

Farm News January 2024

Welcome to the January newsletter



Welcome to the Farm Newsletter for January 2024! In this issue we take a look at Nematodirosis in lambs and the best ways you can prevent this infection during the lambing season and beyond.

As winter sets in, current weather conditions are causing problems with pneumonia. We take a detailed look at this issue.

Details of the second round of the Slurry Infrastructure Grant are also included.

Nematodirosis

Nematodirosis tends to occur every year in spring, which can lead to losses due the sudden onset of the condition. We look into the clinical signs of the infection along with treatment tools to tackle it if it occurs in your flock



The key to success in tackling a *Nematodirus battus* infection is understanding its lifestyle, which is different to most of the other ovine gastrointestinal parasites.

The Lifecycle of Nematodirus

An adult *Nematodirus* worm lays eggs in sheep intestines, which are passed out in the faeces. In the case of *Nematodirus*, the larvae do not hatch straight away, but instead slowly develop to an invasive stage inside the egg. Infective larval stage is reached in the autumn, being very resilient it survives low temperatures over the winter within the egg.

After the larvae “chilling” period, dormant larvae are activated once the temperature exceeds 10 degrees over a period of several days. Mass hatch of larvae, called ‘spring flush’ causes migration onto grass and is eaten by the grazing lamb.

Timing is therefore critical and can have a consequential effect on lambs that are 4 – 8 weeks of age who are beginning to eat significant amounts of grass. Similarly, if a hatch happens to occur before lambing time, for example, then most of the larvae will have died before lambs

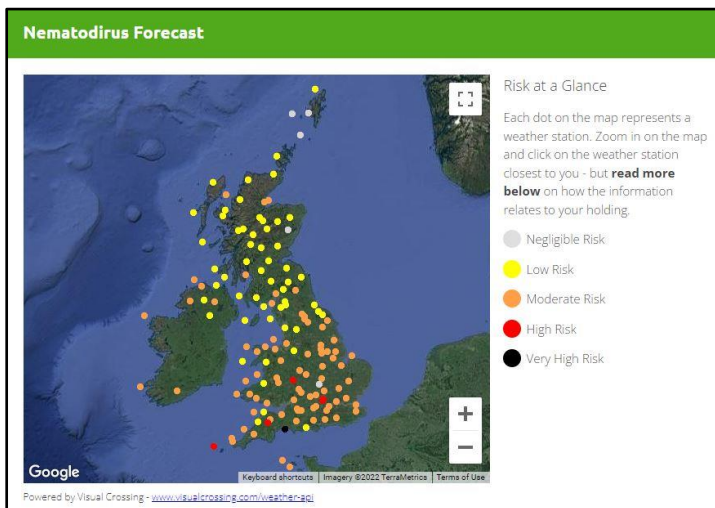


start consuming grass and the disease would be unlikely to spread.

If lambs are older than 3 months of age, they will be more resistant to infection as immunity will begin to build. There will of course be variation from farm to farm and even from field to field and you should assess the risk based on grazing history.

A useful tool to predict *Nematodirus* invasion is a SCOPS forecast, where you can check when to expect it in your region (available online at

<https://www.scops.org.uk/forecasts/nematodirus-forecast/>



In recent years, there have been more cases reported of the disease in autumn. Eggs deposited on a pasture in spring are hatching the same year in autumn when the weather conditions allow for it. A cold spell followed by a temperature of 10 – 15°C for several days usually triggers *Nematodirus* eggs to hatch.

Signs to look out for

The signs of *Nematodirus* infection in lambs are sudden diarrhoea and loss of body condition. Lambs appear dull and gaunt, and they will also be congregating around water drinkers as a result of dehydration. Growth rates will suffer and, in some instances, death may occur quickly.

Unfortunately, another issue is that Coccidiosis can occur at the same age and at the same time with similar symptoms. Treatment of both conditions is very different so veterinary diagnosis will help.

Treatment of Nematodiosis

A Group 1 Benzimidazole (BZ) white drench is still the preferred option for the treatment of nematodiosis in young lambs. However, there is a study underway to identify the scale of resistance in the *Nematodirus battus* parasite to white drenches.

