Dalehead Veterinary Group Ltd

RCVS ACCREDITED PRACTICE FARM ANIMAL PRACTICE

24 hour dedicated farm cover

STATION ROAD, SETTLE BD24 9AA
MOUNT PLEASANT, HIGH BENTHAM LA2 7LE
GISBURN AUCTION MART, GISBURN BB7 4ES

FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2022

DON'T BE LAME!

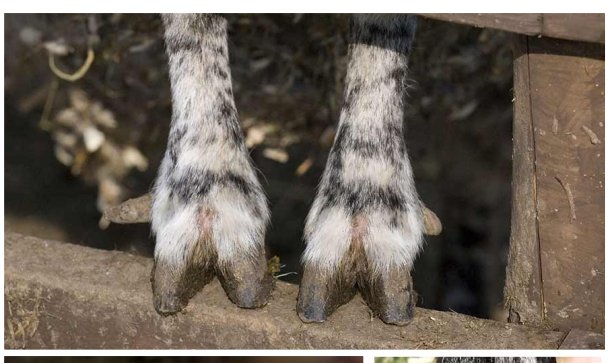
With awful weather upon us and lambing time not in the too distance future, the decision to house sheep brings the risk of lameness. So now is the time to prepare and prevent! The infectious bacterial diseases, footrot and scald, are the most prevalent causes of lameness in sheep, however CODD (contagious ovine digital dermatitis) is on the rise.

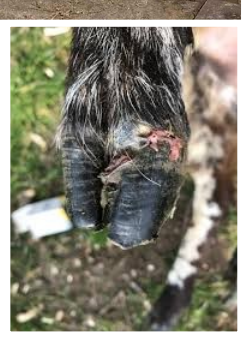
Scald is caused by the bacteria *F. necrophorum* which occurs naturally in the soil. Footrot is caused by *Dichelobacter nodosus*, which is carried by infected sheep and remains infectious for a maximum of 10 days on contaminated pasture or bedding material. This means the feet of infected sheep are the main source of contamination. Sheep should be free from foot rot when housed as cases can escalate and spread quickly. Any lame sheep should be treated and isolated from the rest of the group. Regular foot bathing, adequate bedding and lime spread in high traffic areas will aid in keeping the bacteria low, sterilise the bedding and reduce the rate of transmission. Persistently infected sheep need to be identified and those that do not fully respond to treatment should be culled, as they are a source of infection to the rest of the flock.

The greatest risk of a CODD outbreak in a flock is from bough-in stock. Sheep with CODD can be carriers and not show obvious signs of lameness. Therefore, attention to foot health should be paid when purchasing sheep. Contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD) is clinically different from foot-rot. The main variance is the origin of the initial lesion at the coronary band. Infection starts at the junction of the coronary band and the wall of the hoof then invades the sensitive laminae underneath the horn. CODD lesions starts small but as the disease progresses it causes separation of the wall of the hoof and the coronary band spreads downwards towards the toe. CODD usually affects both claws, the cleft and often the skin above the hoof. The horn may completely detach, but unlike 'normal' foot-rot, the coronary band where new horn is produced may be permanently damaged, resulting in the animal needing to be culled. There is often rapid shedding of the whole horn case, leaving a raw digital stump. The condition is extremely contagious so isolating suspected cases is imperative to reduce to risk of transmission. Please speak to one of our farm vets if you suspect a case of CODD as conventional foot-rot treatments are not affected.

Many of you will be familiar with the 5-point lameness plan. The plan has five action points that aims to build resilience, reduce disease challenge and establish immunity.

