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RCVS ACCREDITED PRACTICE FARM ANIMAL PRACTICE

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FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER - JULY 2024

HOW CAN WE MAXIMISE GROWTH RATES IN LAMBS THIS SUMMER?

Alongside high worm burdens, cobalt deficiency can be a cause of ill thrift in growing lambs, and the two can often present very similarly. Cobalt is made into vitamin B12 by rumen microorganisms, and from here it plays a significant role in energy production - vital for good growth rates.

High worm burdens causing diarrhoea can further reduce the absorption of B12 in the gut. As cobalt and other trace elements are not actively stored within the body, we rely on continuous intake within feed and/or supplementation. Cobalt concentrations in grass vary throughout the year, along with grass species grazed. Red and white clover species have a higher cobalt concentration than ryegrass swards, and typically cobalt concentrations are lowest in grass throughout the summer and vary from pasture to pasture.

Signs of cobalt deficiency include:

- Lethargy
- Reduced appetite
- Poor wool quality
- Poor growth rates despite adequate nutrition
- Poor immunity and increased susceptibility to illnesses such as clostridial disease and Pasteurella
- Pale mucous membranes (eyes) with long term deficiency

We can diagnose cobalt deficiency from clinical signs and a blood sample, alongside worm egg counts to investigate high worm burdens and coccidiosis.

Supplementation of cobalt can be given in many ways:

- Drenches tend to be popular however as the body cannot store cobalt, blood B12 levels will only be raised for 2-3 days post drench. Often this length of time is not enough for long term benefits to be seen, with frequent dosing needed to maintain supplementation.

- Injectable forms of vitamin B12 can offer longer term supplementation from 2-6 months depending on dose, ideal for fattening lambs shorter term or gimmer replacements longer term. Injectable B12 often works out the most cost effective compared to drenches and boluses.
- Boluses offer 5-6 months of supplementation by slowly leaching cobalt in the rumen. This offers a steady long-term supplementation for store lambs and replacements. Care must be taken when administering boluses in lambs and should only be given to lambs over 20kg.

To summarise, know the trace element status of your flock and combine supplementation with adequate nutrition and regular worm egg counts to maximise productivity in your flock.

TEASER TUP 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 assist with 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.

<u>Post-operative care for your vasectomised tup:</u>

- 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.**

EARLY LAMBING IN EWES—REGULIN IMPLANTS

Although we are still seeing the occasional late lambing ewe requiring assistance at the surgery it is already time for early lambing flocks to start thinking of preparing ewes for the tup.

Regulin ear implants can be used to bring forward the natural breeding season by up to 2 months. In a treatment regime, tups are kept away from the ewes (out of sight, sound and smell of the ewes) for at least 1 week prior to inserting the implants in the base of the ear until 5 weeks after implanting.

Peak mating takes place 60-70 days after implanting the ewes. To begin lambing at the start of February, Regulin should be administered at the start of July. We would recommend a tup: ewe ratio of 1:20 but we can also implant the tup to improve the quantity and quality of semen produced.

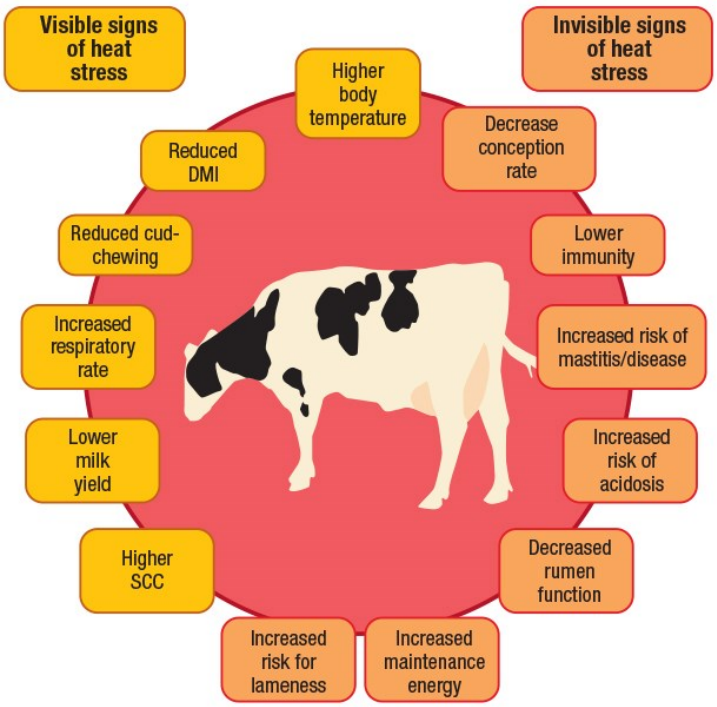
The advantages of using Regulin over sponging include:

- Conception rates are as good as to a totally natural service with no increase in multiple births
- Sheep that don't conceive to their first mating will continue to cycle normally and not return to anoestrus

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

MANAGING HEAT STRESS IN DAIRY COWS

There is increasing evidence that even the relatively low temperature experienced during the UK summer can lead to a degree of heat stress in dairy cows resulting in depressed feed intakes, lower yields, reduced fertility and increased risk of mastitis.



