

Newsletter

Winter 2023



Introduction

With 2023 at a close, the few changes in the Cliffe farm team over the year with Catherine off on Maternity, having now given birth to her baby boy, and the joining of our newly qualified ATT (Approved Tuberculin Tester) Gemma! I am sure you will join us in congratulating them both.

If you see him on farm, you may think we have hired a new male, northern vet, but don't worry it is just Chris who for some reason decided to shave his head! 2023 also saw the introduction of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway, which we have successfully completed on many of our farms and have plenty more scheduled for the coming year. Don't forget to sign up if you are eligible and haven't already.

And wishing you all a Happy New Year, from the Cliffe Farm Team.



Dates for your diary



22nd January - Sheep Lameness Meeting



24th January - Suckler Scours Meeting



February – AHDB Lameness Talk for Dairy Clients only



March – Small Holder Talk

Please call or email the office with any interest to our forthcoming events.

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Vaccination pre-lambing

It's getting to that point again where we need to start thinking about vaccination pre-lambing. Clostridial diseases are caused by a variety of organisms that live in the soil, causing diseases from the more famous tetanus to lesser-known diseases such as Black's disease. Clostridial diseases are untreatable and often fatal, meaning prevention is definitely the best course of action! Heptavac P Plus protects your sheep against 6 strains of clostridial disease (tetanus, botulism, pulpy kidney, blackleg, lamb dysentery and enterotoxaemia) and the two most causes of pastuerellosis (Mannheimia haemolytica and Pasteurella trehalosi).

Every year at Cliffe we organise vaccination days for those with too few animals to warrant buying a whole bottle of Heptavac P Plus; the bottle must be used within 10 hours once breached. We recommend a primary course for any unvaccinated animal of 2 doses 4-6 weeks apart, followed by annual boosters. Vaccinating 4-6 weeks pre-lambing/kidding will allow passive immunity to be transferred to the young in the colostrum. This maternally derived immunity

wanes after 4 weeks, so vaccinating the lambs at this point is also recommended.

Goats do better when vaccinated against fewer strains of clostridial organisms; the recommended one in the UK is Lambivac which protects against tetanus, pulpy kidney and lamb dysentery. This year we are also offering Lambivac vaccination days for goats subject to interest.

Heptavac vaccination days:

17th January 2024
14th February 2024
13th March 2024
14th May 2024
1st June 2024

Lambivac vaccination days:

13th February 2024
14th March 2024

Please phone the office if you'd like to be booked in!



| Ewe nutrition leading up to lambing time

It is not long before early lambing flocks will be lambing again. Body condition scoring your ewes throughout the year, and especially leading up to lambing, is key to a successful lambing. So many of the common conditions seen around lambing can be prevented directly or indirectly through correct ewe nutrition. Examples of some of these conditions are below:

- Twin lamb disease
- Ewe hypocalcaemia
- Dystocia (difficult lambing)
- Lamb hypothermia
- Joint ill / watery mouth
- Lamb pneumonia
- Lamb dysentery
- Poor milk supply

Reducing the incidence of these conditions will increase the productivity of the flock and make for a much more enjoyable and successful lambing!

Monitoring body condition scores (BCS)

Body condition scoring your ewes is an easy and effective way to monitor how the ewes are responding to the feed that they are on. The target BCS at the different reproductive stages are summarised below (lowland sheep: taken from AHDB, Managing Ewes for Greater Returns)

Weaning: BCS 2.5

Tupping: BCS 3.5

Mid pregnancy: BCS 3

Lambing: BCS 3

If ewes are below BCS at weaning and there is not the time or quality of feed to put on enough condition to hit the target by tupping, then they should be culled.

Ration planning

4-6 weeks pre-lambing is a critical time to ensure correct ewe nutrition. We provide a ration planning service in which we use your forage analysis to provide a tailored ration plan for the singles, twins and triplets. This enables you to increase or decrease your concentrate feed to optimise ewe nutrition at this time.

Metabolic profiling

With this we are effectively asking what the ewes think of the ration they are on.

In addition to ration planning, we offer metabolic profile bloods 4 weeks pre-lambing, we take 6 bloods from the singles, twins and triplets. We can perform a metabolic profile on these bloods and calculate a ration tailored to the ewes parity, stage of pregnancy and BCS. This ensures energy, protein and mineral levels are optimised in the different groups to minimise metabolic disease and also ensure enough, good quality colostrum is produced.





Assessing Ewe Body Condition Score

Score 1 The spinous and transverse processes are prominent and sharp. The fingers can be pushed easily below the transverse bone and each process can be felt. The loin is thin with no fat cover.	
Score 2 The spinous processes are prominent but smooth, individual processes being felt only as corrugations. The transverse processes are smooth and rounded, but it is still possible to press fingers underneath. The loin muscle is a moderate depth but with little fat cover.	
Score 3 The spinous processes are smooth and rounded; the bone is only felt with pressure. The transverse processes are also smooth and well-covered; hard pressure is required with the fingers to find the ends. The loin muscle is full and with moderate fat cover.	
Score 4 The spinous processes are only detectable as a line. The ends of the transverse processes cannot be felt. The loin muscles are full and rounded and have a thick covering of fat.	
Score 5 The spinous and transverse processes cannot be detected even with pressure; there is a dimple in the fat layers where the processes should be. The loin muscles are very full and covered with very thick fat.	