1. Quarantine bought in stock. Examine stock prior to purchase for issues such as footrot or CODD. Isolate new purchases to reduce the possibility of transmitting issue to the rest of the flock.
2. Treat lame sheep promptly. Rapid treatment will improve recovery and reduce the spread of disease. If you would like to discuss a treatment plan. Please speak to one of our farm vets.
3. Avoid wet/poached areas. Easier said than done at times! Avoiding bogged areas will reduce the incidence of foot issues. Replacing high traffic areas with a hard-base e.g gateways, trough areas can be beneficial for foot health.
4. Cull repeat offenders. Keep records when treating lame sheep. Consideration should be taken if a sheep has 3 or more cases of lameness in a year.
5. Vaccinate. We have seen an increase in demand regarding 'Footvax' usage. If you would like to discuss the vaccine, please speak to one of our farm vets or SQP's.



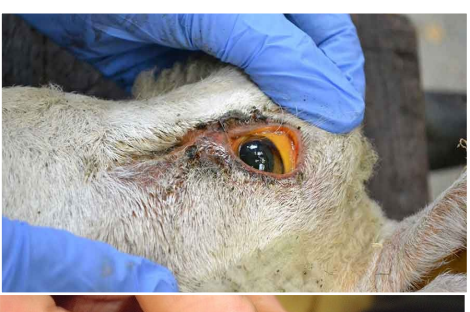


To discuss lameness in sheep, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

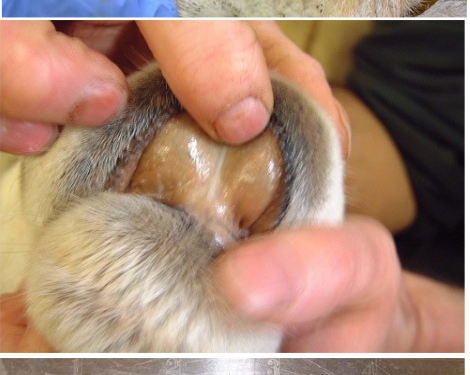
COPPER DEFICIENCY AND TOXICITY IN SHEEP

As lambing time approaches it is imperative that we know the copper status of our flock to prevent Swayback in lambs. The breed of sheep and the nature of feed can have a big influence on the likelihood of copper deficiency. Suffolks and Texels are very efficient at absorbing copper from the diet and are therefore less likely to become copper deficient than other breeds. Blood sampling 6-12 ewes will ascertain the copper status of the flock and whether supplementation is required.

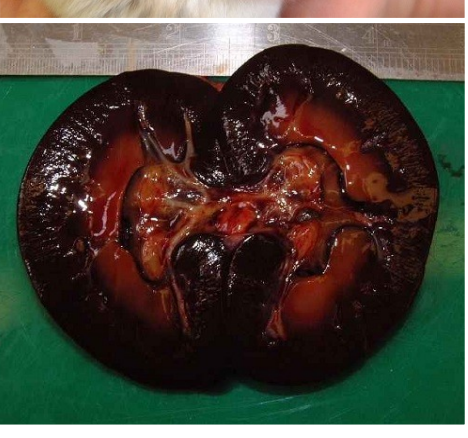
If supplementation is needed, there are a few options available:



Copper Drench: **'Newhouse'** or **'Swayback'** drench. The amount of copper which can be given in one dose is limited because of the potential toxicity. These drenches can therefore only give a short term boost to the liver copper levels. Ewes may need to be drenched twice; firstly in mid pregnancy and again one month later. It is not advisable to treat for liver fluke at the same time as giving a copper drench.



Copper Capsules: **Copinox/ Coprac** These are gelatine capsules containing copper oxide needles. They are administered orally to the ewes either before tupping or during the first half of pregnancy. The copper needles attach to the wall of the abomasum and dissolve slowly over 3-4 weeks allowing efficient uptake and storage of copper in the liver with minimal risk of toxicity. Liver copper levels can remain increased for at least 6 months.



Copper Injections: **Veticop**. Copper injections give a rapid, short term (2-4 month) increase in copper levels. The injection is administered as a single 2ml subcutaneous injection during mid-pregnancy.

