

Farm news



Pablo Sancho Ros
MRCVS



Be prepared for lambing

– our hints and tips for a successful lambing season

The final six weeks of pregnancy are some of the most nutritionally challenging times for the ewe, as energy and protein demands increase nearly two-fold in line with the 75% of foetal growth that happens during this short period.

Meeting this increased requirement for both energy and protein forms the basis of a successful lambing, including the success of the physical lambing event through to influencing the yield and quality of colostrum produced, and ability to produce vigorous lambs with a good birth weight.

It is essential that ewes are fed according to their needs – both underfed and overfed ewes present problems around lambing with potential detrimental outcomes for both.

Underfed ewes produce small lambs that are weaker at birth and slow to stand and suck, whilst the ewe herself may also produce poor quality colostrum. Under supply of energy can also result in slow lambings, that are more stressful on both the ewe and lamb; and increased risks of mis-mothering due to lack of energy.

Overfed ewes have more probabilities of suffering from vaginal prolapses and tend to produce larger lambs. The lambing process is also more complicated by fat being laid down in the pelvic area, making the birth canal narrower and lambing difficulties even more common.

Ensuring the ewe's nutritional requirements are accurately met during these final weeks of pregnancy will pay dividends at lambing time and beyond, particularly where lamb health and survival are concerned.

Lambing tips

It is important to plan for a successful lambing season. Good preparation for lambing season will help you to maximise the number of healthy new-born lambs to finish.



Here are some tips for preparing your farm for lambing season:

Stock up with the equipment and supplies you'll need

Lambing is always a busy time of the year and once the season starts you won't have the time to keep dashing out for essential kit. So get prepared and order materials such as disinfectant for pens, iodine for navels, castration rings, feeding tubes, marker sprays, sterilisation equipment, milk replacer, colostrum replacer and any other lambing essentials well in advance. Scarsdale Vets offer a handy lambing bucket containing everything you need!

Check your flock health plan

Remind yourself of the essential disease management interventions pre and post lambing. For example, make sure any lame sheep are separated and treated well before housing. Also, check the protocols for dealing with any abortion problems, scours or joint ill.

Prepare your sheep housing

Sheds should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before ewes are brought inside (at least two weeks before lambing). Use plenty of clean, dry bedding to reduce the risk of spreading lameness and other infections such as watery mouth, joint ill and coccidiosis. Good lighting is important too because it makes it so much easier to check stock without disturbing them too much. Avoid overcrowding otherwise stress and disease issues can spiral out of control: a typical 70kg ewe needs 1.2m² to 1.4m² of floor space and 45cm of trough space.

Set targets for reducing lamb losses

Good records are essential to benchmark performance and to help you identify any potential problem areas. Your recording system doesn't have to be sophisticated or complicated – the most important thing is to do it well and if you don't record already, lambing time is a great time to start! You should be aiming for less than 15% lamb losses, but top performing flocks are achieving closer to 10%.



What is Mobility Scoring and why is it useful?

Becky Nye, Client Care Supervisor/Vet Tech

Mobility scoring is an effective way to identify and monitor lameness in a herd.

Scoring is usually carried out at milking times when the cows either enter or exit the parlour. If this isn't possible they can be seen in sheds or at grass however the results may vary as the ground can be more uneven giving a false impression of the cows' mobility. Scoring is carried out by our specially trained Vet Techs, Becky and Lottie, who will watch the cows walk at a relaxed pace and will note down the numbers of any lame cows.

The scoring system is based on a 0-3 scale, explained below:

0 - Good Mobility – No lameness.

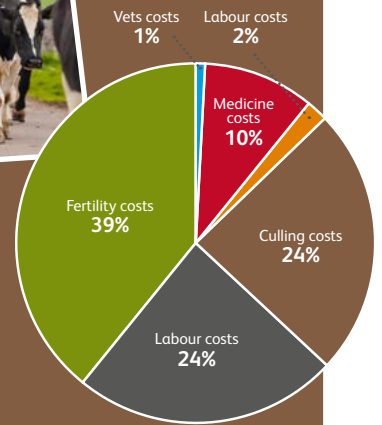
1 - Imperfect Mobility – Mild lameness but limb not identifiable.