Dairy cows need to maintain a constant body temperature of around 101.5°F (38.8°C). They are constantly producing heat as they digest feed in the rumen and this needs to be exchanged with the air in the environment to maintain this body temperature. Air temperature will directly influence the heat exchange ability of the animal. In addition, air movement (wind speed) increases the amount of heat transfer from the surface of the cow and can also improve evaporation which also assists heat loss. Increasing humidity can decrease the heat exchange and have debilitating effects on the cow.

Animals showing signs of heat stress will become lethargic and inactive, will have an increased respiratory rate (over 60 breaths per minute) and pant with their mouths open in an attempt to increase heat loss. Heat stressed cows will have reduced feed intakes, reduced rumination and reduced milk yields. At an air temperature of 29°C with 90% relative humidity milk yields can be reduced by 33%.

As relative humidity increases, the temperature at which dairy cows exhibit heat stress falls. This association between air temperature and relative humidity has led to the development of the temperature humidity index (THI) which is shown in the chart to the right.

Temperature Humidity Index (THI)
Relative Humidity %

C	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
22	66	66	67	68	69	69	70	71	72
24	68	69	70	70	71	72	73	74	75
26	70	71	72	73	74	75	77	78	79
28	72	73	74	76	77	78	80	81	82
30	74	75	77	78	80	81	83	84	86
32	76	77	79	81	83	84	86	88	90
34	78	80	82	84	85	87	89	91	93
36	80	82	84	86	88	90	93	95	97
38	82	84	86	89	91	93	96	98	100
40	84	86	89	91	94	96	99	101	104

No heat stress
Moderate heat stress
Severe heat stress
Dead cows

When the THI of 72 is reached cows will exhibit moderate heat stress. This level is breached and the cow can become stressed with temperatures as low as 22°C if the relative humidity is high (90%). With relative humidity in the UK frequently above 80% during the summer months and nearing 100% in poorly ventilated winter accommodation the effects of heat stress are likely to be an increasing issue for UK dairy farmers.

Practical management of heat stress:

The most practical methods to reduce heat stress involve providing shade, ventilation and cooling the cows. Simple improvements to basic ventilation of buildings such as opening up side ventilation and ridge outlets will often improve airflow. Installation of a mechanical solution (fans) should only be considered after natural ventilation improvements have been considered and implemented.

As temperatures increase cows will drink more. In hot weather water intakes can increase by 10-20% so it is essential that yards, buildings and grazing areas are well supplied with a plentiful availability of clean water. Even lower yielding cows will drink over 100 litres of water per day in warm weather. If cows have access to outside yards or grazing it is particularly important that water is close to shade and a source of feed.

STILLBIRTH IN CALVES

Stillbirth in calves is defined as *'the death of the foetus before or during calving at full term'*.

Stillbirth in calves, like calving difficulty, is a much larger problem in calving heifers than older cows. The incidence in second and later lactation drops to half or less than the rate for heifers.

When investigating the cause of stillbirths we need to consider:

- Body condition score of the mothers
- Size of calf
- Degree of calving difficulty
- Management and handling of cattle close to calving
- Trace elements
- Disease status.

Iodine deficiency of the mother can lead to an increased incidence of stillbirths or calves born alive but without a 'will to live'. If iodine deficiency is suspected we are able to check the weight and iodine content of the calf's thyroid gland at post mortem.

To discuss stillbirth issues in calves, please speak to one of the farm vets.

MEDICINE AVALIABILITY UPDATES

Enzootic Abortion Vaccine (Cevac/Enzovax)
At present we have no enzootic abortion vaccine in stock due to a manufacturing issue. We hope to have further stock in September. Please contact the surgery now to secure your order. We will contact you as soon as the vaccine becomes available.

Heptavac P/ Ovivac P/ Bravoxin/ Covexin 10

Supply issues are still ongoing regarding clostridial vaccines.

The larger pack sizes of Heptavac are currently unavailable, we do have 50ml (25 dose) bottles available with an allocation of 100ml bottles hopefully due shortly.

Ovivac P
100mls unavailable probably until December. We may be getting an allocation of 500ml bottles shortly.

Ovipast
100ml bottles available, 500ml bottles due back in August.

Bravoxin 10
100mls (100 doses) available with no due date for the return of 50ml bottles.

To discuss clostridial and Pasteurella vaccinations for your flock or cattle, please contact the surgery.

Betamox
Currently out of stock with no due date. Please speak to a farm vet to discuss alternatives.

Ubrostar Red
We have no due date for when Ubrostar Red is going to be back in stock, and unfortunately there is no straight alternative. Please contact the surgery to discuss alternative dry cow treatments with one of the farm vets.

Bovaclox DC Extra
We hope to have Bovaclox DC Extra back in stock in August 2024.

Ectofly
Currently out of stock. No expected due date as to when it will be in stock. We do however have good supplies of Crovect. Please contact the surgery to discuss fly control products.

It is an ongoing battle regarding medicine availability and we would just like to say thank you for your understanding when something is not available or if an alternative product is supplied.