

Robson & Prescott Newsletter January 2024

Happy New Year to all our farmers! We hope you have had a chance to relax over Christmas and that this year's weather is better than last year's.

A new year means spring is fast approaching and one of the busiest times for all of us. Lambing will be here before we know it.

Colostrum

Colostrum is one of the most important factors in ensuring lamb health. Good quality ewe colostrum is always the best options for your lambs but if that is not available then artificial colostrum will need to be provided. We will be stocking Quick Start pure 20 colostrum as usual.

Newborn lambs and calves are susceptible to infections and are born with little to no immune system. Colostrum can provide protection to the calf/ lamb up to 9 months of age. Animals who did not receive colostrum are incredibly prone to scours, pneumonia and joint infections.

For both your lambs and calves – getting a large volume of high-quality colostrum will give them the best opportunity to grow well and remain healthy. For calves it is essential they receive **4L** of colostrum in the **first 4 hours of life** and **8L** within the first **12 hours**.

For lambs they require **50ml/kg** of colostrum in the **first two hours of life** and 200ml/kg in the first 12 hours. E.g. a 4kg lamb will need 800ml of colostrum in the first 24 hours.

Assessing your colostrum

If you have concerns over the quality of your colostrum or want to make sure what you have is suitable for your lambs, you can bring in a sample of colostrum to us to assess.

We use a brix refractometer to assess the level of protein and quality and can determine if the colostrum is suitable for use. If you are interested, we can order a refractometer for you to use on farm.

The quality of the colostrum that your ewes and cows produce is affected by their diet in the 3 weeks prior to lambing/calving. We can predict the quality of colostrum by blood sampling a selection of ewes/cows 3-6w before lambing/calving giving you time to correct any energy or protein deficiencies occurring on your farm. If you would like to arrange some blood samples please give us a call to arrange an appointment.

Sheep scab

Whilst sheep scab occurs all year round, it is usually more noticeable over winter when the sheep are housed. Itchiness is the most common sign, but the severity of itchiness can vary

hugely. Some sheep will itch to the point of almost stopping eating whilst some can be infected for months without showing any signs.

We can diagnose scab by either skin scrapes or by blood testing. Blood testing is a lot more accurate, but the advantage of skin scrapes is we can have results back that day.

There are only 2 treatments with a reasonable chance of success; 2% Cydectin LA injection and organophosphate sheep dip. After treatment of either, sheep need to be put in fields or sheds that have been empty of sheep for at least the previous 3 weeks. Sometimes multiple treatments are needed to clear scab from a flock.

Scab can be brought in on new sheep, spread over fences or brought in on shared equipment such as trailers or shearing equipment.

Quarantine is essential to prevent spread onto your farm. It is advisable to blood sample a selection of new arrivals in quarantine two weeks after they have arrived on farm for make sure it has not been brought in.

Animal Health and Welfare Review

There is still government funding available for disease testing under the Animal Health and Welfare Review part of the Sustainable Farming Incentive. It is open to anyone with 11 or more cattle or 21 or more sheep. There is currently £436 available for a sheep review and £522 for a beef review. You can have an agreement for a review of one eligible type of livestock every 10 months.

All the reviews incorporate disease testing. BVD testing is required for cattle. 5 homebred calves between the ages of 9-18 months would be ideal. Sheep need to have a wormer efficacy test. This involves testing the faeces of a batch of sheep 10-14d after a wormer has been given depending on the wormer uses.

The review can be applied for online at <https://apply-for-an-annual-health-and-welfare-review.defra.gov.uk/apply/guidance-for-farmers> or by phoning the Rural Payments Agency on 03000 200 301.

As always, we can be contacted at the surgery on 01670 512276 day and night or on the farm mobile 07921 401901 during office hours only.

Kate, Sam, Andrew & Jonathan