

FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER MAY 2022

BEEF FERTILITY FOCUS



Fertility is a game of two halves, we need the cow/heifer to be fit, cycling and ready to receive the bull and we need the bull to be fit and fully loaded so there are no false starts.

If we have an issue on either side then we could be in for a tough time, at best a really prolonged calving pattern – but at worst we might find a lot of empty cows and heifers.

When we investigate these problems we can find a host of reasons – nutrition, diseases such as Leptospirosis, mineral deficiency, energy issues leading to poor cyclicity and infertile or sub-fertile bulls. In a lot of cases it can be a combination of issues that overall lead to poor fertility.

Preparation is key to ensure maximum fertility. Prior to the mating period we can check the cows and heifers for nutritional and mineral issues, we can ensure they are disease free and cycling. More and more people are turning to fertility protocols to synchronise cows and heifers to ensure a tight calving pattern and there are a lot of benefits to this.

Once we know our cows and heifers are in top shape for the mating period we can't forget about the bull. In a lot of cases he contributes 50% of the whole farm's effort to getting a calf out of a cow and if he isn't performing to his maximum potential then this will have a massive impact. He doesn't have to be completely infertile to be a problem, 20% of bulls tested are sub-fertile; this means that when cows he has served are breaking – it's not their fault, it's his! He will catch them eventually but the calving period will be extended and we might blame the cows for not holding and start to look at them as having issues when in reality we might have a sub-fertile bull.

Carrying out a Bull Pre-Breeding Examination is an essential way to ensure he is up to the job. Doing this 4-6 weeks prior to the mating season gives you time and options if you find an issue.

Finally, once we have got our cows and heifers in calf we want to ensure they carry the calf to term and calve easily so we have a strong calf that will grow on well. We need to focus on body condition, nutrition, mineral levels and disease/vaccination status and ensure this is in our Health Plans to keep the cows and heifers fit and healthy. We also need to think about our bulls and their EBVs and our heifers and their pelvic measurements. Pelvic measurement has been around for a while now but has become a prominent selling point at a lot of sales, we are seeing more and more people have heifers measured prior to sale but also for their own herd.

Andrew Linney

This month we are going to look into all of these topics in more detail over two meetings:

Thursday 12th May at 7pm @ The Farm Building, Settle

Supper will be provided and we will discuss 'Heifer and Cow Fertility Preparation'

Wednesday 18th May at 11am

We will have an on-farm demonstration of bull testing and then lunch followed by a discussion back at The Farm Building, Settle

For more information on these topics or to book at place at the meetings please contact the Farm Team.

NEMATODIRUS & COCCIDIOSIS IN LAMBS

DON'T GUESS... TEST

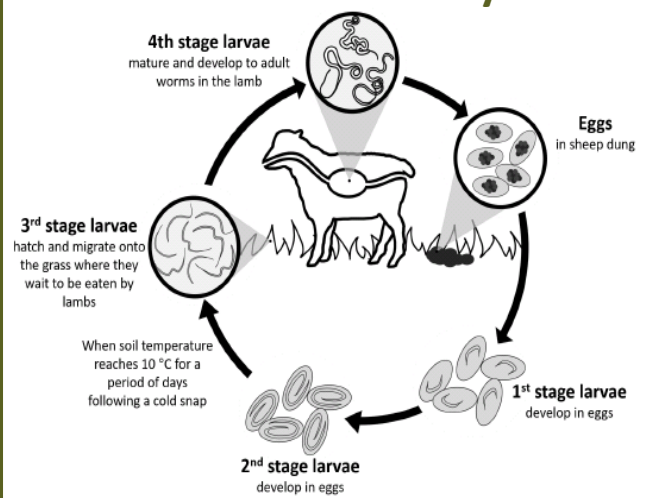


Coccidiosis and Nematodirus (or mixed infections with both!) can cause problems at this time of year with lambs showing similar symptoms with both parasites. No single product is effective at treating both Coccidiosis and Nematodirus and not all farms will be affected, so rather than guessing which infections are present in your lambs we would recommend having pooled dung samples from lambs over 4 weeks of age tested to see what parasite burdens they are carrying.

In our in-house laboratory we have been confirming high Coccidiosis counts in numerous samples as well as Nematodirus infections and mixed strongyle infections in this year's lambs.

NEMATODIRUS ALERT - HIGH RISK PERIOD

Nematodirus Life Cycle



The Nematodirus parasite has a simple life-cycle. Adult worms which live in the intestines of sheep/lambs lay eggs that are deposited on pasture in faeces. The Nematodirus eggs will only hatch out to release infective larvae after a period of cold weather followed by warmer weather with average daily temperatures above 10°C. This can result in a massive challenge of infective larvae on pasture in the spring when young lambs, which have no immunity to the parasite, start grazing. In most years this occurs in mid to late May but this year, due to the warm weather in late March the risk is already high.

Points to remember:

Highest risk fields are those grazed by young lambs the previous year which could harbour dangerous levels of larvae particularly if Nematodirus has been diagnosed in the past.

The mass hatch of Nematodirus eggs on pasture occurs annually in the spring but the level of disease in lambs depends on it coinciding with

grazing activity of young susceptible lambs (6-12 weeks of age).

Acute Nematodirus infection can be a cause of sudden death but more often results in a profuse watery scour and ill thrift. Mixed infections of Coccidiosis and Nematodirus can result in severe symptoms.

Treatment:

On most farms white drenches (e.g. Tramazole, Albex, Rycoben) remain the drug of choice for treating Nematodirus. However where worm egg counts demonstrate the presence of other worm (strongyle) burdens different classes of wormer may be considered. **No anthelmintics have a persistent effect against Nematodirus.**

COCCIDIOSIS

Coccidiosis is a problem found in intensively reared lambs, occurring primarily indoors where stocking densities are high, but may also occur in lambs at pasture where there is contamination around feed troughs or in creep feeding areas during warm, wet weather.

