

## FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 2021

### HOW TO USE YOUR VACCINE



We have all heard about the coronavirus vaccines that are being manufactured to protect us against COVID-19 and the importance of storing them at the right temperature and the discussion about intervals between doses, so it seems appropriate to consider how livestock vaccines are stored and used.

#### Storage

All livestock vaccines need to be stored in a fridge at between 2°C and 8°C, any deviation from the storage temperatures will result in a very significant reduction of the vaccine's potency. How sure are you that the fridge you use is running at the right temperature????

#### Read the Data Sheet

Check the route of administration - if the vaccine is licensed to be given into the muscle it won't be fully effective if administered under the skin. If the vaccine requires 2 doses 4-6 weeks apart, then a longer or shorter interval between injections will reduce the level of protection achieved.

#### Vaccination Technique

Animals should be clean, dry and not stressed when vaccinating. Vaccinator guns should be sterile, in good working order to deliver the correct dose of vaccine with a **sharp, sterile** needle. When you go for your Covid jab, you would not appreciate being injected with an old syringe and blunt, dirty needle containing a vaccine which has been left on the window ledge for 48 hours to warm up!

#### Heptavac P/Covexin Pre-lambing Boosters

For adult ewes already in a clostridial vaccination system, the pre-lambing booster should be given 4-6 weeks before lambing to allow time for the maximum number of antibodies to be passed on through the ewe's colostrum to protect the lambs. Sheep which are not in a system should receive the advised primary course. The 2<sup>nd</sup> injection may be planned in time to meet the pre-lambing vaccination. For more information or to discuss vaccines, please speak with one of the farm vets.

## EMAILING INVOICES

We are hoping to start emailing invoices and newsletters to clients at the beginning of March rather than posting them out. This is something which many of you have been requesting for some time, so we are gradually getting there!

In order for us to email your invoice to you **we need the email address that you want the invoice to be sent to** – this seems like an obvious thing to say but on some accounts we hold several email addresses so please let us know which one you would like us to use for this purpose. **Also, you MUST have signed a GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) form which we hold on file to say that you are happy for us to send emails to you.**

If you would like to receive your invoice by email, please contact the office to ensure that we have the correct details and a signed GDPR form for you. Please remember to check your junk mail folder for your invoice until you have added us to your contacts. Some inboxes do not allow submissions from email addresses with generic names such as 'info@' so you may need to change your preferences in settings to receive our emails.

If we do not hold an email address for you or the GDPR information we hold on your account does not allow us to send an email you will receive your invoice by post as usual.

# METABOLIC DISEASES SEEN IN EWES AT LAMBING

There are three common metabolic diseases we see in ewes around lambing time. Here is a summary:

## TWIN LAMB DISEASE

### CAUSE: ENERGY DEFICIENCY

The rapidly growing foetus has a huge demand for energy in the last weeks of pregnancy. The ewe uses her reserves of body fat to provide this energy. All ewes will be in a state of negative energy balance in late pregnancy, ranging from subclinical and mild, where there are sufficient reserves but liver and metabolism are coping, through to severe where the disparity of energy metabolites is so high that we see Twin Lamb Disease.

### CLINICAL SIGNS

Dullness, inappetence and lethargy which progresses over days to twitching and nervous signs, then collapse. The ewe is depressed and looks really sick.

### RISK FACTORS

- Thin ewes with inadequate fat reserves
- Fat ewes whose energy metabolism will be compromised
- Multiple foetuses outstripping the ewes reserves
- Inadequate feed intakes e.g. poor quality forage, insufficient feed space, bad weather
- Liver disease such as fluke or copper toxicity



### PREVENTION

- Aim for a body condition score (BCS) of 2.5 at lambing. This is achieved by managing the BCS months before lambing, monitor this at tupping and scanning and feed accordingly. You can not change the BCS in late pregnancy.
- Thin sheep down with a BCS over 4 at pre-tupping
- Feed singles, twins and triplets as separate groups and according to their requirements. This will vary year to year depending on the ewe BCS and forage quality (get an analysis).

### TREATMENT

- Supplement with an instant form of energy such as propylene glycol. This chemical doesn't need the ewe to metabolise it unlike other energy sources. There are several twin lamb drenches available
- Make sure she has access to forage, feed and water. Remember she probably feels too sick to get to a water bowl or feed trough to get these nutrients herself. A B vitamin injection will stimulate appetite and help the liver to repair itself.
- In severe cases we will attempt to abort the lambs to remove the energy stress they are causing with a steroid injection.

## HYPOCALCAEMIA (TREMBLINGS, MILK FEVER)

### CAUSE: CALCIUM DEFICIENCY

In a similar way to Twin Lamb Disease the growing foetus requires more nutrients than the ewe can provide, in this case it is a calcium deficiency that is the issue. The increased calcium demand from the foetuses starts mid pregnancy and peaks on day 10 of lactation when 70% of the total bone calcium has been used. The calcium reserves in the body are held in the bones, when dietary intake is insufficient the calcium is mobilised.

### CLINICAL SIGNS

Similar to Twin Lamb but it is much more rapid, over hours rather than days, and the muscle twitching, ataxia (loss of balance/muscle control) and a stiff gait is much more pronounced. A collapsed ewe with tremblings is more likely to be stiff rather than the floppy and depressed twin lamb affected ewe.