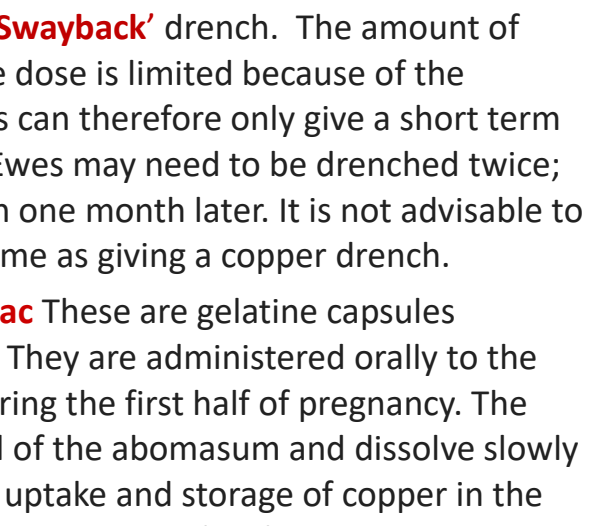
Please talk to one of the farm vets if you would like to discuss blood testing ewes for copper status or the various treatment options available.

Copper poisoning can be acute, caused by an overdose of a product containing copper, or chronic in nature. Chronic copper poisoning is the more common presentation and is due to ingestion of excess copper in the diet over a long period of time. Sources of copper may include concentrates, mineral licks, supplements and in some cases background levels of copper in forage. Mineral licks formulated for cattle often contain higher levels of copper which can be harmful to sheep if they have access to them.

At Dalehead we have seen cases where sheep have been treated with copper routinely over successive years, the copper has accumulated in the liver and subsequent feeding sheep concentrates has caused toxicity problems. Poisoning is more common in susceptible white faced sheep breeds, the commonest recorded breed being Texels. Copper is stored in the liver and when the storage capacity is exceeded copper can be released into the blood stream where it causes damage to the red blood cells (haemolysis). It is worth noting that a haemolytic crisis can be precipitated by stress such as travelling and sales and current exposure to copper does not have to feature.

Presenting signs range from sudden death to lethargy and recumbency followed by death. The mucous membranes, especially those around the eye, will often be jaundiced. Treatment of affected animals is unrewarding and efforts should be focused on reducing exposure.

CALF SCOUR VACCINES



Rotavirus, Coronavirus (a different strain to the human covid!) K99 Ecoli and Cryptospridia are the most common causes of infectious scours in young calves. We are able to test calf scour samples at the surgery for the presence of these infections with results back the same day.

Rotavec Corona are Bovigen are single dose vaccines proving protection against Rotavirus, Coronovirus and K99 Ecoli which are administered to cows between 13 and 3 weeks prior to calving to pass on protection to their calves via colostrums and milk. A single shot of vaccine generates at least 60 times more antibodies than an antibody paste administered to the calf at birth. The vaccine is particularly useful in suckler herds but is now increasingly being used in dairy herds aswel. For more information speak to one of the farm vets.

ABORTION CONTROL IN SHEEP

Any farm experiencing over 2% of ewes either aborting or lambing prematurely is likely to have an infectious cause of abortion present in the flock. It should always be assumed that every ewe that aborts is potentially contagious to other sheep and to isolate her from other ewes and to remove any aborted lambs and afterbirths as soon as possible. Even if the flock is fully vaccinated for Enzootic abortion there are other infections such as Campylobacter and Salmonella which make isolation essential to prevent spread from ewe to ewe. Be aware that many of the causes of abortion in sheep can potentially infect humans as well and that strict hygiene measures such as wearing gloves should be observed when handling abortion material. Anyone who is pregnant should stay well away from sheep at lambing time.

It is important to have samples from aborted lambs and afterbirths tested to determine the cause of the problem as control measures will vary depending on which infection is present. If enzootic abortion is found, antibiotic treatment of the group may be justified to reduce the number of further abortions this year until a vaccination programme can be implemented next year.

If you wish to have abortion samples investigated please phone the surgery first to discuss which samples will be most appropriate for testing. Samples must be packaged in leak proof containers and labelled with your surname and the farm name. They **MUST** be left **OUTSIDE** in the yellow salt bin by the Portakabin and a member of reception informed.