The ewe is the initial source of the infection although coccidial oocysts (eggs) can survive on pasture or in buildings from one year to the next.

Coccidia are species specific therefore the coccidial species that affect cattle or poultry do not affect lambs.

Symptoms

Damage to the intestinal tract results in diarrhoea which may contain mucus or blood and be accompanied by:

- Straining
- Pain
- Weight loss
- Possible death of the lamb.

Clinical coccidiosis is most often seen in lambs aged 4-8 weeks old however, the knock on effects of subclinical disease such as poor growth rates may be apparent in older lambs. If you have a history of coccidiosis on the farm from previous years or are a high-risk flock, it is ideal to treat lambs after they have had a chance to pick up oocysts but before they are causing significant gut damage. In this way, the coccidiosis is killed off and the lambs are left with a residual immunity without suffering the consequences of the infection.



This usually entails treating lambs at 4-6 weeks of age although it is always recommended to have dung samples tested to confirm presence of infection before treatment. There are two licensed drenches available, with **Tolracol** having the advantage of a persistent action for approximately 3 weeks after administration, providing a larger window over which lambs can be successfully treated.

For more information about Coccidiosis and Nematodirus visit our website to access short videos presentations or speak to one of our farm vets or SQP's.

Neil Roberts

COLOSTRUM IS GOLD

Its calving time and we need a topic for the newsletter - oh no it's another rant about colostrum! 'Colostrum is gold, 6 litres in six hours, **Q**uality, **Q**uickly, **sQ**ueaky clean, **Q**uantity and **Q**uantify' and err... **Q**uite nice?

We are always told that it is valuable stuff and we need to hoard it away for when we need it but is it really worth all the effort? Well its worth would be to state what it does and can you buy that from any other product?



Property	Synthetic alternative	Cost per calf
A high energy feed	Calf kick start	£2.60
With high quality highly digestible protein	Pure milk liquid	£0.50
Balanced vitamins and minerals	Mineral drench	£0.20
It is a laxative to allow the meconium to be moved through the guts	Castor oil	£0.80
It promotes gut motility to help digestion and appetite	Emeprid (cats and dogs)/ metaclopramide	£22.00
It provides a high level of antibodies to protect the gut, bind bugs and Teflon coat the gut lining	Locatim oral drench Antibody tonic drench	£38.20
Lots of antibodies that are absorbed into the blood stream to protect against respiratory bugs and pneumonia	Not available	Priceless
It is an immune stimulant making the calf's immune cells work faster and better	Interferon Beta 1a prefilled syringe Immune stimulant	£654.20 for 4
Good colostrum transfer has been shown to be a growth promoter with greater gut elongation and volume allowing more absorption from the same level of feeding	Kexxtone Improves energy production of the rumen	£50.74
Its a life extender with more animals making it to third lactation from the group with good colostrum levels measure after the first week of life	??? Fountain of youth????	Mythical
It is a fertility improver as faster growing calves reach puberty sooner have better conception rates and calve earlier than their peers	Regulin and Prid synch protocols combined	£45
It prevents disease with half the level of scours and pneumonia experienced in those calves with good colostrum levels.	Rotavec corona plus IBR plus intra nasal	£27.30

Total cost of all the benefits = £349.64.

As you can see, although I am being a little tongue in cheek, the value of good colostrum quality and transfer of immunity is exceptional especially when the cost is free.

We have two colostrum replacers available at the surgery when farm colostrum isn't available or it is of poor quality, and there are lots of others out there.

Which one should you choose?

The cheapest products contain:

- Milk powder
- Vegetable oil
- Vitamins
- Minerals and ash.

These have little value as a colostrum replacer as they are an energy source but are missing most of the immune stimulation components.

The cheaper of our two products **Vetcol**, is a colostrum powder and whey powder mix providing energy, protein, antibodies and immune stimulation. This is very good as a top up of calves that haven't had enough volume or poor quality colostrum.

The more expensive product, **Calf's Choice**, is pure freeze dried cow colostrum with one packet providing sufficient immune antibodies, energy and protein to be used as a complete colostrum replacer (useful in herds that have a problem with Johnes/MAP). This product is the only type of colostrum replacement that has been shown to result in normal levels of immune protein in the blood of the calf after feeding allowing you peace of mind in the middle of the night.

So you can see you do get what you pay for with colostrum supplementation unless it's free.



Ian Illingworth

CALCULATE THE GELD EWE RATE AT THE END OF LAMBING – YOU MAY BE SURPRISED!

There are a number of infectious agents that can cause abortions and re-absorptions resulting in geld ewes.

The two most common causes are Chlamydia (EAE) and Toxoplasmosis. Vaccines are available to protect ewe against both of these pathogens.

Border Disease, Listeria, Campylobacter and Salmonella are amongst other pathogens which can cause re-absorptions or abortions.

The symptoms, treatments and preventive measures vary with each disease so it is well worth obtaining a diagnosis. When in the midst of lambing time the number of aborted and geld ewes can become a bit of a blur if you have not had an abortion storm.

Our recommendation is that you have a count up and if there are more than 2% geld at scanning or 4% at the end of lambing that you should do some testing.

We have access to subsidised schemes where all the laboratory fees are paid to sample for EAE and Toxoplasma; the only requirement is that the ewes have not been vaccinated in the past.

Speak to one of the farm vets If your geld rate is higher than you would like, we can advise on the sampling that is worthwhile dependant on your flock history, or contact the surgery to arrange sampling.

Karen Swindlehurst



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www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk

