



	1st Block	2nd Block	3rd Block	Later
Days to sale	227	206	185	
Weight	295	261	230	
Value (£)	505	439	368	-137

Therefore, to maximise the profits available, 65% of cows need to conceive in the first 3 weeks and over 95% in calf. Studies have shown, every cow getting pregnant in the 2nd or 3rd block is losing around 25kg of weaning weight each time and therefore profit.

If your calving data isn't meeting these targets, this is something your vets can identify and investigate. It can be due to many factors from nutrition, bull fertility to infectious disease but is something which will be causing profit loss and needs to be addressed.

QUARTERLY DISEASE REPORT – JANUARY – MARCH 2022

Cattle-

A 5 year old in calf suckler cow presented with lethargy, fever, inappetence and foul smelling faecal contents, she died despite antibiotic, anti-inflammatory and oral rehydration therapy. Post-mortem examination revealed ulceration of the windpipe, abomasum and small intestine with several areas of necrosis throughout the liver. Further testing confirmed **Systemic Mycosis** as the cause of death. This is an overwhelming fungal infection (fungal septicaemia) and is often secondary to immune system suppression. It can also be seen in animals fed mouldy feed or in those treated with prolonged courses of antibiotics.

A 10 year old Friesian cow was examined after being "off colour" for several days. On examination both jugulars were markedly distended and the animal had fluid (oedema) surrounding its brisket and jaw (bottle jaw) a pericardial effusion (fluid around the heart) was noted on ultrasound exam.

Post-mortem confirmed a "**hardwire disease**" as the cause of death.

Examination of the reticulum revealed a 10cm piece of tyre wire (*picture above*) protruding from the reticulum and forming an abscess in the liver.

This piece of wire likely penetrated the reticulum, diaphragm and then seeded infection into the heart. The most common source of these wires is degrading tyres on top of silage clamps, a review silage tyres was recommended, and magnet boluses administered to all cattle.



A further 4 herds had active **Neospora** infection diagnosed and 2 other herds

had active **Johne's** infection diagnosed. In one herd with active Neospora infection there was a clear familial pattern which highlighted the importance of vertical spread as the main route of transmission throughout a herd. We recently ran a farmer talk discussing Johne's and Neospora, their importance and what control options are available which was well attended. When cattle are housed this is the ideal opportunity to perform infectious disease screens which can flag up important herd problems.

Sheep-

Two flocks had active sheep **scab infection** confirmed on blood samples. Affected animals produce antibodies 2-4 weeks after infection which means disease can be detected well before clinical signs start to develop, blood testing can provide a useful screening tool pre/post-purchase and also pre/post-housing to identify affected animals.

VACCINATIONS FOR SHEEP, GOATS AND ALPACAS

Clostridial disease

Sheep, goats and alpacas are all susceptible to clostridial diseases and infection is usually fatal. Clostridial disease is caused by many different types of clostridial bacteria found in the environment, particularly the soil, faeces and intestinal contents.

Some of the common diseases caused by the different clostridial bacteria are listed below and most commonly present as a sudden death:

- Pulpy kidney (Clostridium Perfringens type D)
- Lamb dysentery (C. perfringens type B)
- Struck (C. Perfringens type C)
- Tetanus (C.tetani)
- Black disease (C. novyi type B)
- Botulism (C. Botulinum type C&D)



(vaccinations for sheep, goats and alpacas continued)

Pasteurellosis

Pasteurellosis is another usually fatal disease caused by a number of factors including the infection with *Mannheimia haemolytica*, *Bibersteinia trehalosi* and or *Pasteurella multocida*. Stress is often a trigger for disease and this could include, transportation, weaning, castration, and going to markets.

Both Clostridial disease and Pasteurellosis can be prevented through vaccination.



VACCINATION PROTOCOLS:

SHEEP: Clostridial vaccine

Primary course: 2 injections 4-6 weeks apart for unvaccinated sheep.

Annual booster: 1 injection 4-6 weeks prior to lambing (this provides immunity to

the lamb via colostrum – 10-12 weeks for clostridial disease and 3 weeks protection for Pasteurella)

GOATS & ALPACAS:

Primary course: 2 injections 4-6 weeks apart if unvaccinated

Twice yearly spring and autumn. (4-6 pre-kidding/ to provide clostridial immunity to the kids)

LAMBS & KIDS: Primary course as above from 3 weeks of age.

