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24 hour
dedicated
farm cover

FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER—JUNE 2023

NEVER WASTE A DEAD SHEEP-Part 2: Lambing time losses

In April's newsletter we started a series of articles on why we believe postmortems are so beneficial, the second part is centered around the losses we see around lambing time. Now that lambing time has finished (hopefully!) it's time to take stock and think about lessons which could be learned for next year.

When you are busy lambing the level of losses, both ewe and lamb, is difficult to appreciate. It is often not until many days or weeks after lambing that you realise there were more than an acceptable number of deaths, by which time the opportunity to carry out a postmortem has gone. The fact that there are not enough hours in a lambing day also has an impact on finding time to organise the post mortem (PM). A summary of what we find from lambing time PMs and how that helps future flock plans demonstrates how useful a PM is. The prevention and treatment of the myriad of disease we see varies so widely that getting a diagnosis is the only way to stop ongoing losses. We have summarised some of the commonest findings in the PMs undertaken at the practice:

Ladies first - let's talk about the ewes!

- Sudden death causes range from mineral deficiencies such as 'staggers' (a low blood magnesium level) to clostridial disease from injection site reactions or mastitis to uterine rupture.
- Collapsed ewes are caused by twin lamb disease (an energy imbalance), listeriosis and tremblings (low calcium levels).
- *Twin lamb disease has many underlying causes – dental problems, iceberg disease, fluke, internal abscesses, undernutrition, overnutrition.*
- Thin ewes are being brought to us increasingly at lambing time. The pressure of pregnancy often highlights underlying disease. We have found MV, OPA, heart infections, severe lameness, dental disease and resistant worm loads in the last few seasons.
- A diagnosis allows us to focus on appropriate controls. Often one tweak will make an enormous difference; feeding management, vaccine use and timings, silage quality, forage analysis, stocking rates and environmental hygiene are all examples.

In terms of lamb losses through our PM room we have seen several syndromes:

- The ewes have had high ketones (toxic energy chemicals) in their blood, they have not showed signs of twin lamb disease but have been lean. One working theory is that a loss in body condition has affected the placenta and the lambs have been born weak, listless with noticeably higher death rates, another consideration is that an excess of iodine in the ewe (over supplementation in late gestation) has affected the lambs uptake of immunity.
- Ewes with poor quality colostrum (<20 on a Brix refractometer) resulting in increased watery mouth infections in their lambs.

We believe these scenarios are due to having lost condition in later pregnancy due to poor grass, relentless rain and very dry forage, the body condition losses were not immediately apparent.

- Increased numbers of joint ill and navel/internal umbilical infections. We consider this to be due to environmental build-up of pathogens due to overstocking and wet pens. Again, the rain is being blamed for this.

Those dead sheep have given us lots of information that we can act on to reduce losses next lambing time.



JUNE
2023



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BLOWFLY STRIKE—ARE YOU PREPARED?

Blowfly strike is caused by the larvae of *Lucilia sericata* (greenbottles), *Phormia terrae-novae* (blackbottles) and *Calliphora erythrocephala* (bluebottles). The life cycle is broken up into three distinct stages, the egg, the larvae and the adult. Flies over-winter in the soil as pupae, and emerge as temperatures rise during the spring. Adult female flies lay eggs on desired laying sites such as dirty back ends, foot rot lesions or open wounds. Eggs hatch into first stage larvae within approximately 12 hours. These larvae feed on tissue, grow and moult twice, becoming mature maggots in 3 to 10 days, depending on temperature and humidity. Third stage maggots then drop to the ground and pupate, and so the life cycle begins again.

Blowfly populations are at peak during the summer months. The entire life cycle from egg to adult can occur in less than 10 days. Maggots are active and voracious, causing skin and muscle liquefaction as they develop attracting secondary blowflies.

| | Meat Withdrawal | June | July | August | September | October | November |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------|------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|
| Clik Extra | 40 Days | 19 Weeks | | | | | |
| Clik | 40 Days | 16 Weeks | | | | | |
| Crovect | 8 Days | 6 Weeks | | | | | |
| Dysect | 49 Days | 8 Weeks | | | | | |
| Ectofly | 8 Days | 6 Weeks | | | | | |

What is blowfly strike?



The greenbottle, *Lucilia sericata*, is the most common blowfly associated with strike.



Damage is caused by blowfly maggots feeding on the skin and underlying tissues of sheep.



It can happen quickly – significant damage can occur in as little as 24-36 hours after egg laying.*

Toxins released by decomposing tissues and ammonia secreted by the maggots are absorbed through the lesions into the sheep's blood, causing systemic illness which result in death.

Managing worm burdens helps to prevent dirty backsides through scouring. 'Dagging' or 'crutching' decreases the amount of faecal matter build up which will help reduce the risk of blowfly strike.