On the farms where white drenches are used frequently it is a good practice to check your drench by examining the faeces sample of your lambs 14 days later for FEC (Faecal Egg Count) to ensure the drench was effective.



Nematodirus



Remember that dosing is a cost to your business that is not just associated with the purchase of the product, but also the time and labour associated with the task.

Try and always dose animals based on weight, which can be achieved by weighing a sample of the group and then setting the dose rate based on the heaviest animals in the group. If there is a wide range of different weights, consider splitting the group and weighing the heaviest in each group to avoid underestimating body weight.

Prevent and Control

The best way to prevent and control *Nematodirus* infections is to avoid putting lambs on pasture grazed by similarly aged animals in the previous year. Alternating lambs and cattle can work as a strategy to reduce worm burden, but it should be avoided where possible on farms where *Nematodirus* is a problem as calves can become sporadically infected.



A paddock grazing system is worth considering. Lambs graze on pasture for 3 days and then move to the next paddock in a 3-week rotation. Modification to the paddock system is also an option of forward grazing lambs where you provide access to better grass ahead of the ewes and lambs

Slurry Infrastructure Scheme Opens

Defra has announced a further £74 million to help farmers invest in improved slurry infrastructure to tackle water pollution and improve air quality.



Applications are open for the second round of the slurry infrastructure grant which forms part of a total £200m being invested in slurry infrastructure and equipment. The second round has more than double the funding on offer than the first round of the scheme to help meet increased demand.

Farmers can apply for grants of £25,000 to £250,000 to replace, expand, build extra and cover slurry stores, and fund equipment such as separators, reception pits and agitators.

This grant is competitive. If oversubscribed, the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) will prioritise projects that have the greatest environmental outcomes based on their location.

For more information, follow the link to the DEFRA page

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slurry-infrastructure-grant-round-2-applicant-guidance/>



Pneumonia in Cattle & Calves

As we go through the winter months, cases of pneumonia in housed animals start to rise. Most often pneumonia starts as a viral infection, the 2 most common agents seen are Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and Parainfluenza (PI3). A secondary opportunistic bacterial infection then takes hold from bacteria that are normally found in the nasal passages.

Symptoms seen in these animals include high temperatures and lethargy progressing to heavy breathing, and coughing. Calves may show floppy ears, discharge from the eyes and nose and fail to come up for milk feeds. Early treatment with anti-inflammatories can be successful in mild cases, or antibiotics may be required.



The best chance of a successful recovery relies on timely identification of sick animals and prompt treatment - the sooner the better. In bad cases of pneumonia, the extent of lung damage will have a negative impact for the rest of the animal's life, particularly noticeable in decreased growth rates. Therefore, early treatment protects your investment in these animals.

Minimising the risk to your stock from pneumonia comes in several forms; improving housing, nutrition or other management techniques, decreasing stress and vaccination. Listed below are several key points to consider.

Buying in and housing stock

Animals bought at market have an increased risk of pneumonia due to mixing with stock from different holdings and the immunosuppressive effect of stress. Consider buying from private sources, especially if you know their disease status and management practices such as vaccination or colostrum feeding.

Group animals based on age and operate an "all in, all out" policy for pens rather than mixing groups or trickling animals in and out. Avoid having a large age range (4 months +) in the same group or in the same airspace. Older animals with better immunity may be healthy but could spread disease to younger stock. If possible, all bought-in animals should be isolated from existing cattle for at least 28 days in a separate airspace, and equipment should be cleaned between this group and the rest of the farm. It is good practice to vaccinate during this time to bring the vaccination protocol up to date with your herd.

Housing

Clean, dry, free-draining pens with good ventilation are essential to prevent pneumonia in calves. Being small, calves cannot generate airflow in a shed via the "stack effect" like adult cattle can. Ensuring good airflow without draughts at calf height can be difficult. Often letting a smoke bomb off will help in assessing where the airflow is lacking in the shed. Talk to a vet for this assessment.

Vaccination

Vaccination is aimed at improving the animals' immunity to viral infectious agents and to prevent the secondary bacterial infections taking hold.

