



Wright & Morten Farm Newsletter

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January 2022

Happy New Year

We would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year from all the team at Wright and Morten. It has been a pleasure to work with you over the last 12 months, and particularly to meet those of you who have joined us. Here's to a successful 2022 for you all and a return to something more like normality!

Spectam for Lambs

CEVA Animal Health the manufacturers of Spectam Scour Halt have recently issued an industry-wide notice that Spectam Scour Halt will not be available for the 2022 lambing season. Due to significant reductions in usage (52%) over the last 5 years, the company have decided to remove Spectam from the market from January 2022. There are no alternative products on the market, so this is a significant moment for the sheep industry.

Over the last few years, we have encouraged you to think about lambing shed hygiene, colostrum management and ewe nutrition – these factors will be more important than ever this year. Now is the perfect time to get your forage analysed and to plan your ewe ration for the run up to lambing. This will help to boost colostrum quality and quantity, whilst also ensuring lambs are born full of vigour and of a healthy weight. Matt is happy to help with advice on feeding pregnant ewes and to review housing to highlight risk-factors for watery mouth and other lamb diseases.

If you have concerns about lambing without spectam, now is the time to sit and plan with one of the vets, rather than waiting until problems begin during lambing.

#ColostrumIsGold

Lambing courses 2022

This year our ever-popular lambing courses are back in person at Holly Tree Farm. Cost per person is £70 + VAT, which includes a talk covering practical lambing tips and caring for ewes and lambs at lambing time, lunch, and using our lambing simulator. Whether you're a complete beginner or a seasoned shepherd, we hope to cover information that will maximise success for everyone at lambing time.

Wednesday 23rd February 10.30am - 1.30pm

We are also holding an online lambing course via Zoom, for 2 hours, for £45 +VAT per person. This is presented live, covering lamb and ewe care and lambing assistance. Ideal if you're needing to isolate due to COVID or cannot make our daytime events.

Wednesday 30th March 6.30pm – 8.30pm

To book your place or for further information, call Holly Tree on 01477 571000, or Whaley Bridge on 01663 732564.

TB Cases in our area

In November we didn't record any new breakdowns on farms covered by the practice. This is particularly good news, given that this is a busy time of the year in terms of TB testing.

We have 13 clients currently under TB movement restrictions. Again, this is a pretty low number compared with the same period in previous years.

Please contact us for any questions regarding TB. Alternatively, remember that the TB Hub website is a great source of information whether you are dealing with a breakdown or just want to protect your herd.

Avian Influenza Reminder

We are still in the grips of the Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) outbreak, with 60 cases detected in England so far this winter. We have been involved with the national surveillance operation, with Yasmine and Mirel working with APHA Preston conducting flock inspections in the areas around outbreaks.

With case numbers high, it would be sensible to consider if your poultry housing might need modified to allow longer-term housing, like we experienced in the last outbreak. This includes enrichment and changes to make keeping the housing clean easier. We haven't had any indication of when the housing order may be lifted, but updates can be found on the APHA website or will be sent by email if your poultry are registered with APHA.

Medicines Course

We have another Red Tractor Approved medicines course running on the 19th of January for those of you who still need to attend. This course is for any beef and sheep clients and will cover all you need to know about the safe and effective use of medicines in livestock.

Attendance on these courses is now required under the new red tractor standards, with a certificate issued after October 2016 – so you would need to attend if you attended a course prior to this! Attendance costs £55 + VAT per person.



If you have any questions or would like to attend, please give either office a call on 01477 571000 or 01663 732564.

Introducing – Emily Payne from Nottingham Vet School

From January 2022, a new face may turn up on farm if you have a visit on a Monday or Tuesday. Emily Payne is a vet based at Nottingham Vet School who we will be working with going forward to provide education for the final year students.

We have provided placements for farm-keen Nottingham final year students for several years now (for example, Matt in 2015) and as the next step in our relationship with the university, they have asked to send a clinician with two students to us two days a week. Any work will still be completed under the banner of Wright & Morten, and all cases will be fed back to a W&M vet to allow continuity when Emily is not here. We are really excited to be working more closely with Nottingham and we hope you will give Emily the warm welcome we always experience from our clients.

Lamb Scour and Gut Disease

Lamb losses in the first 48 hours of life are a significant drain on productivity and profitability of UK sheep farms, not to mention the welfare implications of high mortality rates. In 2011, lamb losses in Welsh sheep flocks were found to be around 15%, with nearly half of these being between birth and 48 hours of age. It is estimated that across the UK, losses sit between 4% and 21% in lowland flocks. Clearly this figure varies from farm to farm but the UK target is set at 6%, which is proven to be achievable with the correct management practices in place.

