

FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2022

MYCOPLASMA BOVIS IN DAIRY HERDS

Mycoplasma Bovis infections are commonly recognised on dairy farms.

The main disease presentations associated with M. Bovis infections are pneumonia and middle ear disease causing ear droop or head tilt in calves, arthritis seen as a non-foot lameness with joint swelling in adult cattle and occasionally mastitis. Unfortunately many of the problems can be chronic with variable response to treatment.

Clearly M. Bovis is not the only potential cause of any of these disease symptoms and a veterinary assessment of the disease situation on the farm plus taking appropriate samples for diagnostic testing will be required to determine how much of an issue M. Bovis may be in your herd. As with BVD, bulk milk samples and youngstock antibody screens can be carried out to see how much evidence of Mycoplasma there is in your herd.

One of the main ways that infection spreads to calves in an infected herd is through feeding infected/contaminated cows milk and colostrum. Clearly we need to feed colostrum to calves and therefore in heavily infected herds pasteurisation of colostrum could be considered. Not feeding cow's milk or waste milk to calves will also significantly reduce the risk of disease transmission. In addition to ensuring adequate draught free

ventilation without chilling calves, keeping calf group size small and the age range within the calf group narrow helps to reduce the risk of disease spreading from older to younger calves. For calf pneumonia M. Bovis usually acts in combination with other viruses and bacteria. Taking steps to ensure optimal environmental and feeder hygiene, ensuring calves are well fed with sufficient good quality calf milk replacer and reducing the challenge from other respiratory pathogens through good ventilation and vaccination will all help in Mycplasma Bovis control.

Mycoplasma species differ from many bacteria in that they do not have a cell wall. This is not just of interest to scientists as it means than many commonly used antibiotics such as penicillin will be totally ineffective against Mycoplasmas. As with all bacterial diseases, deciding on the appropriate choice of antibiotic, targeting that treatment to the right animals early in the disease process and reviewing treatment outcomes is critical for success.

If you would like to carry out testing to see how much of a problem M. Bovis may be in your herd please discuss with one of the farm vets.



OUR ANNUAL SHEEP MEETING

Due to the rising COVID cases we have decided to postpone our annual sheep meeting until February.





More information will be in the February newsletter.

SCAB OR LICE-NEITHER ARE REET NICE!

Excessive itching is an important clinical sign that should be investigated when seen in any group of sheep. At this time of year it is likely that excessive skin irritation and wool loss is due to either sheep scab or lice infestation (or occasionally both!) and it is very important that an accurate diagnosis is reached to enable correct treatment and control measures to be put in place before lambing time starts. This usually involves bringing a selection of itchy sheep to the surgery for examination and taking skin scrapings to check under the microscope for lice or scab mites.

LICE

Chewing or biting lice spend their entire life cycle on the sheep and so spread is via direct contact between sheep; for example at feed troughs, during gathering and handling or in crowded housing. Lice live and feed on the skin surface and fleece of sheep. The severity of lice infestations appears to depend on a range of factors including breed, fleece length, overall flock health, temperature and humidity. Lice thrive in sheep with a longer fleece and prefer cool, dry conditions so lice numbers tend to decrease after clipping and during hot weather in the summer months. The entire life cycle takes 4-5 weeks to complete meaning that infestations develop over several months usually peaking in mid to late winter. Adult lice are red/brown in colour and 2-3mm in length and can be visible with the naked eye in wool samples taken from affected areas of the fleece.



Treatment of affected groups of sheep is either with synthetic pyrethroid

pour-on preparations applied with a T-Bar applicator down the length of the back of the sheep (e.g. *Crovect, Dysect, Ectofly*) or spot-on preparations such as *Spotinor* or by plunge dipping sheep in an organophosphosphate dip. At this time of year when sheep are in full fleece the 'pour-on' and 'spot-on' preparations may not be fully effective due to the preparation not reaching effective concentrations in the full length of the fleece. **Scab injections e.g.** *Cydectin, Dectomax, Ivomec* are **NOT effective against sheep lice.**

SHEEP SCAB

Sheep scab is caused by the *Psorophes Ovis* mite. The mite can survive for 17 days off the sheep which is important to remember when considering how to tackle the parasite. Scab mites are smaller than lice and can not be seen with the naked eye. Recently a blood test has been developed that identifies sheep scab antibodies, this tool detects infection in the early stages before the sheep start scratching.

TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR SHEEP SCAB

Organophosphate Dips

A single plunge dip treatment will kill off all scab mites within 2 days (treating lice as well) and its persistency prevents re-infection if sheep are returned to dirty pasture. Using an O/P dip through a shower is NOT effective at controlling scab.

Injectables

Ivermectin (e.g Ivomec, Noromectin, Bimectin)

• 2 injections required, 7 days apart

Doromectin (Dectomax)

- Treatment: Single injection of 1ml/33kg into the muscle
- To avoid re-infection sheep must be turned onto clean pasture (which has not had sheep on it for at least 19 days)

Moxidectin 1% (Cydectin 1%)

- Prevention: 1 injection protects against infestation for 28 days.
- Treatment: 2 injections 10 days apart
- DO NOT USE IN FLOCKS VACCINATED AGAINST FOOTROT

Moxidectin 2% (Cydectin 2%)

- A single injection will prevent and treat scab
- Provides 60 days protection
- Treated animals can be moved back onto dirty pasture
- Can be used in flocks which vaccinate against footrot

For a discussion about scab or lice in sheep and preferred treatment options please contact the surgery and speak to one of the farm vets/SQP's.



