



WELCOME TO farm news



FEBRUARY 2015



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Please note that telephone
calls are recorded for quality
and monitoring purposes.

The early bird catches the worm!

The AHPA has asked us to remind our cattle-farming clients that, on 1st January 2015, the existing cross-compliance approach to late TB tests was extended to include all test types (except those resulting from tracings of animals following a TB breakdown elsewhere). This means that the APHA will report tests that are completed late to the Rural Payments Agency, and breaches of the rules will result in a financial

penalty being applied to any Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments.

So please do ring and book your test as early as possible - we do get booked up well in advance, so to avoid disappointment (and the financial penalties!) try and give us as much notice as you can.



Dairy Herd Health Plan Review

Chantal Bryant BVM&S BSc MRCVS

Recently, farm assurance schemes have become more stringent and so require a little bit more from your herd health plans.

Since October 2013 it has been necessary to have some figures relating to milk quality, animal health, mortality rates and levels of production. These are usually readily available to you if you keep records during the year, either on a computer system or in a medicines book.

When you need your herd health plan updating, please do give us plenty of notice - we are not just being awkward when we say we can't just sign a piece of paper at the last minute, but are trying to help you make a good job of the health plan and pass your inspection!



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Coccidiosis in Lambs

Coccidiosis is a problem in intensive indoor units with high stocking densities. It can also be a problem when lambs are at pasture, especially if there is heavy contamination around feed and water troughs during warm wet weather.

Coccidiosis is caused by a single-celled protozoa, *Eimeria*, which attacks the lining of the gut. The protozoa go through many stages within the cells lining the gut, bursting the cells as they progress to the next stage. This leads to severe damage, reducing the gut's absorptive capacity and causing diarrhoea. There are 2 main types of pathogenic species - *E. crandallii* and *E. ovinoidalis*. It usually takes approximately 15 days from first ingestion of *Eimeria* to excretion in faeces, but diarrhoea may well start before this.

Clinical Presentation

4-6 week old lambs are most commonly affected, with rapid weight loss, profuse diarrhoea and a tucked-up appearance. The diarrhoea can be very smelly and may contain flecks of blood and mucus. Staining of the back end often occurs. There can be excessive straining which in severe cases can lead to prolapse of the rectum. Often a large proportion of the group is affected. Clinical disease can be brought on by a stressful event such as weaning, bad weather or a change in diet.

Milder cases can lead to weight loss and reduced appetite.

The signs of coccidiosis can be very similar to that of worms, especially Nematodirus infection, which often occurs in 6-8 week old lambs in May.

Diagnosis

Clinical signs often give a good indication that coccidiosis is the problem. For confirmation, a faecal sample can be used to look for oocysts (these can be as high as 100,000 per gram). In severe cases clinical disease may occur before the oocysts are shed in the

faeces. A post mortem would reveal signs of intestinal damage and again large numbers of oocysts will be found.

Treatment

If possible move the lambs off infected pastures. Treat them with an anti-coccidial (speak to your vet for more details). Treatment will kill the protozoa, but the intestinal damage will still take time to heal and so recovery may be prolonged.

Prevention/Control

Eimeria oocysts are very hardy and can survive for long periods on pasture, coping with very low temperatures. This means that they can survive over winter, and usually once the infection is present on farm, preventative measures are required each year. If you lamb indoors, make sure you begin lambing with a shed that has been emptied and disinfected with a disinfectant active against coccidia. High levels of hygiene are important to avoid bedding or pasture contamination. When indoors, bedding must be regularly refreshed, and at grass the troughs need to be moved frequently, especially if there is wet weather. Lamb creep feed can be medicated, although this is expensive and limits the development of the lambs' immunity to the disease. Targeted treatment with an anticoccidial will allow the lambs to gain immunity whilst reducing the risk of severe infection.

As the different species have slightly different behaviours it is useful to identify which is present on your farm, to time preventative treatment appropriately. This can be done by bringing faecal samples in for speciation. If you are interested in this, please contact one of us at the surgery.

Is my cow in heat?

It was great to see so many of you at our 'Festive Fertility' meeting back in December. One of the topics of discussion was P4 Rapid, which is an easy-to-use, cow-side test that can help to confirm whether or not a cow is in heat. The test measures the level of progesterone in milk, which varies with the stage of the cow's cycle.

P4 Rapid is especially useful for timing insemination correctly in those cows that don't show signs of heat very well. When the test says her progesterone level is low, she's ready to be served. It's also useful for cows that seem to come bulling when they're not truly in heat, or even when they're pregnant - if the progesterone level is high, she won't be in heat and may be already pregnant - don't serve her! The test can also detect non-pregnant cows 19-23 days after insemination, so you know whether it's safe to serve again.

If you missed the meeting and would like to know more, please speak to one of the farm vets.

Meet the Team: Sue Ivings

Sue has been working on reception at Scarsdale for 11 years. In this time she has always dealt with everything to do with TB testing, and has recently taken on the role of TB administrator. When Sue first started at the practice, all TB admin was hand-written, and the new computer systems were only just coming into place.

In Sue's spare time she loves to bake - her cupcakes are a favourite here with the Scarsdale staff! Sue also enjoys walking, photography and all crafty things like card making and crochet.



How many lamb losses are you willing to have this New Year?

Hector Santo-Tomas DVM MRCVS Sheep farming would prove very difficult without the use of vaccines. Two of the most effective vaccines used in sheep are Clostridial and Pasteurella vaccines (which can be combined).

Clostridial bacteria are ubiquitous (they live everywhere) and can cause diseases such as lamb dysentery, tetanus, pulpy kidney, black-leg, struck, braxy, etc. This is seen on-farm as sudden death in lambs, or even in adult sheep.

Pasteurellosis can also cause septicaemia and sudden death in lambs, pneumonia in older sheep and mastitis in ewes. Systemic pasteurellosis is the most common cause of sudden death in lambs in the UK between August and December. This 'bug' normally lives in the upper respiratory tract of healthy

sheep, but if something goes wrong and upsets the sheep, it can colonise the lower tract and cause disease or death.

To prevent both Clostridial diseases and Pasteurellosis we can vaccinate. Ideally, ewes should receive their annual booster 4-6 weeks before lambing to pass the immunity to their lambs through colostrum. Lambs can then be vaccinated when they are 4-5 months old (when maternal immunity wanes). Remember that the first course includes 2 jabs, 4 to 6 weeks apart.