CRIAS: primary course of 2 injections 4 weeks apart starting from 3 months of age. Annual booster thereafter.

Please contact the vets to discuss which vaccination is best suited for your animals, different vaccines provide cover for a different number of clostridia and some include Pasteurella and some do not.

COLOSTRUM IS GOLD!

Colostrum is a conversation we bring up every single year, time and time again – why? Because it is so important. Previously we have perhaps taken more of a backseat role with colostrum management in our sheep. But should we be taking more of a proactive stance? Normally we say just look out for those problem cases that may include triplets, those not seen to drink, and lambs born to ewes with poor udders/little milk. But if we leave lambs until we notice they haven't had a drink, or there is a problem it may be too late to intervene.

Colostrum contains vital antibodies that are protective against many diseases in the first few weeks of life when the lamb is unable to amount its own immune response against any diseases it may encounter. Colostrum is a key player (as well as hygiene) in controlling watery mouth, a hot topic now that Spectam is off the market. Colostrum also provides those vital antibodies that the ewe has made because of us vaccinating with Heptavac P+, protecting the lamb against pneumonia and clostridial diseases.

Lambs should receive 50ml per kg of bodyweight within the first 2 hours of life. This should be repeated in 2-4 hours. Knowing your average birthweight on farm will help you know how much colostrum to feed when you do need to intervene. Now it's a bit too time consuming and not practical on farm to be tube feeding colostrum to every lamb that hits the ground, so in most scenarios we can't measure how much the lamb has drunk. However, it is obvious if they are only at the teat for 30 seconds before being booted off that it hasn't drunk enough. So practically on farm we want to see the lamb up and having a good, sustained feed shortly after birth, but also going back to the ewe to have more feeds within the first 4 hours of life.

Whilst it is impractical to ensure the quantity of colostrum that the lamb receives, it is very quick and easy to ensure the quality of colostrum the lamb receives. Testing the quality of the colostrum produced by the ewes gives us the confidence that our lambs are receiving what they need, but also reflects on the nutrition that the ewe has been receiving in the run up to lambing. Ewes with a good plane of nutrition, good access to the feed face and optimal body condition scores have been shown to produce better quality colostrum. Again, whilst we may not be able to test the colostrum of every ewe, we can start by taking samples from any ewe we've had to assist with lambing, ewes with poor condition scores and those with poor udders.

Using a BRIX refractometer gives you an instant result that you can act upon by either letting the lamb drink from the ewe or supplementing it with better colostrum. When reading a result, you want a minimum of 26% in sheep (compared to 22% in cattle). Anything below 26% is not good enough and should be discarded and not be fed to the lambs. A helpful how to guide of using the BRIX can be found on the AHDB website, if not ask one of us when we are next on farm to show you. A BRIX refractometer is quite cheap to buy and can be purchased online with next day delivery!

As ever colostrum from an ewe is always better than bought in powdered colostrum, but powdered colostrum is better than nothing (and normally the more expensive it is, the better it is). Colostrum from ewes on farm will contain antibodies that fit the disease profile of your farm, better protecting your lambs. Ewes with plentiful, good quality colostrum (that has also sufficiently fed its own lamb) can be milked out and stored for future use, such as feeding triplets. Not only will this stored colostrum be better than anything bought in, but it will also be cheaper as the ewe has produced it anyway. Colostrum from other animals e.g., a cow, is not best practice as it can cause some health issues as well as the antibodies not lasting long enough until the lamb is able to produce its own immune response.

Colostrum is best stored in small quantities (such as in an ice cube tray) to make it easy to defrost and convenient to use in the quantities it is needed. Once harvested it should be put into the fridge/freezer quickly to prevent contamination and bacterial replication. Colostrum can be stored in the fridge for up to a week and in the freezer for 6 months. All equipment used to harvest and store colostrum should be thoroughly cleaned and well maintained to prevent contaminating colostrum. Defrosting should be done slowly in a warm water bath, not in boiling water or in the microwave. The colostrum should be given at 38 degrees, over 42 degrees and the antibodies will be ruined.

If you want to discuss colostrum control on your farm, or your ewe nutrition in the run up to lambing, please give us a call at the practice.