

Spring has arrived! It might still be too cold at night for the grass to really get going but the warm sunny days make up for it. And as always this time of the year there have been lots of lambings and calvings to attend. On top of all these babies, our own Kate gave birth to baby William. William was born on the 31st of January. As you can see he is already being trained up to become one of the next generation of farmers. Well there is lots to read in this newsletter, so I will leave you to continue reading . Wishing you all a productive spring!



EAST SUSSEX SURVEY FOR TB IN BADGER RTA 2021

Starting in April, APHA is looking for volunteers to locate and collect roadkill badgers in East Sussex.

The carcasses must be fresh and not be **severely** decomposed or damaged. £25.00 is being offered to cover personal expenses in collection of a carcass.

Relevant paperwork and appropriate bags will be available from the Lewes surgery and the nearest local collection point for RTA badgers will be Diplocks, Ringmer.

Please consider either carrying bags in your vehicle or at least reporting to the surgery the location of RTA badgers as we believe this to be a worthwhile exercise especially in areas where there have been bTB breakdowns.

QUARTERLY DISEASE REPORT—JANUARY MARCH 2021

Cattle-

Several of our beef herds took part in whole herd Johne's blood sampling which revealed a total of 21 positive results from 3 herds showing a high prevalence of disease within beef herds. The testing is cost-effective, with one positive animal having a cull value which covers the testing and vet costs.

Speak to one of the vets to discuss Johne's testing in your herd.

The second cohort of our BVD Stamp It Out initiative is well underway with one herd returning a positive check test with 8 out of 10 animals as positive to BVD antibody. The overall prevalence of BVD amongst those enrolled on the scheme is low, therefore to maintain disease free status focus should be on appropriate biosecurity, grazing management with vaccination being protective and cost-beneficial



Coccidiosis was the cause of death in a one month old calf which was depressed, lethargic and had moderate scour. Faecal examination returned a coccidial oocyst count of 6200epg. Speciation revealed 57% of eggs being either *Eimeria bovis* and *Eimeria zuernii* and likely the cause of the scour and death.

Small Ruminants-

Several of our sheep flocks experienced poor scanning percentages this year. MSD Animal Health are offering subsidised testing for infectious causes of abortion- **If your scanning percentages were low please speak to your vet!**

Post-mortem examination on a ewe lamb in January revealed an extensive worm burden of 3100 epg. The animal had been wormed with a yellow drench 7 days ago and then housed. Further investigation revealed that the dosing gun had not been calibrated and was giving 50% of the required dose, **a timely reminder that we should check the basics!**



Campylobacter jejuni was the cause of abortion in a group of shearlings in a 1000 ewe flock- 5 animals had aborted in the shearling group. Vaccination with an imported New Zealand product can control disease and is cost effective.

Haemothorax (chest haemorrhage) secondary to lung abscessation was the cause of death in a Valaise Blacknose ewe which was recently weaned and then found dead in the field. Lung abscessation is likely to be caused by dirty injection technique or lameness which provides a point of entry for bacteria.



MESSAGE FROM APHA

Severe Summer Scour Syndrome and Idiopathic Necrotising Enteritis

The Cattle Expert Group would like to highlight two diseases which might be encountered over the next two to three months.

Severe Summer Scour Syndrome has been recognised since 2018. This is a syndrome of diarrhoea and rapid loss of condition, affecting first season grazing dairy calves, with clinical signs beginning within a month of turnout to grass. It is unresponsive to treatment and in most cases recognised bacterial, parasitic and viral causes have not been detected. Morbidity is generally high. Some of these cases feature oral and oesophageal ulceration and necrosis.

Idiopathic Necrotising Enteritis (INE) most commonly affects suckler calves of 6 to 12 weeks old. The main presenting signs are also diarrhoea (often grey colour) and oral ulceration; ulceration of the small intestine is characteristically identified postmortem. Other less common presentations are respiratory signs, pyrexia, or found dead with no signs observed. Oral ulceration may be seen. Haematology testing may indicate a profound non regenerative neutropenia. Morbidity is low, although there is a high case fatality rate.

