RCVS ACCREDITED PRACTICE

24 hour dedicated farm cover

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FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER - SEPTEMBER 2025

#farm24 24 HOURS IN FARMING Sponsored by Morrisons

On the 7th August 2025 we once again got involved with the *Farmers Guardian's* prestigious campaign, **24 Hours in Farming**, agriculture's biggest digital event connecting consumers to their food.

A big thankyou to all our clients who got involved.

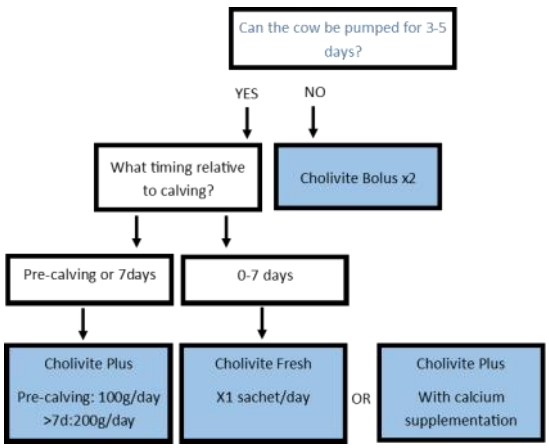
CHOLIVITE BOLUSES

We now have a good stock of the Cholivite Boluses and fresh cow sachets. At our meeting we held on the 6th August we discussed the supportive benefits the Cholivite boluses offer to at risk cows and administration protocol.

Over conditioned cows and 'SOFT' cows in general (Sick, Old, Fat, Twins) are at risk of ketosis after calving with big impacts on health and yield. Kexxtone made the cow more efficient as monensin increases proprionate production to reduce ketosis whereas choline and methionine work to help make the liver better at exporting fat rather than storing it or burning it inefficiently.

So are Choline boluses a direct replacement for Kexxtone - definitely not, but are they beneficial? Yes - they will:

- Reduce the risk of fatty liver
- Reduce the risk of immune dysfunction
- Reduce the risk of ketosis
- Increase yield
- Support cows after a twisted stomach operation



To discuss, please contact the surgery and speak to one of our farm vets.

A-Z OF PRE-TUPPING

Last month we wrote about pre-breeding examination of Tups - this is only one (important) thing we should be considering in our flocks at this time of year. Here is a list of other things that are worth pondering.

A) **ALL THE FLOCK:** Ewes, tups, hoggs, shearlings and teasers all need attention in the months pre-tupping.

B) **BCS (BODY CONDITION SCORE):** Probably the most key factor in flock fertility. Ewe BCS pre-tupping influences cyclicity, egg quality, embryo survival, colostrum quality, lamb viability, and growth. The ideal BCS for a lowland ewe is 3-3.5, 2.5 for a hill ewe. Tup BCS is fundamental for sperm production and fertility. The target is 3.5-4C

C) **CYCLICITY**: Sheep are seasonal breeders. Influenced by daylength, BCS, pheromones, energy intake, trace elements – more about these later!

D) **DEAD SHEEP:** We all get them! Never waste one! A postmortem tells a lot about flock health and often reveals developing problems.

E) **ECTOPARASITES:** Scab, lice & blowfly- can cause a whole host of production problems. Preventative measures are best to be in place pre-tupping.

F) **FLUSHING:** Increasing the plane of nutrition to improve scanning %. Recent research has shown that genetics and an ideal BCS is far more effective in achieving twins. Flushing thin ewes often results in twins/ triplets with a substantial risk of twin lamb disease.

G) **GENETICS:** Fundamental to breeding lambs to fit your target market. Whether it is breed type, maternal traits, DLWG or disease resilience that is your goal, keeping records and researching EBV in recorded breeds can all be extremely useful.

H) **HEALTH & WELFARE PATHWAY:** RPA grant that pays to investigate flock health. The follow up grant pays £639. Pre tupping is an ideal time to sample for conditions that would qualify for this funding.

I) **ICEBERG DISEASES:** A group of diseases that rumble unseen in the flock. Thin ewes at pre-tupping with no obvious symptoms are often suffering with one of these.

