NEWS

GLENTHORNE
Farm Vets

Farm News March 2024

Welcome to the Farm Newsletter for March 2024! In this issue we investigate the cost of Leptospirosis on a farm. This bacterial disease can cause abortion, decreased fertility and a drop in milk production. We look at the symptoms, diagnosis and the ways you can prevent it from taking hold in your herd.

The Cost of Leptospirosis

As a zoonotic disease Leptospirosis can be harmful to both animals and humans, so preventing it on your farm is vital. Using a combination of vaccination, quarantine and blood testing, you can limit the spread of any outbreak and put measures in place to ensure the health of your herd

Leptospirosis can have a severe effect on a farm, costing an estimated £ 69 - £ 106 per cow in an infected herd. The best way to avoid an outbreak is to understand the disease and prevent it from taking hold.

What is Leptospirosis?

Leptospirosis can cause abortion, decreased fertility and a drop in milk production. It is passed around a herd by direct contact with infected and recovered “carrier” animals through:

- Urine
- Reproductive secretions
- Milk from acutely affected animals
- Contaminated water
- Via other species like sheep

It can also be passed onto humans, making it a zoonotic disease. In humans, it causes flu-like symptoms with headaches and a fever, sometimes progressing to meningitis.

During primary infection, and generally before the disease has even been noticed in the herd, animals shed leptospires in high volume in their urine, milk and foetal fluids. This shedding can continue for several weeks. Animals who have had lepto, but have recovered, can continue to be an issue by becoming renal carriers and shedding leptospires in their urine. If you are concerned about leptospirosis or whether you may have "carrier" animals, give us a call.

The Symptoms

After the first phase of Leptospira infection in cattle, the bacteria gather in the urogenital tract. Early symptoms are usually mild and short-lived, and this can mean they are often not noticed.

In cows, the first symptom is often a sudden decrease in milk yield. Abortions usually occur 6 – 12 weeks after the initial infection. If the infection occurs in the late gestation, an infected calf maybe born. Abortion rates range from up to 30% herds not previously infected to 5% in herds where Leptospirosis is endemic.

The greatest effects of infection on fertility are low pregnancy rates and increased culling due to low fertility. How these symptoms manifest varies, depending on the infection status of the herd. In a chronic inactive state of infection, there are very few signs of poor fertility. During initial infection of the herd, or an inactive state that becomes active, the symptoms are more visible.

A natural immunity is established in a herd after the initial infection phase. All new animals that enter the herd are susceptible, however, and suffer from an acute infection with the associated symptoms. This is also the case with animals that were not with the infected herd during the initial infection but joined later (eg dry cows).

Diagnosis

Diagnosis needs to be confirmed by lab tests. However, diagnosis of leptospiral abortion is difficult and based on maternal and foetal blood tests. There are no outwardly obvious signs associated with the infection.

Isolation of Leptospires from blood, cerebrospinal fluid and milk can be attempted in acute cases. Cultures from urine samples can also be made from clinically infected or suspected carrier animals.

The bacteria can also be isolated from organs of animals that died during the acute phase of disease. Samples need to be kept chilled and reach the laboratory within 3 hours. Other laboratory methods such as fluorescent antibody tests and dark field examination of blood and urine samples to detect live bacteria may also be useful for a definitive disease diagnosis.

In most farms, due to the level of pathogens, it is not economically feasible to test and cull all the animals. Unfortunately, blood tests are an unreliable indicator of infection status. All aborting animals or acutely infected animals should be isolated. Acutely infected animals can be treated with antibiotics.

Biosecurity & Vaccine

Maintaining biosecurity involves avoiding the introduction of infected animals into the herd and/or implementing strict isolation/quarantine of introductions until they are proven negative. Restricting access of livestock to external sources of infection eg double fencing is in place at all perimeters, prohibiting access to open waterways, etc, is always a good idea. The best way to make sure your herd is Lepto-free is with vaccination.

Please contact the Farm Office on 01889 567200 for more information

HAVE YOU HAD MORE THAN 2% ABORTIONS or BARREN EWES

Ewe reproductive failure, neonatal lamb disease and mortality are the 3 biggest factors limiting better flock productivity – with toxoplasmosis and enzootic abortion continuing to be significant causes of these unwanted flock issues

We are offering blood sampling for up to 8 barren ewes between 1st February and 30th June for £ 35.00 ex VAT subject to availability.

Samples will be tested for evidence of exposure to enzootic abortion and toxoplasmosis, and should be taken from unvaccinated ewes.

Please contact the Farm Office on 01889 567200 for more information.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

The team at Glenthorne Farm Vets held an interesting evening meeting on “Infectious Diseases” in conjunction with Uttoxeter NFU.

APHA Vet, Sascha van Helvoort spoke about the current situation on the spread of Bluetongue and Emma Crust spoke about the Schmallenberg virus.

The APHA is continuing to offer free of charge testing on samples from lambs and calves born with congenital malformations or musculoskeletal deformities. For more info please speak to one of our vets.

IMPORTANT DISINFECTANT UPDATE

FAM30 has been suspended from the list of DEFRA approved disinfectants for Tuberculosis Order. This means that the use of FAM30 to disinfect the premises and PPE after a breakdown is not currently approved. At the time being, all we know is that FAM30 will hopefully be reapproved in the coming weeks/months, so do not throw away any stock that you have.

It is important to use the appropriate approved disinfectant when completing the Notice of Cleansing and Disinfection (BT05) to restore your herd’s officially TB free status, otherwise this will be delayed.

Please check the list of approved disinfectants for Tuberculosis Order at this link:

http://disinfectants.defra.gov.uk/DisinfectantsExternal

We as a practice are currently using Virophor 2.8% which is approved for Tuberculosis Order at the dilution of 1:14.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

We have the following training courses coming up to help keep you up to date with industry standards:

MilkSure Course

A training and stewardship programme for dairy farmers on the use of veterinary medicines. It aims to improve the professionalism around medicine use on dairy farms and drives higher standards, helps to avoid medicine residues and reduce antibiotic resistance. A two-part course run by our own team of MilkSure registered vets. We have a Part One course coming up on

Friday 22nd March
10am – 1pm
At Heath House Conference Centre, Uttoxeter ST14 7BY

The fee for Part One is £62.40 ex VAT. Part Two then takes place on farm at a later date, where a farm specific risk assessment is completed and a management plan agreed. This takes around 80 minutes to complete.

Mastering Medicines

We are also holding a Mastering Medicines course. This is a Red Tractor approved course which aims to increase awareness of different classes of medicine, enhance knowledge of how different medicines work and how to use them effectively and responsibly as well as understanding antimicrobial resistance.

This course is suitable for dairy, beef and sheep enterprises.

Friday 22nd March
2pm
At Heath House Conference Centre, Uttoxeter ST14 7BY

The fee for the Mastering Medicines course is £41.60 ex VAT.

Please call the Farm Office on 01889 567200 to book a place on either of these courses.

Sheep Parasite Workshop

You are invited to join us for an evening meeting on sheep parasites with guest speaker Hannah from Norbrook Labs. Our vet Nicola Falder will also present an update on NADIS Parasite Forecasts and the Animal Health & Welfare Pathway.

Tuesday 9th April 2024
7.30pm
Marchington Woodlands Village Hall

Lights refreshments will be provided. Please call the Farm Office on 01889 567200 to book a place. This event has been kindly sponsored by Norbrook Laboratories Ltd.