If you become aware of incidents that fit these case definitions, we would be interested to discuss them with you. As for many diseases, it is important to investigate these cases early in the course of the disease. Free of charge testing would be available for appropriate cases.

CHEMICAL FREE FARMING

This was the topic for the latest flock club meeting we held in February, prompted by some of the members. It was a good example of the advantages to Zoom meetings as we were able to get people from different places and backgrounds together. Joining us for the discussion were Harriet Fuller, a vet from the midlands, Tim White a farmer from the west country and Hugh Passmore from Lancing giving a local view.

Tim explained his reasoning for chemical free farming down in a couple of bullet points; lower input costs, customer preference, increased resistance and the effect on the environment. Changes to the subsidy system brought about by Brexit will get more people focused on the environmental impact of using chemicals. This is applicable in any species. Even dogs have been in the news in relation to using spot-on treatments and contaminating rivers by swimming, but we focused specifically on sheep.

In sheep the main issues are worming/fluke treatments and fly control. With regards to worm control the aim is to get as much clean grazing as possible. This led to the conclusion that the desire to use less chemicals will lead to intensive livestock systems moving away from permanent pastures to being more integral with arable systems. This seems to be the aim of the government as we considered the new subsidies encouraging people to farm this way. Other aims discussed were repeated faecal egg counting and much more targeted treatments. And above all aiming for a healthy animal in a good body condition producing healthy lambs that are more resilient anyway. We touched on genetics and even though a lot has been achieved in breeding for resilient sheep it remains a very slow process.

Genetics did come up again when discussing fly control with the very controversial subject of the length of the tail. It seems easy to "breed" for shorter tails, with results seen within 5 years. The overall conclusion on the length of the tail seemed to be that leaving the tails long is actually beneficial for the sheep and will not increase the incidence of flystrike in the absence of scour. What increases the incidence is mucky bums and thus dagging, dag scoring, and controlling worms are much more beneficial. What did stand out was the complexity of the impact of treatments on environment. This was shown with an example of the Chough (bird) population on the Isle of Islay, which reduced in numbers even though they had not been using Ivermectins there for 20 years. It turned out to be due to cattle being treated with triclabendazole (fluke) and synthetic pyrethroids (fly). These products reduce the dung colonising insects in the faecal pat by up to 80%, reducing food availability to the birds. Even the use of non chemical treatments e.g. diatomaceous earth lead to a decline as this had an effect on the number of fly larvae in the dung, again a food source for the Chough.

So all in all a very interesting subject and one to be discussed more in the future!

HOW DOES FLYCONTROL WORK?

Flies are not only a nuisance but can spread diseases including Newforest eye and mastitis. Furthermore recent research has shown reduced feed conversion ratios and lower milk production in dairy heifers suffering with fly infestations. There are two types of fly control: (I) Population control and (II) Repellents. Spot-on products containing deltamethrin or permethrin (including Coopers Spot-on, Dectospot or Flypor) act as a fly population control. Flies land on the animal, absorb the product and subsequently die, this means they do not breed and fly levels remain low. These products work best if applied early in the season, to stop the flies becoming a problem, once the fly burden is high, population control products will not be overly effective. Equally they are not designed to repel flies, so you will still see flies landing on the cows! Fly tags work in a similar fashion however they last all summer rather than needing repeat application every 6-8 weeks. As the name suggests, fly repellents (including Oxylys) are used to repel flies, they are typically citronella-based or contain potent fragrances. These products are often preferred in organic systems as they do not contain insecticides. Applying early in the season will not reduce the fly challenge, they should be applied when flies become a nuisance to keep the cattle more comfortable. Managing grazing around water courses and farm yard manure management can play a significant role in fly prevention. **Make sure you think about your fly control nice and early, before those populations start to build!**



21 Cliffe High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2AH
Tel: 01273 473232 - Fax: 01273 472216
farmenquiries@cliffevets.co.uk



EMBRYO TRANSFER

Following four successful seasons performing artificial insemination in ewes, Cliffe Vets will be offering Embryo Transfer for the next breeding season. This service is targeted at pedigree and rare breed flocks who would like to amplify good maternal genetics within their flocks. With the use of frozen semen AI we have been able to maximise the use of ram genetics and now you can do it for your females! Nick and Jorge have recently completed an ET training course and Nick has been working for the same ET training company both last season and over winter.