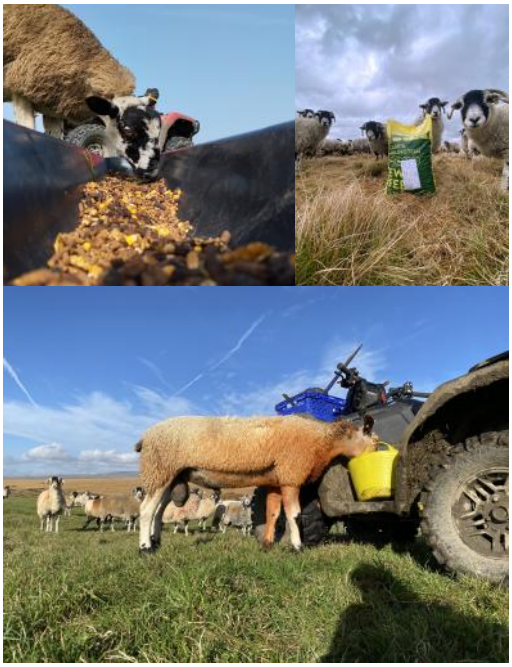
J) **JOHNES:** Infiltration of the gut by a bacteria. An iceberg disease. Infected sheep are thin with poor immunity- usually 3 crop and older. Diseased sheep do not scour unlike cattle.

K) **KPI (KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS):** The main one pre-tupping after BCS is tup: ewe ratio. Recommendations vary - 1:25 to 1:100. Tup lambs should not be over worked, run them at the lower end of this scale. Hybrid tups (e.g., Aberfields) are successfully run at 1:100 in a lowland environment. Synchronised ewes (sponge or teaser) 1:10 or 1:20 is appropriate.

L) **LAMENESS**: One of the main causes of infertility in tups. The use of Footvax in at least your tups is highly recommended.

M) **MV:** Another iceberg disease, caused by a virus Maedi Visna. This causes production loss across the board, deaths, mastitis, pneumonia, immunosuppression.

N) **NUTRITION**: Energy, protein, and trace elements are all vitally important to fertility. Energy and protein – fundamental to BCS and growth and metabolism. Cobalt deficiency= energy metabolism failure, poor egg / sperm quality, poor lamb viability & mortality. Copper deficiency affects the whole metabolism, if low 2/3 through pregnancy swayback in lambs→ Toxicity results in ill thrift and ultimately liver failure. Iodine is responsible for cyclicity, foetal growth Selenium deficiency= poor immunity, sperm volume, concentration and quality, egg quality, ovulation. It is worth sampling for trace element status. Boluses are often the longest acting, cost effective way to supplement (should be administered at least 6 weeks pre-tupping to have full effect).



O) **OPA:** A viral iceberg disease. The virus usually infects lambs, causes large tumours to grow in the lung slowly over many months-years. The adults that die of "pneumonia" may very well have OPA.

P) **PHEROMONES**: These are chemical messengers which are which carried to the brain through smell and have a direct developmental effect on hormone levels and behaviour. Passed in urine, faeces, vaginal secretions, saliva, and scent glands. They stimulate the reproductive hormones to become active- enhancing onset of puberty, cyclicity and male libido. See "tup effect."

Q) **QUARANTINE:** Treat all bought in animals to prevent buying in disease or resistant parasites. Worms: Orange or Purple drench. Fluke: Closantel. Lameness: footbath. Scab: OP Dip or Cydectin 2% (or blood sample). Blood sample for Johnes, Border Disease, MV and ultrasound for OPA.

R) **REGULIN**: A melatonin implant that mimics the shorter days, it stimulates the early onset of natural reproductive activity. We can bring lambing forward by up to 2 months by implanting. Implanted 2 - 9 weeks before lambing time. This does not synchronise the ewes.

S) **SPONGES:** (or Ovis Cidr). Progesterone implant (inserted intravaginally) to synchronise ewes. This implant mimics the natural cycle, used to synchronise ovulation for AI, ET, or natural mating

T) **TEASERS / TUP EFFECT**: A vasectomised tup (vas deferens tubes have been partly removed, semen containing sperm is not produced, but still produces testosterone) will synchronise and stimulate reproductive activity through the "tup effect. "The "tup effect" is where a tup (fertile or teaser) is introduced to a group of ewes and a "silent heat" is stimulated 3-4 days after introduction. This heat is not fertile but is necessary to programme the reproductive system at the start of every breeding season. Ewes will then have two peaks of normal oestrus 17 and 25 days later. A teaser is run with the ewes for 14 days to stimulate this silent heat. The ewes should be fertile when the stock tup is introduced.

