

SHEEP SCAB

There has been a spate of cases of sheep scab this autumn and the problem is seemingly not going away. Cliffe Farm Vets have been called to diagnose more than a handful of cases, and I am sure that we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg.

Sheep scab is a highly contagious parasitic infection which can cause enormous production losses if left untreated. It is notifiable in Scotland and although not notifiable in England, it is a legal requirement to treat it (effectively) and local authorities have the power to enforce treatment and prevent movement of sheep on common grazing.

The sheep scab mite, *Psoroptes ovis*, can survive on fences, gates and in the environment for 17 days, so it is important to get good advice on which products to use and how and when to use them. Some treatments require a move away from infested pasture for at least this period. Sheep lice can also look a bit like scab and can also coexist on the same sheep at the same time.

Dipping with OP dips is the most reliable way to treat scab. With injectable treatments larger sheep are more likely to be underdosed or individuals missed. Dipping does not require sheep to be moved from their current grazing, as the treatment is persistent for 28 days. (There are people locally that can come out with mobile dipping equipment).

Shared boundaries, shared equipment, scanning and shearing kits represent a significant risk. It is wise to check that equipment is being disinfected between flocks. Although not licensed, Virkon and Hypochlorite are both reportedly effective against scab, but physically removing tufts of fleece is most important.

It is also crucially important to liaise with your neighbours to try to ensure that neighbouring sheep that may be in contact after treatment, are dosed at the same time. Failure to do this can mean that scab will ping back and forwards between adjacent flocks via rubbing on fences.

The market unfortunately represents a significant risk for onward spread as mites will survive for 17 days on wool tags and gates. Scab may therefore be transferred to other sheep for over 2 weeks unless equipment is disinfected. Visibly itchy sheep should not be brought to the market. Unfortunately, early cases (<3 weeks) will show no clinical signs, so normal looking sheep does not mean no scab, but the risk of onward spread through the market is much lower. We recommend blood sampling of sheep in quarantine 3 weeks after arrival on your farm.

Please visit our new website at www.cliffefarm.co.uk. We would like to thank Tom Mills at www.whiteflame.eu for his help.



DID YOU KNOW THAT.....

Cows have regional accents!

It was found after dairy farmers reported different moos in cows joining their herd from different areas of the UK and has been well recognised since 2004

PELVIMETRY

We have started offering Pelvimetry- measuring the cross-sectional area of heifer pelvises before their first service. With many beef herds now serving at 15 months of age for calving at two years, reduced pelvic size is the second most common cause of dystocia and Caesarean Section after foetal oversize. By selecting heifers with larger pelvises, assisted calvings will also be reduced.

This can be done on the same visit as your bull test, or when we are inserting PRIDs/CIDRs for herds synchronising their heifers. Please call if you may be interested.



BULL TESTING

CAN YOU AFFORD NOT TO HAVE HIM CHECKED?

Please contact Nick if you wish to have your bulls semen tested before breeding this year. We recommend checking your bulls' semen quality 4-6 weeks before service. Most problem bulls are subfertile and good fertility in previous seasons does not guarantee good fertility this season.

Last season 22% of all bulls tested by Cliffe Vets were subfertile. Of these bulls that failed pre-breeding exam, 40% were retested at some point and half of those bulls that were retested had recovered their fertility. 91% of cases that failed the pre-breeding exam failed on sperm defects rather than on physical examination.

COLOSTRUM IN SUCKLER CALVES

(taken from AHDB Beef and Lamb webinar)

The importance of colostrum is something that has been talked about for a long time now, specifically in the dairy industry and more recently within the sheep sector (due to reduced use of preventative treatment of lambs at birth). However, within the beef industry, it has been unknown what the prevalence of passive transfer of antibodies from colostrum to the calf is.