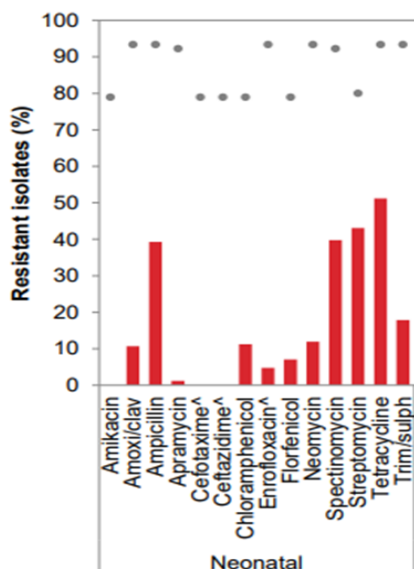
The process involves programming donor ewes to super-ovulate them, followed by AI once or twice. They are then flushed six days later to retrieve the embryos before implanting them into recipient ewes who have been programmed to the same stage in the reproductive cycle. A good flush can yield up to 20 embryos but this is highly dependent on many factors, including age, breed, previous flushing success, ewe management, semen quality and age of ram, and tight adherence to the synchronisation programme.

In addition to flushing your own ewes, we are also able to implant frozen embryos that you may have purchased into your own recipient ewes.

This is a very exciting addition to the list of advanced breeding services that we can now offer at Cliffe Vets.

- ⇒ Artificial Insemination
- ⇒ Flushing and Embryo Transfer
- ⇒ Embryo Implantation
- ⇒ Semen Collection and Freezing
- ⇒ Ram semen testing
- ⇒ Ram Vasectomies

If this may be of interest please contact Nick to discuss your plans asap, as it is important to start planning well in advance of the breeding season.



IT'S ALL ABOUT SHEEP



NEONATAL SPECTAM USE – Effective some of the time

It's that time of year where the inevitable Spectam requests keep coming in. The use of Spectam over recent years has become ever more controversial. Not only are we trying to drive down antibiotic usage in food producing and companion animals but also the resistance of bacteria to Spectam is increasing drastically.

APHA and Veterinary Medicine Directorate (VMD) produce reports analysing the **resistance of E.coli (the cause of Watery Mouth) with the last two years showing up to 40% resistance to Spectam (spectinomycin) and 50% resistance to Alamycin (oxytetracyline)**. If we were to recommend treatment for pneumonia, for example, with the caveat that 4/10 or 5/10 animals treated were not going to respond because the antibiotic chosen was inappropriate would we deem this adequate? **I think not and Spectam is no different!**

What can we do differently? The prevention of Watery Mouth starts well before lambing. Ewe condition, diet and hygiene at lambing are the best ways to prevent Watery Mouth. However on some farms cases are inevitable. Investigation into the cause of neonatal lamb mortality is essential and cost effective. **In cases of suspected Watery Mouth we are able to offer a post-mortem (up to 2 lambs <7 days old) and lab fees for E.coli culture for £60. This represents a saving of over 50% on the normal cost** and can be done at our Laughton facility. **Alternatively for other causes of lamb mortality we can offer post-mortems for £15 per lamb (at Laughton)** however there may be a need for further sampling and disposal charges will be invoiced to you by Diplocks.

If your neonatal mortality is higher than expected or you are experiencing Watery Mouth issues we are more than happy to discuss the possible causes and solutions!

NOVEL ULCERATIVE LESIONS IN YEARLING LAMBS

In recent years there has been an emerging disease in yearling lambs associated with ulceration and lameness. The lesions are contagious and occur anywhere between the top of the hoof (coronary band) and the fetlock joint. These lesions are often singular, well demarcated, circular and ulcerative with animals experiencing severe lameness as a result.

