

# Farm news



**Pablo Sancho** MRCVS MBVCA

## Welcome to Pablo

With the recent increases in the frequency of TB testing in the Edge area, we're very pleased to have a new vet on board.

Pablo will be doing clinical vet work as well as TB testing, and he introduces himself here:

Hi everybody, I'm Pablo Sancho, the new Spanish vet at Scarsdale. I studied veterinary science at the Catholic University of Valencia, finished my studies in 2017 and worked as a farm animal vet in Spain. I have also worked for the United Nations Army at the border between Lebanon, Syria and Israel, treating local farm animals as a humanitarian aid. As a vet, I'm interested in surgery and reproduction, but not all my life is work! In my free time I like riding my Triumph and spending time with my grumpy dog "Newton". I love doing all sports, especially hockey and basketball.

I'm very proud to be working here. See you at the practice!



## Poisonous Plant of the Month: Ragwort

**Bobby Hyde** BVMedSci BVM BVSc(Hons) MRCVS

Ragwort poisoning tends to be uncommon in the UK, as the fresh plant is extremely unpalatable. Cattle can, however, be tempted to eat ragwort if grazing is poor, and particularly if the plant is present in silage or hay, where it does not taste so unpleasant but retains its toxicity.

Ragwort damages the liver, and poisoning tends to be chronic, occurring over several weeks or months. Affected cattle can lose weight, show signs of jaundice, depression, diarrhoea, colic or straining, and develop a "bottle jaw" (fluid under the jaw and brisket, due to low blood protein). The damaged liver cannot process green plant chlorophyll adequately and this leads to a secondary photosensitisation, making

animals very susceptible to sunburn (you may notice redness, inflammation and scabs on white areas).

The damaged liver becomes unable to process ammonia, which then builds up in the blood and affects the brain, causing neurological signs such as staggering, circling and apparent blindness, often leading to death. Treatment of affected cattle is often unrewarding, and efforts should be directed towards removing the risk of poisoning for other cattle. Horses are particularly susceptible to ragwort poisoning, whereas sheep seem to be particularly resilient.



### CALLING ALL ALPACA CLIENTS

We now stock in our shop the Vitamin A, D & E paste for alpacas and cria. £12 per 50ml tube or 3 tubes for £30. If you would like further information please do not hesitate to contact us on **01332 294929**.



# Enzootic Abortion and Toxoplasmosis

Rose Jackson BVS<sub>c</sub> DBR MRCVS



- Many farmers accept barren ewe and abortion rates of 5-10 %.
- Most lowland flocks could achieve a lambing percentage of over 170 %.
- Both hill and lowland flocks with correct management should be achieving empty/abortion rates under 2 %.

**Enzootic Abortion (EAE) and toxoplasmosis are major causes of abortion in sheep.**

### Enzootic abortion (EAE) (aka Chlamydia)

Abortions caused by *Chlamydia abortus* usually occur during the last 2-3 weeks of pregnancy. When an ewe aborts, she sheds large numbers of the EAE organisms, infecting in-contact sheep. Newly-infected sheep will not show signs of EAE until approximately three weeks before lambing, when the placenta becomes inflamed, abortion occurs and the cycle continues. An enzootic abortion storm can take up to 25 % of flocks' lambs. If a large proportion of the flock is already infected, the disease will cause ongoing losses of around 5 % a year.

### Toxoplasma abortion

Toxoplasmosis, caused by *Toxoplasma gondii*, causes losses at all stages of pregnancy, resulting in infertility, empty ewes, abortions,

stillbirths and weak/sickly lambs that usually die. Ewes usually acquire toxoplasma oocysts from contaminated cat faeces. A single cat dropping can infect more than 100 ewes. Normally toxoplasmosis is a grumbling problem, reducing the number of lambs by around 6 % yearly.

For farms where toxoplasma is present, vaccination has been shown to produce a 6.4 % increase in the number of lambs, and a reduction in the abortion rate by as little as 2 % will see the investment in vaccination pay for itself.

MSD Animal Health are now offering a fully funded diagnostic test. **Flockcheck™** is available from your vet until the end of July to test your ewes for both EAE and Toxoplasma. Speak to your vet for more information about **Flockcheck™**, and don't forget to order vaccines in plenty of time!



# Carry On Foot-Bathing

Carolyn Baguley  
MA VetMB CertAVP  
(Cattle) MRCVS

If you have digital dermatitis (DD) on your farm, use a foot-bath regularly as a result, and graze over the summer, don't stop foot-bathing! DD does tend to abate over the summer months, due to the grass cleaning cows' feet, the (usually!) drier, cleaner conditions and the reduced stocking densities, and so many people stop foot-bathing. However, this can lead to a worsening of the DD problem when cows are housed again in the autumn. Instead, it's better to carry on foot-bathing over the summer and use it as an opportunity to reduce the prevalence of DD in the herd, leaving the cows in a better position for housing and getting their feet off to a good start when they come in.



# Young girl, get out of my mind...

... My love for you is way out of line  
Better run, girl  
You're much too young, girl...

It might be half a century since Gary Puckett and The Union Gap first sang these (now controversial) lines, but today's bulls can still learn a lot from them. Heifers can sometimes be fertile from as young as four or five months of age, and calving heifers that are barely over a year old is no fun for anybody – least of all the heifer herself. So please separate your young heifers from entire male animals, whether it be their father (who will have no qualms about mating his daughters), their uncastrated brothers (who can reach puberty equally early) or other bulls on the farm. And if mistakes have been made, let us know sooner rather than later – it's a lot easier to inject a heifer early on with a mis-mating injection than it is to perform an emergency caesarean on her in the middle of the night!



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

Allstree  
01332 554422

Pride Veterinary Centre  
01332 678333

Duffield  
01332 841700

Shelton Lock  
01332 700321

Hilton  
01283 732999

Stapenhill  
01283 568162

Mickleover  
01332 518585

Stretton  
01283 565333

Oakwood  
01332 666500