

Sheep News

Lambing is underway with lots of sheep visiting both surgeries every day. Most of you will be aware that the only licenced product for E coli in lambs has been withdrawn from the market with only very limit supply available before it finishes entirely. We have spoken to all the clients that bought it last year and discussed how to control watery mouth without using blanket antibiotic treatment. It has actually been great to catch up with farmers we may not see all that often and have a chat before the madness of lambing time.

The main message is that **#colostrumisgold** and that getting enough ewe colostrum into lambs will protect against both watery mouth and joint ill. Even the best colostrum substitutes contain less than 30% of the antibodies of ewe colostrum and some contain none at all so be selective when you buy – look for colostrum in the ingredients!

Hygiene is important as well – bedding pens frequently, washing feeding tubes and bottles when they are used and even washing hands. Before you start lambing think of ways to make all this easier- can you have disinfectant wipes on hand or buckets of water and hand soap available

It's really hard when you are handling the day to day challenges of farming to find the time to develop your knowledge and skills but 'if you always do what you have always done you will only get what you always got!' That may be fine or you may be looking for new ways to do things.

Your levy goes to AHDB who not only promote beef and lamb in the UK and abroad but who also fund research into improving agriculture and provide loads of free training throughout the UK. The information they provide is top quality and very accessible and often forms the basis of much of the advice given by feed companies, agronomists, agricultural consultants and even vets! The network of monitor farms throughout the UK allows you to see if the theory works for real farmers on real farms. From maximising grass utilisation, to preventing disease, to how to market your stock; the information is there. If you have a question or an idea you would like to explore check out the website.

Live events around the country and online webinars are available. The better returns manuals on everything from managing ewes to marketing lamb and controlling disease are available online or in hard copy in the knowledge library <https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library>

If you miss a webinar or an update they are all recorded and available on the beef and lamb You tube channel <https://www.youtube.com/c/AHDBBeefandLamb/videos>

Your chance to have your say in how your levy is spent is coming up in April but before you can vote YOU HAVE to register and this has to be done by March 31st. To register visit the Shape the future page <https://ahdb.org.uk/shapethefuture>



Flavour of the month seems to be pneumonia in calves again. Quite a few folk have been struggling- possibly exacerbated by the mild weather which has had a few cold snaps. Have a look in previous editions of the newsletter for an explanation of why this may be the case. Also, give us a call to arrange some troubleshooting as there are often things that can be done, ranging from improved ventilation, different treatment protocols and vaccination to mitigate against disease developing in the first place.



We have seen markedly fewer twisted stomachs (displaced abomasums) this year, especially when compared to last year. It's interesting to speculate why. The only common factor that I can think of between farms is forage quality, as everything else is so highly variable and individual to different businesses. Those that we have seen have been a mixed bag of left-displaced and right-sided torsions. The right-sided torsions are usually needing attention pretty quickly as the cow can go rapidly downhill over a few hours. The blood supply to the abomasum becomes twisted and markedly reduced, and the outflow becomes necked-off, a bit like bending a hosepipe in half. The net result is that gas builds up in the abomasum fairly quickly, and the stomach wall is low in oxygen as the blood supply is disrupted- so it starts to die-off. Diagnosis of this is usually pretty straightforward but can be complicated by the fact that occasionally the cow does not look as sick as you might think she should with such a problem. Surgery is the next step to rotate the abomasum back to its proper place. If the abomasum is a dark purple or blackish colour, rather than the usual salmon pink, then we might decide that the best thing is to put her down as the colour change means that the stomach wall is beyond recovery. Usually, though, they can be quite a rewarding op to do and the cow makes a decent recovery- we've even had cows in early pregnancy when it's all going on and still hold on to the calf like nothing has happened!

Strange things happen inside a cow's guts, so if they look even vaguely unwell give us a call, even if it's for a bit of advice, as it can be a long time to wait until morning!

Richard Knight

Winter Dysentery- What You Need to Know

Recently there has been a rise in reports of diarrhoea in groups of cattle across the UK, and we have seen several cases within the practice. These are thought to be linked to bovine coronavirus, which causes the disease 'Winter Dysentery'. The disease is usually seen during winter housing and the virus is highly contagious, spreading through a group of animals quickly. Animals are infected from ingestion of contaminated faeces, and the virus can also cause diarrhoea in calves. Although the virus spreads quickly (high morbidity) the disease is rarely results in death (low mortality).

Clinical Signs

- Acute diarrhoea- this usually is very liquid, dark brown and 'explosive'
- Decreased appetite
- Reduced rumen fill and turn-over
- Reduced milk yield- on average 4-7 litres but can be up-to 50% of a lactational yield
- Some animals develop a mild cough
- Temperature is usually normal when clinical signs are detected but animals can have a mild temperature (39.5-40°C) at the start of the disease.
- Animals can be depressed
- Extremities, such as ears, can become cold

At the start of an outbreak 10-30% of the herd can be affected which is often followed by another 20-70% of the herd within the next 7-10 days, meaning the disease can remain within the herd for up-to 14 days. The virus is usually self-limiting, meaning that within 3-5 days the symptoms resolve without treatment. In some cases, usually first-calved heifers, haemorrhagic diarrhoea can develop, meaning the diarrhoea is bloody and these animals are more likely to suffer from dehydration and require supportive therapy.

Treatment

- Usually none required
- If dehydration occurs:
 - Oral fluids or in severe cases intravenous therapy (IV) may be needed.
 - Electrolytes can be given
- Calcium may be required if secondary hypocalcaemia occurs.
- Treatment for ketosis may be necessary if inappetence causes excessive fat mobilisation.
- Anti-inflammatory and/or antispasmodics if abdominal pain is significant

Prevention

The virus is shed in manure and the build-up of slurry during housing helps to spread the disease. The virus can be introduced to a herd by bought-in animals, but animals within a herd

buildings, and visitors to farm. Maintaining good biosecurity on farm is the best prevention as there is currently no effective vaccination for the bovine coronavirus which causes Winter Dysentery. Immunity does develop within a herd and after an outbreak, anecdotally, this last for 2-3 years, with younger animals always being more susceptible to the virus.



Other infectious causes of diarrhoea including bovine viral diarrhoea virus (BVDV), Salmonella, Coccidiosis, Schmallenburg Virus (SBV) and non-infectious causes, such as a nutritional issue leading to dietary diarrhoea, should still be considered when a herd outbreak occurs. Blood and faecal samples can be submitted to help rule out the other causes. To confirm coronavirus as a causative agent, paired blood samples, taken 3-4 weeks apart, from 6 animals is recommended.

If you have any concerns about Winter Dysentery, please contact the practice for more Information.

Cara Hatfield

Before long spring should be appearing on the horizon. Please place your orders for your spring vaccines (BVD, Lepto, IBR and Husk-vac) ASAP to ensure that you are ready to turnout when the weather comes good. See right for our super spring offer.

Westmorland Veterinary Group FARM SERVICES

Spring Offer

5% OFF all BVD vaccine when ordered with Spirovac

Please contact the surgery for further information
Valid for orders placed between Feb, March and April

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