



**Coleraine  
Veterinary Practice**

# November/December NEWSLETTER!

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*Welcome to the November/December edition of our newsletter!*

*We hope you have enjoyed reading the articles in the newsletters this year and we have been planning the topics for 2021. If you have any suggestions for articles that you want to see, please feel free to contact us.*

*This time, we take a look at OPA – a fatal lung disease in sheep. We’ve covered the signs and what to do if you think you may have it on farm.*

*We’ve also covered bio-security. This article would make a great checklist to reduce the risk of cross-contamination on your farm and covers all of the main points for you.*

*Keep warm, keep safe and we’ll see you next time!*

*Best wishes,*

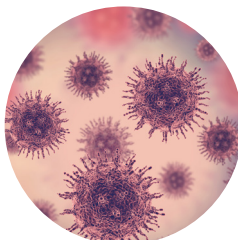
*The team at Coleraine Veterinary Practice.*

## **In this issue:**



### **OPA and Your Flock**

Ovine pulmonary adenocarcinoma is highly infectious and fatal. Take a look at how to spot the signs



### **Keep It Out!**

This article on biosecurity covers what the risks are, where they come from and how to reduce them on farm



## **OPA and Your Flock**

**Continued ➞**

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## What is it?

Ovine pulmonary adenocarcinoma (OPA, also known as Jaagsiekte) is an infectious and fatal lung disease of sheep.

Caused by a virus, known as Jaagsiekte sheep retrovirus (JSRV), it infects cells in the lung causing tumours to form. The tumour cells then produce more of the virus which can infect new areas of the lung.

The Jaagsiekte retrovirus is spread through the air or direct contact with infected respiratory secretions and mucus. The virus may also be spread from ewe to lamb through milk or colostrum.

## What are the signs?

Signs associated with OPA are loss of condition, difficulty breathing and, in around half of cases, production of clear or frothy fluid, appearing as discharge, dripping or pouring from the nose. The sheep may survive for many weeks after the signs of disease appear or may die suddenly, but the disease is fatal and there is no currently no treatment for it.

There is a very long incubation period between infection and the development of disease. The number of animals in a flock that are infected with the virus may actually be much greater than the number that develop clinical signs of disease during their commercial lifespan.

## Fatalities

In affected flocks, OPA can be the cause of death of 1% to 20% of the flock in one year. Additional productivity losses such as reduced fertility have yet to be investigated. It is important to note here, that the early stages of OPA are not always apparent as the tumours are too small to cause any breathing problems, even though they are able to produce virus which can infect other sheep.



*The virus may also be spread from ewe to lamb through milk or colostrum.*

## What to do if you suspect OPA

If you have animals that you suspect are suffering from OPA, you should isolate them from the flock and contact us immediately. We would always recommend a post mortem examination of the lungs in order to confirm the diagnosis. OPA doesn't seem to be picky when it comes to breeds. There is no strong evidence that any breed is more, or less, susceptible.

OPA is commonly introduced into new flocks through the purchase of apparently healthy animals that are carrying the virus.

Tests to detect OPA in sheep, before they develop clinical signs of OPA, are a focus of ongoing research. Ultrasound scanning can identify early OPA in sheep before any signs of disease begin to show and whilst the animal is still of some cull value. Unfortunately, ultrasound doesn't give a definitive negative result for individual animals.

Although OPA was first described almost 200 years ago, methods for controlling the disease are limited. In recent years, great progress has been made in understanding how the virus triggers the growth of the cancer in the lung and research is advancing in the area of early detection.

**If you have any questions or have concerns that you may have OPA in your flock, give us a call.**



*OPA is commonly introduced into new flocks through the purchase of new animals.*





## What is Biosecurity

Biosecurity aims to reduce the introduction of new diseases onto a farm from outside sources. Biosecurity is not only for protecting animals; it is there to protect you, your family, your workers, and the public. This is why there is a whole section on biosecurity in your herd or flock health plan. A complete approach is required if you are to be successful in keeping out unwanted bugs, viruses, worms, and other parasites. This article is designed to make you think about risks on your farm and help you to reduce them.

There are four key components to biosecurity:

1. Select - all purchased animals should come from known sources
2. Isolation - strict isolation prevents contact between groups of animals after arrival on farm
3. Movement control - includes all vehicles, animals, and people traffic
4. Sanitation - the disinfection of materials, people and equipment entering the farm

## Livestock

Contact with animals outside your own herd is the most important way that disease can spread onto your holding.

### Bought in stock

It is important to isolate animals which are new to the farm so that brought-on diseases can be treated or identified before the animal is introduced to the rest of your stock. During this time, the animals should be monitored for any sign of disease. It is also a good time to test for diseases and dose them with a quarantine drench. Where possible animals should be purchased from high health status herds or flocks as these animals will undergo annual testing to ensure they are free from certain diseases.

### Neighbouring farms

Ensuring your farm boundaries are secure will help limit contact with neighbouring stock. It is recommended that there is 2m double fenced boundary where one of your fields contacts a neighbouring farm.

### The show ring

An area which is often overlooked is taking animals to a show. On returning these animals should be treated as newly purchased animals and quarantined as such. It is prudent to test these animals for diseases which they may have acquired whilst off your farm. Such as infectious bovine tracheitis (IBR), bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) for cattle and foot rot or maedi visna (MV) for sheep. Please speak to us about which diseases would be relevant to your animals.

### Keep it Clean

Organic waste limits the effectiveness of disinfectants. It is vital surfaces and equipment are thoroughly cleaned before disinfecting. This can be as simple as pre-dip buckets for your wellies before the disinfectant bucket.

### Resistance Warning

Buying in animals can also buy in drug resistant parasites (gut worms, fluke). It is important to give parasite treatment whilst animals are in quarantine.

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## Wildlife

Contact with, or contamination from, wildlife is a potential route for disease to enter your farm. This is particularly relevant in areas where TB is endemic in the wildlife, but is not just limited to TB, for example . . .

Potential sources of infection from wildlife are:

- Feed contamination: wildlife is attracted by the free food offered on your farm. Keep feed stores secure and raise troughs so that access by wildlife is limited. This includes lick buckets.
- Water contamination: Open water courses and troughs can both be accessed by wildlife. Regular cleaning and raising water troughs can help limit contamination.



## Visitors

Muddy boots and clothing can bring disease onto your farm.

Clothes and footwear should be checked for soil or organic waste before entering and leaving the farm. Boots should be disinfected both on arrival and after a visit. As an extra precaution you could supply personal protective clothing (PPE) for visitors.

There is also a risk of disease passing from your animals to visitors. Hand washing facilities should be available for people to use when they arrive and before they leave.

## Vehicles and Shared Machinery

Farms often have multiple vehicles visiting on a regular basis.

Where possible, these vehicles should not enter areas in which your animals are kept. This includes our vet vehicles. Signs can be useful to guide people to where you would like them to park on your premises.

Where shared machinery is used on your farm it is of key importance that the machinery arrives free from soil and organic waste and leaves in the same condition.



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## Within your farm

Disease can pass between your own animals via equipment such as feeding equipment, drenching equipment, foot trimming knives, hoof shears and clipping combs. All this equipment should be cleaned and disinfected regularly. Handling systems and footbaths should also be well maintained, cleaned and disinfected regularly.

Hopefully this article has provided some ideas as to how you can approach biosecurity on your farm. It needs to be a whole team approach to keep diseases coming into your farm to a minimum.

If you would like some more information on keeping you and your animals safe, give us a call.