### RISK FACTORS

- Changes in diet around lambing when the calcium demand is highest. Calcium mobilisation takes 5 days to be fully switched on, so there is a lag period when insufficient intake can result in disease. We commonly see cases increase with a number of management factors.
- Changes to low calcium grain, poor hay or straw based diet
- Housing with no buffer feeding of the silage or hay first



- Insufficient trough space at housing (horned ewes need 55cms per ewe, non-horned need 45cms per ewe)
- Simultaneous disease causing inappetence.

## PREVENTION

- Ensure ewes get fed a balanced diet which contains at least 3 gm/kg DM calcium, and up to 5 gm/kg in ewes with multiple lambs. Legume forages are great sources of calcium, cereal grains are poor
- Change diets slowly over the last 6 weeks of pregnancy
- Avoid stressful management procedures where ewes feed intake is significantly reduced in late pregnancy.

## TREATMENT

Inject calcium borogluconate. 50-80 mls of a 20% solution should be injected under the skin at a couple of sites. Remember to give the site a good massage post injection to disperse the solution and maximise uptake, and use a clean needle - infections and abscesses at these sites are not uncommon and contribute to the losses in affected sheep.

# HYPOMAGNESEMIA (STAGGERS)

## CAUSE: MAGNESIUM DEFICIENCY

Unlike the other two metabolic diseases outlined, this is a simple deficiency where 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 many 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 in-coordination, recumbency, severe tremors and death.

Staggers is usually seen (unlike the other two diseases) 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
- Supplementation.

## Treatment

- A subcutaneous injection of 25% magnesium. 75mls per ewe is the recommended dose. Follow the same procedure as the calcium injection, multiple sites, aseptic technique.
- TLC as recommended with the other diseases, provide warmth, shelter, water and feed. In this instance again the ewe will be unable to move to get her water and feed, so hand feeding is necessary.



## FLOCK CHECK ABORTION TESTING AVAILABLE

6-8 aborted ewes can be blood sampled for evidence of exposure to Toxoplasmosis and Enzootic Abortion. The testing is not suitable for ewes that have been previously vaccinated against these diseases. Understanding what has contributed to abortion rates greater than 2%, a greater than expected number of barren ewes and weak or sickly lambs, can help identify actions to be implemented to prevent the same problems occurring the following year.

## EARLY LAMBERS, WORM EGG COUNTS

We've started checking worm egg counts for early lambing ewes.

It is well known that ewes can have a peri-parturient rise in WEC, but it doesn't necessarily mean they **all** need dosing. Fit ewes with good BCS and those bearing singles are unlikely to have a rise in worm output and may not need dosing. Leaner ewes or those bearing multiple lambs could have a higher worm egg count. Collect some faecal samples for testing (10 individual samples of 5g for us to pool together), then we can then see exactly which groups need dosing. Targeted dosing can help reduce wormer resistance and may even save you time and money. A fluke test can be done at the same time, please let us know some history such as last dose and when they were housed.

# ANNUAL SHEEP MEETING!!!!

For obvious reasons this year's sheep meeting will be held **online**, and will take place on:

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021 Time: 7.30pm**

The topic of this year's presentation is

## 'Healthy Lambs For Healthy Profits'

and will focus on prevention and management of disease in newborn lambs including colostrum management and colostrum substitutes.

To be able to access the meeting please contact the surgery by 12 noon on Monday 15th February to be sent a link. As in other years, those attending the meeting will be able to take advantage of extra discount on sheep related products on the night.

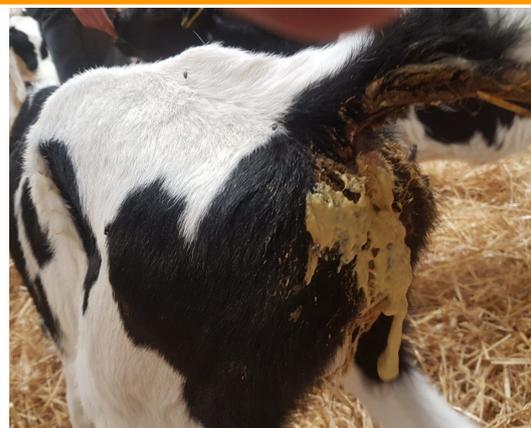
If you are unable to attend the meeting you will be able to contact the surgery to access the meeting from our website at a later date. **Please note: Discount will only be offered to clients attending the meeting on Monday 15th February.**



## CALF SCOUR VACCINES

Rotavirus, Coronavirus (a different strain to the human covid!) K99 Ecoli and Cryptosporidia 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** and **Bovigen** are single dose vaccines proving protection against Rotavirus, Coronavirus and K99 Ecoli which are administered to cows between 13 and 3 weeks prior to calving to pass on protection to their calves via colostrum 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 as well. For more information, please speak to one of the farm vets.



## BVD STAMP IT OUT



STAMP IT OUT!

As many of you will already know, funding has been available as part of a national initiative to raise awareness about BVD. Up to £500 of laboratory work and veterinary health planning time is available **free of charge** to help determine the BVD status of your herd.

Dalehead received an allocation of up to 100 herds to test. We have now used up our allocation but some other practices have not, so we can potentially test on a few more farms using other practices' allocations. If you have not already tested and are interested in testing please contact the surgery for more information and register an interest.

## PRACTICAL LAMBING COURSE

In addition to the Annual Lambing Meeting, we are also offering a 'Practical' Lambing Course which can be viewed online. The course will be held on:

**Thursday 25th February at 7.30pm**

As with the Annual Lambing Meeting please contact the surgery by 12 noon on Thursday 25th February to be sent a link. The course will be free of charge to Flock Club members, others will be charged £25 + VAT. This charge will include a work booklet and various step by step laminated handouts.



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