Please see the table to best assess the Body Condition Score of your ewes. It is a great tool to record ewe fitness and to plan their nutrition and management appropriately.

Recording BCS of your ewes 8 weeks after lambing, when the lambs are mainly grazing, allows for reactive planning to time weaning. Optimal timing of weaning allows for maximising growth of lambs as well as preparing the ewes for the next tupping period. Gathering the ewes and lambs when drenching the lambs could be a convenient time to record this data.

Nerys Wright from AHDB recently lead a workshop for our clients on ewe body condition scoring and the effect on flock performance. We hope you enjoyed the talk and learnt something new!

Source: Nerys Wright, AHDB Beef & Lamb; Dr Liz Genever, Independent sheep & beef consultant, Managing Ewes for Better Returns Accessed: 15/12/2023



When to Assess BCS	Target BCS in Lowland Ewes
8 weeks post lambing	2.5/3
Weaning	2.5
Tupping	3.5
Scanning and Lambing	3

Quarterly Disease Report- September to December 2023

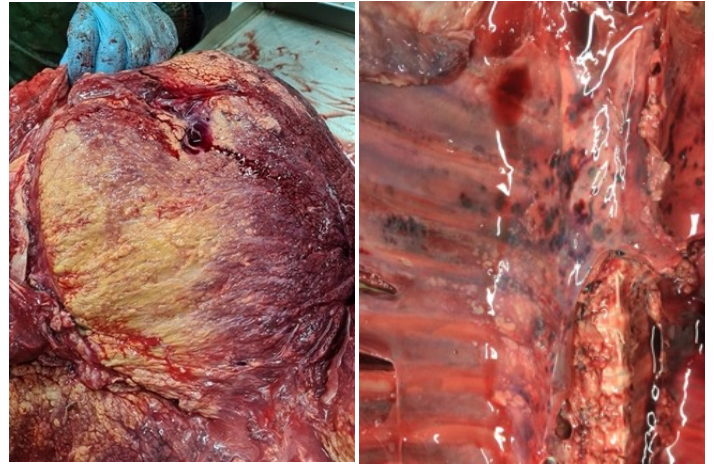
Cattle

A 2-day old Holstein Friesian calf was found dead after a history of lethargy and inappetence since birth. The calf had been born with a meningocoele which was an open communication from the skull to the lining of the brain (the meninges).

The animal also had a ventricular septal defect- a congenital heart defect. This is where there is a communication between the right and left side of the heart and blood is not pumped effectively around the body. It is one of the most reported congenital heart defects in cattle. Both conditions likely contributed to the lethargy and subsequent death of this calf.



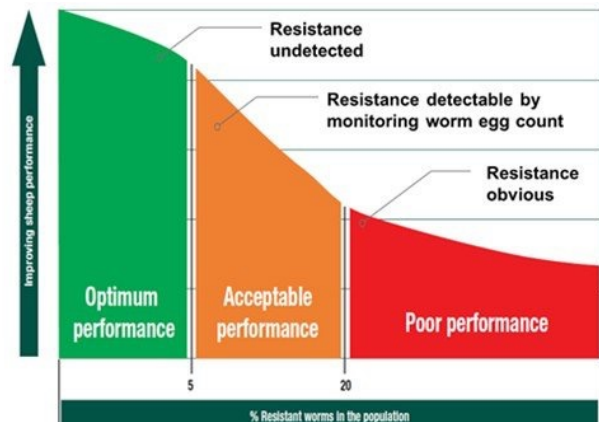
Septicaemia secondary to toxic mastitis was the cause of death in a dairy cow who had recently been dried off with cloxacillin antibiotic dry cow tubes. The animal had been lethargic 24 hours previously and died despite treatment. One other animal in the group was affected. On post-mortem examination there was extensive haemorrhages throughout the carcass and the udder had a dark purple discolouration in 2 quarters. Klebsiella pneumoniae was isolated from udder tissue and a sterile milk sample from the other affected animal. Typically, this bacteria causes severe septicaemia, as seen in this case, and is multi-drug resistant. A review of dry cow therapy technique was recommended.



Sheep

Parasitic gastroenteritis (PGE) continued to be a problem into late October with several reports of high egg counts amongst the 2023 lamb crop. This is likely a result of the warm wet weather experienced towards the end of September and into October.

PGE is the focus of endemic disease testing part-funded by the Animal Health and Welfare Review (AHWR). A drench check is performed 7-14 days after worming and compared to a pre-treatment egg count. The subsequent reduction is expressed in percentage terms, with <95% efficacy indicative of resistance.