The cause of the lesions is unknown, however some studies have shown involvement of joint ill bacteria (*Streptococcus dysgalactiae*) and a bacteria seen in Footrot and CODD infections (*Fusobacterium necrophorum*). Further to this changes were seen on the skin which were consistent with an initial viral challenge suggesting a possible viral cause with secondary bacteria infection. Clinically these lesions appear to resemble Strawberry Footrot however they appear higher up on the limb and Orf virus has not been isolated from such lesions.

The disease has proved difficult to treat with topical and systemic tetracycline (Alamycin LA) therapy being unrewarding. Some success has been seen with an injection of long-acting amoxicillin (Betamox LA/Trymox LA) although some animals needed a second dose to fully resolve lesions. A good response was seen to long acting macrolide treatment e.g. Zactran however this raises questions regarding responsible antibiotic usage.

Risk factors for Joint Ill in lambs relate to compromised skin barrier function through tail docking, castration, ear notching and ear tagging. Therefore skin abrasion may be a risk factor for the development of Novel Ulcerative Lesions. In 2019 APHA suggested stemmy rye grass and thistles may have contributed to the development of lesions.

In the 20th year since the Foot and Mouth outbreak of 2001 it is important to remember our responsibility as livestock keepers and professionals to report suspicion of notifiable disease. Both Foot and Mouth Disease and Novel Ulcerative Lesions produce ulcerative lesions around the coronary band, therefore investigation is warranted. If you are experiencing similar lesions, do not hesitate to contact your vet for a discussion regarding examination, sampling, diagnosis and management- we are always happy to help!



LAMBING – RINGWOMB

Some of you will be well on your way through lambing, whilst others may yet still be waiting to start. Either way it isn't too early to start thinking about next year's lambing, particularly if you've been having problems this spring. Already this year we have seen our fair share of difficult lambings, many of which might be avoidable next year. Ringwomb is something we've seen quite a lot of, and it can be very frustrating for farmers with a caesarean potentially being the only option to get the lambs out. Ringwomb is the incomplete dilation of the cervix at lambing where it has often only dilated enough to get a couple of fingers through, not a whole hand or a lamb. Causes of ringwomb are variable so management and prevention differs. Causes include malpresentation, calcium deficiency, prematurity/abortion, hereditary component, poor BCS, poor diet, and insufficient energy intake.

Some ringwombs may be able to manually dilate whilst others will need more intervention. Manual dilation can always be attempted when you've first noticed the problem, however if after 10 minutes you've made no progress then tactics need to change. It is important to be gentle in this approach and to not to attempt to pull the lambs when you've had a slight improvement in dilation, as this can cause trauma to the ewe. Additionally, if you have caught the problem early, you may have over diagnosed the problem before the ewe has a chance to naturally dilate.

If you've had multiple cases of ringwomb that are likely associated to poor diet and insufficient calcium, then intervention with calcium and a cervical dilator may be the best option. 40ml of calciject no.5 (warmed in a bucket of warm water first) under the skin (ideally across multiple sites) should start to work in 30 minutes, so prompt diagnosis and treatment is key. Combine this with 2-3 mls of Sensiblex in the muscle at the point at which any part of the foetus has entered the birth canal (and not before) and you should achieve enough cervical dilation to safely deliver the lambs. Evidence behind cervical dilators, such as Sensiblex, is limited but anecdotally we have seen some benefits of its use.

Prevention of ringwomb is difficult due to the multifactorial nature, but some easy preventative steps will not only help prevent ringwomb but a whole load of other problems such as twin lamb disease. There is limited evidence in sheep that magnesium chloride in the water helps to prevent ringwomb but there has been some recent discussion surrounding high magnesium buckets instead. Magnesium helps calcium absorption from the diet and helps to mobilise calcium from the bones, therefore preventing calcium deficiencies.

Performing a blood metabolic profile and BCS across the flock three weeks pre-lambing can flag up any energy and calcium deficiencies with enough time to correct feeding and prevent any problems. It also gives us the opportunity to assess how you are providing your feed to ensure there is enough space for each ewe to have sufficient intake..