The consequences for a suckler calf of not receiving colostrum within the first couple of hours of life are well known. It has been shown that these calves are:

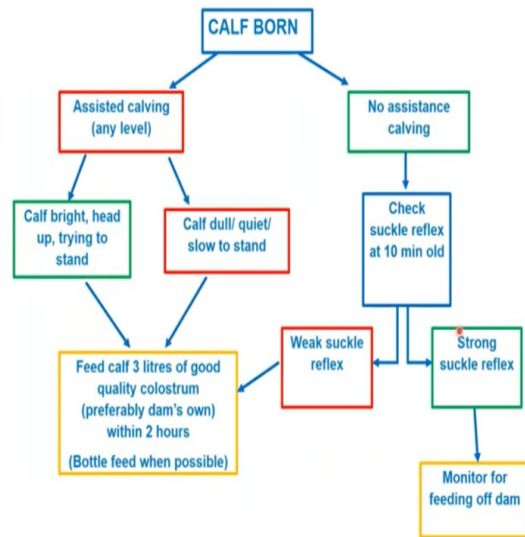
- More likely to die in the first 4 months of life
- 1.6-3 times more likely to be treated prior to weaning
- Weigh an estimated 3.3 kg less

In 2018 AHDB conducted a study to investigate the maternal antibody levels in suckler calves. When we talk about the results the phrase 'failure of passive transfer' is used. This means the transfer from antibodies in the colostrum through the guts of the calves within the first 24 hours of life. This can be a complete failure (CFPT) or a partial failure (PFPT), where some antibodies are taken up but not enough.

This study showed that 15% of the calves had complete FPT and 22% had a partial FPT, so a total of 37% had either no antibodies at all or not enough.

They found several reasons for this failure of uptake of antibodies, most of them related to calves being weaker, mostly due to prolonged calving. It also showed that, when colostrum is given to a calf you have to ensure enough is given and it is given as soon after birth as possible.

Following the initial study, they came up with a flow diagram (based on a Canadian study) to decide which calves need colostrum supplemented, based on calving history and the presence of suck reflex. This diagram shows that all calves born to a difficult calving, and those that have a weak suck reflex 10 minutes after birth, need 3-4 litres of colostrum immediately after calving. This can be done with a bottle or, if comfortable doing so, by stomach tube. Obviously the quality of the colostrum is as important as the amount given, which links to the dam's nutrition. This however is a subject we will cover another time



NIMROD RED START— IMPROVES SURVIVAL IN WEAK NEWBORN CALVES/LAMBS

Nimrod Red Start is an easy to administer paste. It contains four ingredients that will reduce the mortality rate in newborn calves;

CAFFEINE- stimulates breathing.

GLUCOSE AND MEDIUM-CHAIN FATTY ACIDS- providing extra glucose will prevent brain damage from developing in calves born with insufficient glucose.

SELENIUM- the absorption by the calf of antibodies in colostrum has been shown to be improved by giving additional selenium. This dose will also reduce the risk of white muscle disease.

VITAMIN A- a deficiency in vitamin A has been found to be a contributing factor to mortality in newborn calves in some cases.

One syringe of paste should be given to newborn calves immediately at birth. It is intended particularly for calves born in assisted calvings and Caesarean deliveries. It can also be used in lambs, the dose should be reduced to ¼ syringe at birth and ¼ syringe 6 hours later.

If you are interested in using this give us a ring to discuss and order.

FREE BVD HERD INVESTIGATIONS!!!

Following on from last year, Cliffe Vets have secured funding to investigate BVD status on another 30 of our farms. The **BVD Stamp It Out** scheme is paying for us to establish your herd status at no cost to you!! There is also extra money available to hunt out any persistently infected "PI" animals in herds where we confirm the presence of BVD. Routine screening of homebred youngstock for BVD is the gold standard for monitoring for BVD and is recommended on all farms, both dairy and beef. Even if you use bulk milk for checking your dairy herd, a youngstock screen is still recommended. If you have not screened in the last 12 months, then please get in touch.

How can you get involved?

This is strictly limited to 30 commercial farms, suckler or dairy, as long as you have breeding cattle. It is on a **first come-first served** basis.

Cluster meetings – we will organise an introductory meeting in the next few months, which you must attend. You, alongside like-minded farmers in the practice, will find out more about the life cycle of the disease, the implications for your business and the next steps to start taking control. Once we have worked with you and the other members of the cluster group, you will all attend a final meeting to discuss the main issues and share ideas about the best control methods with the goal of eradicating the disease from your herds.

One to One Visits – following the first cluster meeting, we will visit your farm twice. The first visit will be fact finding and taking some samples, a "check test" to screen for the disease. The second visit will be to discuss the findings of the testing, and recommend a control plan tailored to your farm.

All of the above will be **FREE OF CHARGE** to you, with our time and the check testing, funded through the project.

To find out how to get involved, contact us on 01273473232