2 - Impaired Mobility – A cow with lameness and the limb can be identified.

3 - Severely Impaired Mobility – A cow with identified lameness and is slower than the herd

If a cow scores '0-1' this is acceptable mobility, a score of '2' would suggest the cow would benefit from treatment and a score of '3' indicates that the cow will need urgent treatment.

For further information or to book a mobility score, please contact the practice on 01332 294929.



What are the costs?

Recent studies have shown that the average lameness case can last around 5 months (Green et al, 2002). The simplest way to calculate the cost over this time is on a £/day/lame cow basis. This study showed that the average cost of a score 2 cow was £2.20 per day the cow is lame. It's also predicted that score 3 cows could cost slightly more up to (£5 per day). Above is a pie chart of other hidden costs involved with lameness (Willsher and Bell, 2009).

Why should you mobility score?

Mobility scoring will produce reliable data you can use to monitor your farm's level of lameness. This will in turn save money by prompt identification and treatment of lame animals, reducing the number of days lame, therefore reducing the cost per case. The sooner treatment is administered in the disease process the higher the lameness recovery rates, highlighting the importance of prompt identification. Untreated lame cows are a welfare concern and as part of new red tractor guidelines a mobility scoring protocol must be in place.



MilkSure Top-Up Training

Rose Jackson

BVSc DBR CertVBM MRCVS

For farmers that have carried out MilkSure training with us, there is a now a 'top up' which allows farms to become re-accredited each year.

There is no requirement to re-do the classroom training part (or initial online test) each time but to complete MilkSure Top-Up, the vet must review the previous year's action plan, re-do the risk assessment and at least one person must pass a shorter online medicine competency test. This should not require additional training, but it will help prioritise the importance of responsible medicines use, and act as a refresher. Top-Up is supported by a separate workbook to guide and record the risk assessment. It also contains useful information on medicines for the farm.



Mastering Medicine Courses

Extended Dates!

We have added more dates for our mastering medicine courses. Attendance will comply with the new Red Tractor guidelines for farm staff involved with the administration of veterinary medicines to have attended a course on the appropriate use of these products. Each course takes place at our Markeaton Lane practice on the following dates:

Thursday 9 January

Dairy 10am – 12:30pm
Beef & Sheep 2pm – 4:30pm

Thursday 6 February

Dairy 10am – 12:30pm
Beef & Sheep 2pm – 4:30pm

Thursday 5 March

Dairy 10am – 12:30pm
Beef & Sheep 2pm – 4:30pm

Thursday 2 April

Dairy 10am – 12:30pm
Beef & Sheep 2pm – 4:30pm

Thursday 7 May

Dairy 10am – 12:30pm
Beef & Sheep 2pm – 4:30pm

Thursday 4 June

Dairy 10am – 12:30pm
Beef & Sheep 2pm – 4:30pm

Thursday 2 July

Dairy 10am – 12:30pm
Beef & Sheep 2pm – 4:30pm

Thursday 6 August

Dairy 10am – 12:30pm
Beef & Sheep 2pm – 4:30pm

Please call 01332 294929 for more information and to book your place.

Farm and Equine Centre
Markeaton Lane, Markeaton, Derby DE22 4NH
01332 294929

Alfreton
01773 304900

Pride Veterinary Centre
01332 678333

Allestree
01332 554422

Shelton Lock
01332 700321

Hilton
01283 732999

Stapenhill
01283 568162

Langley Mill
01773 304914

Stretton
01283 565333

Mickleover
01332 518585

Wollaton
0115 697 6586

Oakwood
01332 666500