

Farm news



Rob Howard BVMS MRCVS

Take Action to Reduce Abortion in Sheep

With lambing under way or rapidly approaching, the vast majority of sheep farmers will see some degree of abortion.

This may be very visible or may only be seen as empty ewes at the end of the lambing period. These ewes can be very valuable due to the information that they hold within their immune system. Barren or aborted ewes can be blood sampled to discover the diseases present on farm which may be negatively affecting the flock. Abortion is often caused by either enzootic abortion (*Chlamydomydia abortus*), or toxoplasmosis (*Toxoplasma gondii*). There is subsidised testing available to look for these diseases and if they are found, the sheep can be protected against them through vaccination.

If you have suffered with over 2% barren rate or abortion then vaccination can be a very effective way of boosting your income through improving flock productivity with more lambs to sell at the end of the season. The key to success is to permanently mark either by red ear tag, ear notch or physical removal from the flock, the ewes that have aborted or who are barren so they can be later identified and tested between 1st March and 31st July.



Introducing Jess!

Hi, I am Jess Reynolds and I am the new Farm Vet to join the Farm Team at Scarsdale Vets.

I qualified from Nottingham Vet School with honours in 2017 and have been working in mixed practice in Leicestershire ever since, gaining the reserve Dairy Industry Vet of the Future award at the Dairy Show in 2017. Originally from an agricultural background, I have interests in all aspects of farm animal practice, particularly in infectious disease in the dairy and beef herd, alongside flock/herd health planning and fertility work.

In my spare time I enjoy all things outdoors, especially running, alongside trying to find myself a replacement gundog! I look forward to meeting you all over the coming months!

For more information call our practice on 01332 294929 or email farmandequine@scarsdalevets.com

Double XL Colostrum - unique feed supplement for newborn suckler calves

Rose Jackson

BVSc DBR CertVBM MRCVS

We know that it is essential that all calves receive sufficient, quality colostrum within 6 hours of birth.

With dairy calves, it is relatively easy to keep a stock of frozen colostrum on hand. However, on suckler units colostrum management can be tricky as it isn't possible to know how much a calf has had.



Most beef cow colostrum is relatively high in antibodies compared to dairy cows but can be low in energy. XLVets have developed a unique colostrum replacer which can be given alongside the mother's own milk to boost energy intake. This is particularly important after an assisted calving or caesarean when the calf isn't always quick to stand and start sucking.

Double XL Premium Calf Colostrum supplement is handy and easy to use. It comes in a 2l milk bottle and contains 400gms of premium colostrum which is guaranteed BVD and Johne's free. Just add warm water and shake well. Suitable for bottle or tube feeding. Feed within 6 hours of birth for optimum results. Also suitable as a supplement for dairy calves if no frozen colostrum is available.

Oops - we're very sorry

There was an error with the AHDB 'new carcass trait EBVs' article in last month's newsletter.

You can view the correct article here: bit.ly/2T8131g



Keeping cosy through the cool months: Calf management

Emily Payne BVM BVS MRCVS

Is the future of your herd wrapped up and prepared for round two of the “Beast from the East” or the “Scandinavian snow storm”? Last January the average temperature recorded across the UK was 4.1°C, for February it was 2.4°C. The lower critical temperature (LCT) for a calf under three weeks (the temperature below which a calf needs additional energy to keep warm) is between 10°C and 15°C – depending on wind speed. This clearly shows that we should be doing something to help the animals most susceptible to cold temperatures. So, what are our options?