Hooves which are in good health and are free from foot-rot or severe scald will also assist in reducing the risk of blowflies becoming attracted and laying eggs.

In addition to the above points there are chemical based products which can be applied onto the fleece that will prevent the incidence of blowfly strike. Dicyclanil based products (**Clik: 16 weeks protection, Clik extra: 19 weeks protection**) will prevent blowfly strike but will not treat active blowfly strike.

OP dips can will treat and prevent blowfly strike as well as other external parasite infections for 60 days.

It is stated in the datasheet not to shear sheep for 3 months post treatment relating to human health.

Cypermethrin (Crovect, Ectofly) based products can also be used to prevent blowfly strike and treat active blowfly strike infections. These provide a shorter protection window of up to 6-8 weeks and have a shorter meat withdrawal period with no restriction as to when a sheep can be clipped.

When using any products it is essential that all the manufacturers instructions are followed. Not doing so will affect the protection and may result in sheep becoming infested.

We advise that sheep severely affected by blowfly strike are given antibiotics and NSAIDs.

For more information regarding blowfly prevention or for a price on products we stock please contact the surgery on 01729 823538 to speak to a large animal vet or SQP and come along to the meeting on Thursday 8th June at 7pm.





Settle Country Store



Are flies spoiling your summer?

Come to our integrated fly control meeting with speakers from Elanco and Bestico.

**Thursday 8th June
7pm**

**North Ribblesdale Rugby Club
Grove Park
Settle, BD24 9RB**

BBQ and Beer

Please RSVP to the Dalehead Surgery or Settle Country Store by 5th June.

01729 823538
01729 815070



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 about Regulin please speak to one of the farm vets.

RED MITE AND CHICKENS

The red mite is a blood sucking parasite that can infest and feed on chickens and turkeys. They can invade at any time but especially during the warmer summer months. Warmth gives the red mite ideal conditions to breed so numbers can proliferate extremely quickly.

Low numbers of mites cause irritation and annoyance to the chicken and their keeper (mites can crawl up onto your skin making you itch, but they will not live on humans). Large numbers of mites can suck enough blood causing anaemia, shown by a pale comb and wattles, weakness, dullness and reduced egg production. Red mite are nocturnal so are difficult to spot, they hide in crevices of the poultry house during the day then emerge at night to crawl up the bird's legs, through the feathers and take a blood feed. If you get a huge hatch of mites, they are easily seen.

A regular check of any areas they can potentially hide is important so you can take quick action. You may find small greyish cream coloured mites; these could be mites which have not yet fed. Once they have sucked a feed of blood, they turn bright red.

You can use treatments in spring as a prevention tactic but make sure you treat for red mites as soon as you discover them.

- Clean your coop once a month with a good disinfectant.
- There are mite powders that can be applied to the bird, make sure you put some under the wings and the vent.
- If using mite powder you should also treat the coop. This follows cleaning, once the coop is dry. Apply a liberal dusting of mite powder or spray.

YOU MUST ENSURE YOUR CHICKENS ARE AWAY FROM THE COOP AT THIS TIME AND ALWAYS FOLLOW MANUFACTURERS INSTRUCTIONS. WITHDRAWAL PERIODS MAY APPLY TO SOME OF THESE CHEMICALS.

- **Exzolt**, an oral solution can be added to their drinking water. We stock this at the surgery. It's convenient as the birds take it from the drinkers they are already trained to use. It is recommended that 2 doses are given 7 days apart as this will cover two mite life cycles. There is no need to treat the coop and it has a zero egg withdrawal period.
- Multivitamins would be advised for birds in a heavy red mite infestation.

FAECAL SAMPLING

Worm egg counts are still coming in thick and fast! Most of the samples sent in are ideal for testing but we've had a few recently that haven't been suitable, so we've had to ask for fresh. We know it's not always a quick job, so we don't like to do this, but c*\$%p samples give c*\$%p results.

Here's a few things to bear in mind:

