lambs may fail to respond well to vaccinations and are more susceptible to clostridial disease (e.g. pulpy kidney) and pasteurellosis (pneumonia).

Diagnosis of cobalt deficiency is based on clinical signs in areas with known cobalt deficient soils supported by blood testing lambs for vitamin B12 levels or by response to treatment.



Treatment

Treatment of cobalt/vitamin B12 deficient lambs is either by vitamin B12 injection and/or oral cobalt supplementation. Monthly dosing of lambs from 3 months of age with cobalt sulphate drenches should supply sufficient cobalt to growing lambs in most situations. **We can make up cobalt sulphate drenches for you at the surgery. We can also supply long acting vitamin B12 injection which will provide 3 months of supplementation from a single dose.** Please ask at the surgery for more information.



Copper Deficiency

In growing lambs copper deficiency may result in poor fleece without its natural crimp, poor growth rates, anaemia and increased susceptibility to bacterial infections. Copper deficiency is common when lambs graze pastures which are either low in copper or high in molybdenum, iron and/or sulphur.

If copper deficiency is suspected, blood samples can be checked to assess the copper status of the lambs and copper supplementation given if required. As well as being susceptible to copper deficiency sheep can also be prone to copper accumulation and toxicity. There is considerable

breed variation with respect to copper absorption and therefore to copper deficiency or toxicity. Veterinary advice is essential before copper supplementations are given to sheep.

TEASER TUPS PREPARATION!

Vasectomising tups to produce teasers can be a very useful management tool, helping to ensure a compact lambing period. The sight, sound and smell of a male sheep causes a hormonal response in the ewes known as the 'tup or ram effect'. These pheromones work to cause a silent heat in all ewes within 2-3 days, followed by a normal fertile heat 17 days later.

- At least 6 weeks before introducing the teaser, make sure that the ewe flock is out of sight and smell of any rams or wethers.
- After this introduce the teaser to the ewes for a minimum 3 days, maximum 14 days.
- One fit teaser ram should be enough for 100-150 ewes.
- Then remove the teaser and introduce the fertile ram.
- Ewes and lambs can be separated into batches to aid management and planning for lambing timing.



Providing the ewe flock were cycling at the time when the teaser was with them, they will lamb in a compacted lambing time. Usually the compacted lambing will consist of two 'peak' periods 6-8 days apart.

Timing:

- Day 0 – Ewes away from any male sheep.
- Day 30 – Introduce teaser to ewes.
- Day 42 – Teaser out, ram in with flock.

Post-Operative care for your vasectomised tup.

- **Vasectomies should be performed at least 2 months before you intend to use them.** This is to ensure the wound has healed well and he is no longer fertile.
- Pain relief and antibiotic is given by injection, which lasts for 2 days.
- Please keep an eye on his wound for swelling or discharge, contact the surgery if you notice any complications.
- In hot weather keep an eye out for flies, it may be a good idea to treat him with a fly prevention product but don't put any directly onto the wound.

If you would like more information or to receive an estimate of cost please contact the surgery. Discounts are given to Flock Club members.

SUMMER MASTITIS

Summer Mastitis is caused by *Arcanobacterium pyogenes*, *Peptostreptococcus indolicus* and *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* which act synergistically to cause disease. The insect which spreads the infection is mainly the sheep headfly (*Hydrotaea irritans*). Both dairy and beef dry cows are most at risk during the summer months (late June-mid September). Mastitis in maiden heifers is not unheard of so ensure they are managed the same as the dry cows. Environmental factors play a big part in Summer Mastitis. The flies live in bushes and trees, and can only fly during mild, damp humid conditions and low wind speeds. Cases therefore tend to be associated with "problem fields" next to wooded areas and/or high hedges.

Symptoms

- Swelling of the teat and infected quarter
- Frequent kicking as large numbers of flies gather around the udders causing irritation
- Animals often lie away from the group and will spend more time lying
- When standing or walking stiffness in the back legs and a reluctance to walk can be seen
- As the condition progresses, and if left untreated, the cow will show signs of ill thrift e.g. loss of appetite, high temperature, hollow in the gut, weight loss
- In some cases the infected quarter will burst out, resulting in a foul discharge and odour
- Severe cases can be fatal.

Treatment

- **Success will often depend on how advanced the condition is**
- Summer mastitis is treated with antibiotics, possibly intramammary tubes and anti-inflammatories. We advise speaking to a vet as treatment may vary depending on the severity of the mastitis.
- In all cases the affected quarter needs to be stripped out frequently
- In extreme cases, the teat may be amputated, allowing the infected quarter to drain
- Affected animals should be isolated from the group.