Understanding the resistance patterns at different times of year can help to guide your choice of wormer and minimise the effects of wormer resistance.



| Additional oral calcium can increase milk yield

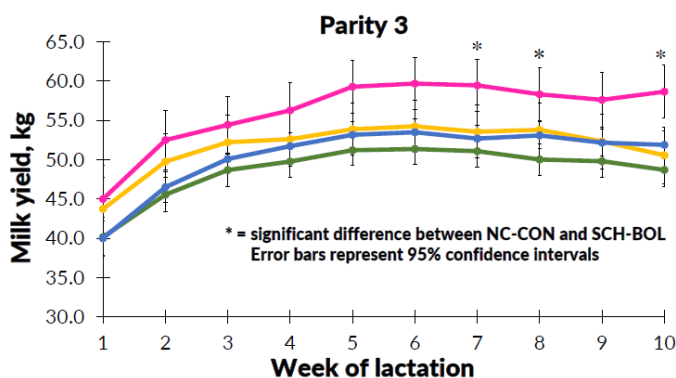
New research has shown that cattle that have reduced concentrations of blood calcium 4 days after calving have lower milk yields, poorer fertility and increased risk of post-partum diseases. It is common for more than 50% of cows to develop subclinical hypocalcemia within 72 hours of calving due to increased demands.

On average cows with a delayed subclinical hypocalcemia (SCH) yield 3.2kg less milk per day in the first ten weeks of lactation and those with a persistent SCH yield 2.2 kg less milk per day.

A study done by McCray et al saw an increase in milk yield for the first ten weeks in cows with both subclinical hypocalcemia and normal calcium concentrations on day 2 after calving in third lactation cows given oral calcium at DIM 2 and 3.

These yield increases were statistically significant with an increase of 4.6kg/day in subclinical hypocalcaemic third calvers and 1.9kg/day in third calvers with normal calcium levels.

RESULTS: ■ NC-CON ■ NC-BOL ■ SCH-CON ■ SCH-BOL



Giving oral calcium to your third (and greater) calvers can give you over 3 times return of investment.

There are different products you can use for this, but we recommend a Selekt product called Selekt Calcivit.

Many of you will be very familiar with the Selekt products used for rehydration and treatment for different conditions, like E. coli mastitis, ketosis, anorexia and after calving.

Selekt Calcivit has been indicated to be used as a prevention for milk fever and reduce the risk of subclinical hypocalcaemia. It comes in an easy-to-use bottle, with the new model now having a longer

neck making drenching even easier. And now it can also be used to increase milk yields by administering a bottle on day 2 and day 3 post calving.

It does not only contain 50 g of Calcium (higher dose than other products), but also Magnesium and vit D3, both increasing the absorption of calcium

This leads to the discussion regarding the use of phosphorus in downer cows. Many people have wondered why there isn't any phosphorus in the Selekt Calcivit.

But giving calcium doesn't necessarily mean you have to give phosphorus. In fact, it can be counteractive. A transient hypophosphatemia can be beneficial to the lactating dairy cow and helps limit the hypocalcemia. This is because low levels of phosphorus in the blood increase the synthesis of vit D3 in the kidney, which will increase the absorption of calcium from the intestines. It will also allow increased mobilization of calcium from the bone due to release of the hormone PTH from the pituitary gland.



Therefore, high levels of phosphorus can counteract these responses and can lead to a delay in the correction of the hypocalcemia.

Only about 25% of hypocalcaemic downer cows are also hypophosphataemic, and most of these are corrected by correcting the hypocalcemia through giving IV and/or oral calcium.

The recommendation is to treat a hypocalcaemic downer cow with calcium (IV and/or oral) first and if the typical symptoms of hypophosphatemia (ie crawler cows) remain, it is only then that you should supplement with phosphorus. It is important that when you give IV calcium treatment to also give an oral dose (either with Calcivit or by drenching with Selekt Fresh cow and correcting the dehydration at the same time). The IV dose of calcium acts really fast but also wears off quickly, the oral dose however lasts a lot longer and will prevent recurrence.

All in all some interesting new research and findings, if you have any questions about these please ask one of our vets.





| TBAS Conference 2023

Sam, Gemma and myself all attended the annual TB Advisory Conference last month at Worcester. More than 250 delegates including farmers leaders and government officials attended the event which focused on the need for collaboration between all parties involved to eradicate the disease. A DEFRA spokesperson acknowledged the potential disconnect between itself and the cattle farming industry and that the current process of “co-designing” policy was an important solution to the problem and would come up with policies to get on top of the disease together including government, vets and farmers. Insights from local control projects in Cumbria, Oxfordshire and Pembrokeshire were discussed as demonstrations of collaboration in action.

The conference heard presentations on the current work to develop a new skin test and TB vaccine for cattle. TB vaccination results in Ethiopia (partly funded by DEFRA) showed that vaccinated cattle were only 60% protected when housed with an equal number of infected unvaccinated cattle, which is an unusually high challenge! 85% protection was demonstrated by a trial in New Zealand under more normal field conditions. More impressively, the vaccinated animals had a very significant reduction in transmission of TB within the herd and were therefore less infectious.

Other key points

“The common enemy is the TB bacteria, not any of us in the room”

“The reduction in badger density has had a massive impact”

“Bovine Tb in England is at a 15 year low”

“Badger vaccination reduces transmission to other badgers and cattle”

Bill Pepper



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