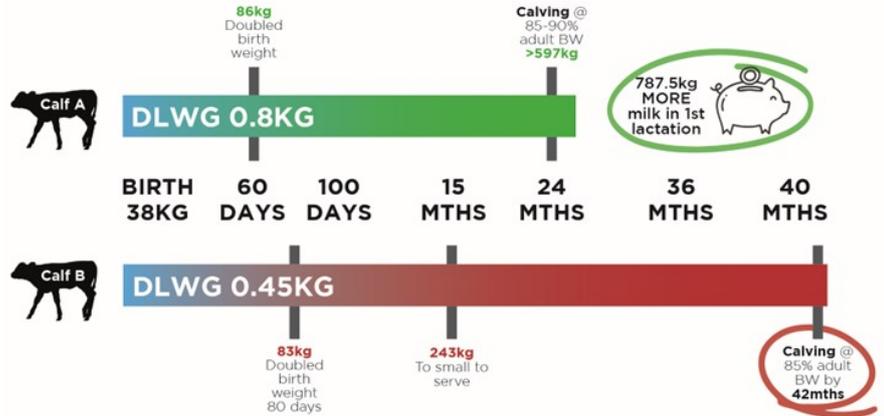
- The fresher the better, gather sheep and lambs and collect the warm poo! Please don't bring us dried poo or dags.
- Pick up plenty; at least a teaspoon from each sample and at least 10 samples from a field.
- Select random poo to give an overview of a mob.
- Keep individual samples separate. Some people use egg boxes, long arm gloves and knot them to resemble a bead necklace! freezer bags, jars whatever you fancy.
- Bag age groups separately and label them.
 - Lambs have not yet developed an immune response to worms as ewes have, so we would expect much different results from lambs compared to ewes grazing the same field.
 - This also goes for hogs and thin sheep whose immune system may not be top notch.
- Let us know if you've dosed them and any other information such as field name, age etc.
- Keep the samples in the fridge until you can fetch them down to the surgery.

CALF WEIGHING PROJECT 2023

We had a meet up this month with all the farms that have been involved with heifer calf weighing. Anna and Karen the vet techs ran the meeting with Rachel doing a short presentation of growth rate comparison. The vets were then grilled with lots of questions and discussion, talking everything calf!

Here's a quick run-down of what we discussed.

- Gets heifers to meet targets for breeding.
- Develop a strong immune system for a healthy heifer.
- Maximise production through feed conversion and a milk yield.
- Importance of good growth rates and the difference it makes to our heifers.
- We need a growth rate of 0.8kg per day to achieve all these things.
- The farms involved currently lie with the national average of 0.6kg DLWG.



- The weighing was done at the beginning of the year when we had a real cold snap, we discussed measures to help the calves through this by using jackets and increasing milk concentrate.
- Young calves are the most effective at feed conversion in their first 2 months, so high growth rates need to be targeted while milk feeding.
- To achieve a higher DLWG we need to look at everything from colostrum management to effects of their environment, there's too much to list.

We can provide a range of services for your calves including a calf health assessment, a great way to find out which areas of your calf management may need targeting to achieve higher growth rates.

Please speak to one of the team if you would like more details.

Dalehead Veterinary Group Ltd CALF WEIGHING PROJECT 2023

HEALTH ASSESSMENT
Looking at housing, colostrum management, nutrition & disease levels. Provides advice & targets for calf rearing.

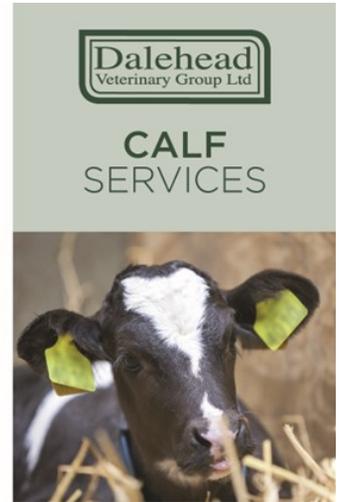
COLOSTRUM TESTING
Quality testing & measurement of antibody transfer.

WEIGHING & GROWTH RATE ANALYSIS

VACCINATIONS

DISBUDDING
Local anaesthesia & NSAID pain relief are included.

DISEASE MONITORING
Sample collection, faecal testing & health scoring.



APPLICATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE EQUIPMENT

Applications for animal health and welfare equipment and technology grants will close at midday on the 15th of June. Grants of between £1,000 and £25,000 towards the cost items that improve the health and welfare of livestock are currently available through the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund, as part of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway.

The grant is open to all farmers or contractors with a business in England who keep beef and dairy cattle, sheep, pigs, laying hens and broilers (including rearing and breeding farms).

Applicants do not need to be eligible for BPS to apply. Each application must be for a minimum grant of £1000. To meet this, it is possible to apply for multiple items as part of the application. For example, a cattle farmer could bundle together a head scoop for a cattle crush, a calving gate and an EID panel reader in their application, to cross the minimum grant threshold.

More information can be found on GOV.UK at the following links:

The full list of items available through the grant: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-equipment-and-technology-fund-fetf-2023/annex-4-fetf-2023-animal-health-and-welfare-eligible-items>

The guidance for how to apply for a grant: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-equipment-and-technology-fund-fetf-2023/how-to-apply-for-a-farming-equipment-and-technology-fund-fetf-2023-grant>

More information about the Farming Equipment and Technology Grant: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-equipment-and-technology-fund-fetf-2023/about-the-farming-equipment-and-technology-fund-fetf-2023>

A short video explainer of the application process:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HmX3uGe2oOU>