U) **UDDER:** Examined as part of the ewe pre breeding checks.These checks ensure she is in good body condition, disease free, her feet, mouth and udder are sound.

V) **VACCINES**: It is important all vaccines are administered well before tupping to be fully effective and so they do not affect fertility at the point of tupping. Abortion vaccines for EAE and toxoplasma are given at least a month pre-tupping, Footvax and BlueTongue vaccines are recommended to be at least 6 weeks pre-tupping.

W) **WORMS AND FLUKE:** The main causes of production loss. There is widespread resistance to drugs. In recent years regular testing has revealed that the pattern changes dramatically year to year and tups, ewes, hoggs and shearlings often have differing status with worms. Please sample strategically - do not blanket treat.

X) **EXAMINATION:** A tup pre-breeding examination is essential to avoid high geld rates. Semen sampling every tup is not necessary, in fact on welfare grounds it is not recommended. A good physical examination will detect >95% of infertile and sub fertile tups. This involves assessment of: scrotal circumference, mobility, testicle palpation, feet, genitalia inspection, BCS, teeth examination (incisors & molars).

Y) **YOUNG SHEEP:** Hoggs and Shearlings should be well grown to maximise fertility. Hoggs should be 60% of their adult weight at tupping, shearlings 80%.

Z) **ZOLVIX & STARTECT:** The Quarantine wormer doses with minimal resistance in the UK. Quarantine treat all sheep bought in or returning from grazing other holdings. A quarantine dose is the only time these should be used in adult sheep.

HAEMONCHUS (BARBERS POLE WORM)

There have been increasing cases of *Haemonchus contortus* across the northwest in previous weeks. This worm, more commonly known as the barber's pole worm, can be fatal with as few as 500 worms causing severe disease. A short lifecycle (20 days), combined with high egg output, means there can be a very rapid build up of parasites on pasture given suitable weather conditions – warm and wet! The worm develops in the abomasum and survives by sucking blood from the stomach lining. This results in a severe anaemia and often death shortly after. A bottle jaw is seen in more chronic infections and can present very similarly to acute fluke. Scour often isn't an immediate clinical sign of *Haemonchus* but can be present when we see a mixed infection of *Haemonchus* with our usual summer worms in grazing lambs. Unlike other worms, adult sheep do not build up a natural immunity to *Haemonchus*, and so regular worm egg counts of adults must be incorporated into your regime.

Treatment is relatively simple as currently in the UK there is little known anthelmintic resistance to *Haemonchus* meaning that all classes of wormer should be effective. *Heamonchus* can also be killed by closantel based fluke drenches too which can be useful if there is a need to treat for fluke and *Haemonchus* at the same time in the back end. Dosing animals brought onto your farm with a suitable quarantine dose – **Zolvix** or **Startect** – is the only way to prevent bringing *Haemonchus* and other resistant worms in. Animals should be treated on arrival and housed for 24-48 hours to ensure any eggs are excreted before being turned out to pasture. Please speak to one of our farm vets if you have any questions.

THE VET TECHS

Our vet tech team of Anna, Karen and Claire have had a busy month of farm visits and in house lab testing.

- **141 Calves weighed.** The best daily live weight gains seen this month are 1.14kg per day for a dairy heifer and 1.75kg for a beef calf. The target growth rate is 0.7kg per day and above.
- **69 Calves disbudded.**
- **51 Calves vaccinated.** Majority being intranasal respiratory vaccines.
- **1015 Cows mobility scored.** Only 2.87% of which were lame, massively below the national herds estimated lameness prevalence of 30%.
- **99 Worm egg counts.** We have seen a variety of results in both lambs and adult sheep.
- **7 Fluke egg counts.** We will carry out a lot more of these once the fluke risk starts to rise in Autumn.
- **5 Calf Scourchecks.** This is a rapid test, testing for Crypto, Rotavirus, Coronavirus and E. coli.

If you think any of the vet tech services could benefit your farm then call the surgery and speak to either Anna, Karen or Claire to discuss further.

IT'S SHOW TIME!

We had a fantastic day at Malham Show, thank you to everyone who visited our stand. Come and see us at:

HODDER VALLEY SHOW

SATURDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER

It would be great to see as many of you as possible for a catch up over a cuppa!