Vaccines are available for a variety of ages either intranasal or injectable with variable cover for viruses and speeds of onset of pneumonia. It is therefore important to work out the best plan for your farm with your vet.



Preventing Pneumonia in Housed Calves

As discussed, pneumonia in calves is affected by many different factors including stress, infection pressure from other animals, the types of disease circulating, housing and ventilation. Stress also takes many forms eg weaning, dietary changes, or being moved. It is best to try to spread management changes rather than making multiple alterations on the same day.

Nutrition is also important because the immune system needs sufficient energy to work. When weaning calves off milk, make sure they are eating enough solid feed first and the rumen is sufficiently developed for good nutrient absorption.

We always recommend that you speak to your vet to discuss bespoke advice for your farm, and being proactive in assessing the risk before animals are getting sick.

WILDLIFE CAMERA

A reminder that our wildlife camera is available to borrow to monitor badger activity on your farm.

Where badgers come into close contact with cattle, it is possible that they can contaminate cattle feed or the farm environment. The use of cameras is a tool that can quickly and easily be installed to investigate whether badgers are entering farm yards. This information can be used to inform on future biosecurity measures. Feed stores and cattle housing are key areas to place cameras. In general, cameras should be placed in areas where badgers and cattle could come into close contact, or areas which badgers may contaminate and which cattle may then be exposed to.

The main areas to monitor activity are:

- **Feed stores**

This includes feed bins and under silos, in fact, anywhere where spilled feed can attract badgers, and they can access

- **Cattle housing**

Badgers may enter cattle housing looking for food, particularly if cattle are fed in low troughs or on the floor.



- **Silage clamps (particularly maize)**

Grass silage is unlikely to be attractive to badgers

- **Hay/straw barns**

Badgers may visit these areas to forage, to collect bedding or make a latrine

- **Narrow gaps/entrances to the yard**

If the yard is fairly secure, or there are no suitable camera locations elsewhere, focus on potential entry points to the yard/buildings, particular if there are signs of wildlife activity.

If you wish to loan the wildlife camera please contact the Farm Office on 01889 567200



LAMBING ESSENTIALS

The lambing season is fast approaching and some of you may already be in full swing. For those of you who haven't started just yet we have got it covered with a bucket containing the **Lambing Season Essentials Kit** with all of the essential items you will need for £ 58 ex VAT.



SYRINGE & NEEDLE BOXES

We have 2 types of syringe and needle boxes available:

The Farm Pack

Contains a selection of syringes from 2ml to 30ml and needle sizes 14G x 1½", 16G x 1", 16G x 1½" to 21G x 5/8"



The Ovine Pack

Contains a selection of syringes from 2ml to 20ml and needles sizes 16G x 1", 18G x 1" and 20G x 1"

Refills for both packs are available.

Contact the Farm Office on **01889 567200** for more details

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Join us on our Glenthorne Farm Vets-led Practical Lambing Course on Wednesday 24th January 2024

The aim of this course is to expand your knowledge and develop key practical skills ready for this year's lambing season.

Ticket prices for Smallholder and Flock Health Club Members are £ 35 per person. For non-Club Members it is £ 50 per person. Lunch is provided courtesy of MSD.

Please contact the Farm Office on **01889 567200** to book your place



Practical Lambing Course 24th January 2024

PRACTICAL LAMBING COURSE

- Discussing preparations for lambing
- Equipment required
- Vaccination protocols for your flock
- Normal lambings
- Problem lambings
- Problems around lambings
- Abortions and weak lambs
- Medicine usage and injection techniques
- AHWP

PRACTICAL LAMBING COURSE Wednesday, 24th January 2024

10.45	ARRIVE at Marchington Woodlands Village Hall
11.00 – 12.45	SESSION 1 - Discussion with Q & A Led by Glenthorne Farm Vets Marchington Woodlands Village Hall, Tinkers Lane, Marchington, ST14 8PF
12.45 – 13.30	LUNCH Kindly sponsored by MSD
13.45 – 15.00	SESSION 2 - On-Farm Practical Session

PRICES

FLOCK HEALTH CLUB & SMALLHOLDER CLUB MEMBERS

£ 35 per person

NON MEMBERS

£ 50 per person