PREGNANT EWE NUTRITION

NUTRITION OF THE EWE

Providing the best pre-lambing nutrition is essential as it not only allows the ewe to produce good quality colostrum, but it also provides her with the nutrients she needs for full placental development throughout her pregnancy.

Mid-pregnancy (Day 50-90)

During this stage of pregnancy the placenta is developing. Ensuring the ewe has good nutrition at this time allows for the placenta to develop to optimum size. This is crucial for good birthweights leading to increased survival and growth rates of the lambs. Research has shown a higher mortality rate following undernutrition in mid-pregnancy.

OPTIMIZING THE EWE'S BODY CONDITION SCORE

Scanning allows us to identify how many lambs a ewe is carrying. This knowledge enables us to manage ewes and group them depending on how many lambs they are carrying resulting in preferential feeding.



Final two months of pregnancy

Aapproximately 75% of foetal growth takes place during late pregnancy. At this point the ewe's requirements for energy and protein also need to increase, depending on how many lambs she is carrying.

During the last 4 weeks of pregnancy we start to see mammary development and in the last 3 weeks of pregnancy, there is a clear relationship between energy intake and colostrum production. Well-fed ewes have also been shown to have a better maternal ability than those which are under-fed or over-fed.

Inadequate nutrition results in:

- Reduced quantity of colostrum
- Reduced quality of milk produced
- Delay in the onset of lactation
- Increased thickness of colostrum (which the lamb may find more difficult to extract from the teat)
- Increased risk of metabolic diseases such as twin lamb

Top tips:

- Ensure ewes maintain their target body condition score in the last six weeks of pregnancy (target 3.0–3.5 for lowland and 2.5 for upland ewes)
- Blood samples two to three weeks before lambing can be taken to assess the nutrition in late pregnancy
- Young first-time lambers (ewe lambs or shearlings) should be fed in separate groups, by litter size, to adult ewes.

For more information please contact the surgery and speak to one of the farm vets.

DALEHEAD AI COURSE

Last month we ran our first Artificial Insemination course which went very well. The four day course provided a good mix of time spent in the classroom and post mortem room identifying the reproductive system, and on farm teaching and hands-on learning.



The course needs to be delivered with cow welfare at it's centre and so relies heavily on post mortem specimens and teaching models to develop the skills before further practice on farm. The six attendees made the most of the opportunities provided in a light hearted learning environment with ample refreshments to keep them going throughout the day.

The course has provided them with the knowledge and guidance to allow them to practice and develop the skills on their own on farm.

If you have an interest in attending a course please let us know at the practice.

FLUKE UPDATE

The latest sampling results in mid December show no evidence of active fluke on our monitor farms except on areas that have standing water (Rathmell Bottoms) which had active fluke much earlier in the season.

We have had positives in terms of adult fluke on very wet land. This means go ahead and fluke if you are very wet.

If you would like to give us a call at the surgery and talk to one of us about your individual case please ring 01729 823538.

Kind Regards

Karen



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DO YOU NEED TO FLUKE YOUR CATTLE?

The fluke challenge to cattle varies from year to year depending on weather conditions, some years we are hit hard and other years there is no need to dose. From ingesting the immature fluke stage to becoming an egg laying adult fluke in the bile duct takes 3 months.

No new fluke infections should be picked up after housing as immature fluke do not survive in silage. Once cattle have been housed for 3 months any fluke that they are carrying will be egg laying adults. We can identify if your cattle are carrying fluke by performing a fluke egg count in house on a pooled dung sample (provide us with samples from 10 cows which we will pool together).

If you have not already treated your cattle for fluke this autumn it would be worth checking to see if they would benefit from being treated. Treatment plans can be straightforward for suckler cows and dairy youngstock, the options being more limited for dairy cows due to milk withhold periods on flukicides.

For more information on fluke control plans for cattle speak to one of the farm vets.

PRE-LAMBING CLOSTRIDIAL BOOSTERS FOR EWES

Ewes in a clostridial (*Covexin/ Bravoxin*) or combined clostridial/pasterella (*Heptavac P*) vaccination system should receive their booster vaccination 4-6 weeks before lambing to allow the ewes to respond fully to the vaccine and maximise the amount of antibodies in their colostrum to provide protection to their lambs against diseases such as lamb dysentery, pulpy kidney and tetanus.

The ewes must be dry when they are vaccinated and care must be taken to ensure correct subcutaneous (under the skin) injection of every ewe. Injecting sheep when they are wet may result in contamination of the needle and abscess formation. 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 booster 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!

A sterimatic vaccinator system is recommended which sanitises the needle between ewes. Patient handling of pregnant ewes is essential during the operation-speed is not important! This also applies to when gathering ewes in.

Vaccine storage is important to ensure that it is fully effective. Vaccines need to be kept between 2-8°C and part-used bottles should be discarded at the end of the day. All of our surgery fridges are continuously temperature monitored with alarm triggered if temperatures were to deviate from the manufacturer's recommendations-how confident are you of your on farm fridge storage?

JANUARY 2022



www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk

Dalehead Veterinary Group is a trading name of Dalehead Veterinary Group Ltd, a limited company, registered in England and Wales with the number 09445397. Registered Office: Station Road, Settle, North Yorkshire BD24 9AA.