Feed more

Cattle are at their most efficient, when considering food conversion efficiency, in the first eight weeks of life. This means we really want to maximise the potential here and ensure they are putting on as much weight as possible; hitting that 0.8kg/day target. Whether you are using whole milk or milk replacer, feeding more will help your calves to have extra energy to utilise for keeping warm, whilst still growing. Current recommendations are to feed an extra 50grams of milk replacer/0.33litres of whole milk per 5°C drop below 15°C, i.e. if this February is similar weather wise to last year, calves under three weeks need an extra 125g/0.825l feed. This LCT moves slightly once calves are over three weeks of age and the temperature falls between 6°C and 10°C. This means we need to feed 50g/0.33l more for every 5°C drop below 10°C. This can seem like an impossible volume/concentration to give and so, if possible, try introducing a third feed during the winter months. Access to water is a legal requirement and therefore the addition of extra feed does not mean that water is not needed. It has been shown that addition of water (alongside whole milk or milk replacer) can increase growth rates by up to 38%!

Housing

During the cold months it is especially important to ensure that housing is adequate. Ensuring new born calves are rapidly dried (either by the dam or by you depending on your system used) ensures that the very limited supply of brown fat calves are born with isn't burnt off before colostrum is ingested. The temperature that calves feel their environment is at is a mixture of the actual temperature, airspeed and humidity. It is vital to reduce damp by ensuring there is good drainage. Ventilation is key to good calf health but ensure there are no draughts at calf level (remember pre-weaned calves cannot produce the stack effect). If calves are kept in a high ceiling building, consider building shelters using straw bales and off-cuts of wood. Finally, make sure the calf has plenty of dry, clean bedding. When a calf has nested down in straw you should not be able to see its legs.

Calf Jackets

Calf jackets help create a micro-environment for your calf, keeping it warmer and allowing it to conserve more energy, to be used for growing. There are, however, some important things to consider when buying calf jackets:

- **Firstly, is it breathable?** Poor jackets are like us wearing cheap waterproofs, they don't allow moisture to pass through and therefore they trap a layer of sweat along the calf's back. Conversely, if your calves are outside at all, is it water resistant/waterproof? Calves outside do not want to be stuck with a waterlogged blanket over them.

- **Is it machine washable?** This is really important with disease control. Ideally, the worst contamination should be removed using a hose or by soaking, the jackets can then be put in the washing machine (NB if you have a cryptosporidium problem on your farm they will need to be soaked in a licensed disinfectant before being put in the washing machine). Lesser quality jackets will shrink on washing.
- **Finally, how does it attach to the calf?** There are various different types of straps and fastenings. The main considerations are: adjustable straps – these should be checked, at a minimum, weekly; and types of fastenings. Velcro fastenings may seem quick and easy but they are readily clogged with dirt and easily removed by that cheeky calf with a wandering tongue. For this reason simple clips are advantageous.

We offer a range of calf jackets including cosy calf; please speak to one of the vets about the available options.

How can we check our management is working?

Monitor your calves! Hopefully they are being checked at least twice a day but simple signs of ill health include: dropped ears, discharge (from nose or eyes), refusing feed, coughing or scouring (diarrhoea). Another way to ensure all these additions are working is to record weights. A quick, cheap and easy way to start is using a weigh tape to record a birth weight, four week weight and a weaning weight.

This allows us to calculate a rough daily live weight gain (as mentioned above, the target is 0.8kg/day), the four-weeks of age weight allows us to see if our management is working and adjust accordingly in order to maximise our key eight-week period. We understand that sometimes, whilst you are keen to try these things, there aren't enough hours in the day! Scarsdale Vets is proud to have several trained veterinary techs, who in addition to coming and helping with weighing, can help with vaccinating and calf health scoring (using a recognised method for identifying pneumonia). If this is something that you are interested in, please contact the practice.

Mastering Medicine courses

Our 'Mastering Medicine' courses will take place at our Markeaton Lane practice, with separate sessions for dairy farmers and for beef/sheep farmers.

Monday 11 February

Dairy 10am – 12:30pm

Beef & Sheep 2pm – 4:30pm

Monday 11 March

Dairy 10am – 12:30pm

Beef & Sheep 2pm – 4:30pm

Please call 01332 294929 for more information and to book.

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