Prevention and Control

- Keep dry cows and replacement heifers away from susceptible fields
- Fields that are open, dry and kept well topped will reduce the habitat where flies can thrive therefore reducing the risk
- Fly repellents should be administered and used in conjunction other preventative methods such as lick buckets. We have a selection of fly repellants licensed for cattle available at the Settle surgery, to discuss the different options please contact the surgery to speak to one of the farm vets or SQP's
- With most farms embracing selective dry cow therapy there has been a dramatic reduction in the amount of antibiotic dry cow tubes used at drying off. In high risk periods for summer mastitis it may be more appropriate to double tube dry cows with an antibiotic and sealant tube rather than sealant only. This technique will need to be discussed with your vet and stated in your dairy/ beef health plan.



PAIN RELIEF PROTOCOLS FOR CATTLE AND SHEEP



Every milk producer will be aware of the Red Tractor Farm Assurance dairy standards which require farm protocols/policies to be in place for pain relief requiring 'a written policy detailing when pain relief should be provided, the person responsible and the products used e.g. after a difficult calving, disbudding of calves, lameness treatments'.

Disbudding/ Dehorning Calves

Under The Protection of Animals (Anaesthetics) Act 1954 it is a legal requirement that cattle of all ages are given local anaesthetic for disbudding and dehorning. The only exception is the use of a disbudding paste when used at less than 7 days of age.

It is safest and least stressful to disbud calves by 4 weeks of age after administering a local anaesthetic nerve block. Local anaesthetic wears off within a few hours potentially leaving the animal in discomfort for up to a few days after the procedure. This discomfort can be minimised by the administration of pain relief such as *Metacam* injection (1ml/40kg subcut) or *Finadyne/Ketofen* at the time of disbudding.

Welfare benefits aside, calves which are not in pain eat and drink more and grow faster than calves not given pain relief after disbudding. The additional cost of pain relief will be far outweighed by improved growth rates.

Castration Of Calves

Calves can legally be castrated by rubber ringing in the first week of life. Any calves castrated over the age of 2 months require an anaesthetic and the procedure should be carried out by a vet.

Use of pain relief at the time of castration (*Metacam*, *Finadyne* or *Ketofen*) is recommended.

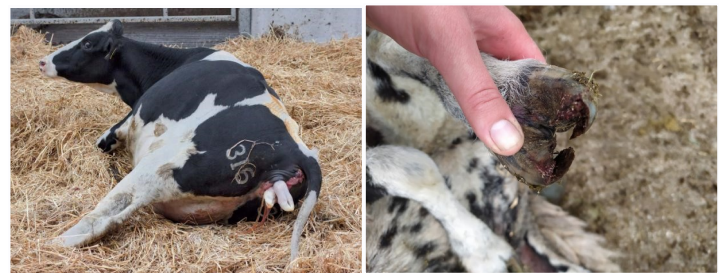
Difficult Calvings, Lameness, Mastitis

Any cow or sheep suffering from a painful condition e.g. lameness, mastitis with a hard or swollen quarter, or after an assisted calving/ lambing will benefit from the provision of pain relief. The pain relief will maintain the animals appetite and will also improve the success rate of antibiotic treatments.

Although no pain relieving injections are licensed for the use in sheep *Metacam* is licensed in other countries at a dose rate of 1ml/20kg under the skin.

The delivery of pain relief to livestock is common practice on the majority of farms and is an accepted part of responsible livestock husbandry procedures. Delivery of pain relief when procedures are undertaken should be documented in The Health Plan and recorded within the medicine records. This will include:

- The conditions for which you provide pain relief,
- Which product/drugs are used, and the dose rate given
- Withdrawal periods.



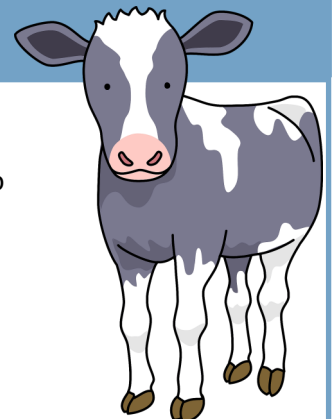
VET TECH DISBUDDING SERVICE

Vet Tech Anna her assistant Karen Gardner, offer a disbudding service for calves up to two months of age. As well as the local anaesthetic block, NSAIDs are given providing pain relief to minimise any reduction in feed intake and discomfort. Handling assistance can be provided where needed so that you can get on with other jobs around the farm.

The price for this service is £8.25 + VAT per calf including visit and drugs used.

(Additional discount for Direct Debit Clients)

For more information regarding our disbudding service, please contact the surgery.



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