So, what causes lamb scours?

There are multiple pathogens involved in new-born lamb GI disease and 'scours', many of which are in common with those encountered with calves – *Rotavirus*, *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), *Salmonella*, *Cryptosporidium* and *Clostridium perfringens* type B. Clearly other diseases and conditions come into play as the lambs get older, however in this article we will focus on the first 2-3 weeks of life.

After birth, the first pathogens most likely to cause scour are *E. coli* and *Salmonella*. Both are common environmental pathogens often carried by healthy adults. Of the two, the most prominent and widely recognised is 'Watery Mouth Disease', an *E. coli* overgrowth in the small intestine. Lambs are often collapsed, after a period of inappetence of around 2-6 hours. They develop abdominal bloat and salivate a lot – hence the name of the condition. Disease progresses rapidly as the toxins produced by the bacteria enter the lambs blood stream, and it is often fatal.

Rotavirus causes diarrhoea and lethargy, with lambs rapidly becoming dehydrated due to the fluid loss and lack of suckling. Luckily, cases of viral scours tend to be less common in lambs than we experience with calves. *Cryptosporidium parvum* is a protozoan pathogen which is common on farms. Lambs tend to be 5-10 days old when symptoms begin, with watery diarrhoea being the main sign. As the lamb becomes more dehydrated, the will to suckle is lost and the lambs become lethargic. If not treated promptly, lambs often succumb to this disease due to the dehydration or hypothermia.

Clostridium perfringens is a bacterium of which there are many strains, producing differing disease presentations at different stages of life. Lamb Dysentery is caused by *C. perfringens* Type B and lambs often have diarrhoea containing blood and mucus. This condition can be acutely fatal; however, lambs can also stop suckling and become lethargic, dying within a couple of days. Treatment of dysentery is unlikely to be successful, as is the case for most clostridial diseases.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Diagnosis of the pathogen involved can be achieved by either testing of faecal samples from affected lambs, or by post-mortem of lambs lost to disease. Particularly in the case of bacterial infections, the animals to sample are those which have not received antibiotics, as this could result in a false result, possibly causing confusion.

With the exception of watery mouth disease, these conditions all present very similarly, with diarrhoea and dehydration progressing to death without intervention. Due to the rapid deterioration of the affected lambs, prompt intervention and supporting lambs is vital to success when facing an outbreak of lamb scour. The most important aspect of the treatment of lamb scour is rehydration, which needs to be started early to maximise the chance of success. Oral rehydration is the most practical option in lambs, which can be achieved using many of the products available on the market. In lambs suffering with watery mouth, rehydration should be given at the rate of 50ml per kilogram, four times per day. Products should always be mixed at the rate described on the packaging to ensure optimum action. In some cases, antibiotics can be beneficial, however in many cases it is the toxins released by the bacteria which causes the greatest problems rather than the bacteria themselves. Antibiotics should only be used after discussion with your vet to ensure the correct product, duration, and dosage. Blanket use of antibiotics has historically been used to control bacterial infections in young lambs. However, levels of resistance to antibiotics are increasing and human medicine is under growing pressure. This blanket use is no longer appropriate on farm and efforts should be focussed on preventative measures instead.

Focussing on Prevention

Preventing outbreaks is vastly more effective than treatment and there are a few different factors to look at.

- Colostrum

- by far the most important. Lambs are born with effectively no immune system, but colostrum is rich in antibodies which help protect the lamb in its early life and form the foundation of its immune system going forward. Ensuring lambs have access to the **quantity, quality** of colostrum they need, and **quickly**, is vital. They require **50ml/kg** in the **first two hours**, increasing to **200ml/kg by 24 hours**
- Supplementing colostrum with artificial sources should be done with care, as powdered products are not as good as ewes' colostrum. If a ewe has surplus, this should be harvested and kept chilled or frozen for future use
- Colostrum quality is dictated by ewe body condition and the diet they receive during late pregnancy. Protein levels in the diet correlate with the quantity and quality of colostrum produced
- Vaccines - For lamb dysentery, there is a simple thing we can do to avoid the risk of disease – and many of you are probably already doing it – but are you doing it properly? Vaccinating ewes against clostridial disease pre-lambing leads to a big spike in antibodies in the colostrum. Ensuring ewes are vaccinated as stated on the datasheet means you will get the maximum protection from that vaccine

- Hygiene

- Lambing shed hygiene is critical to success – this is where the lambs are most likely to pick up bugs
- Ensure sheds are properly mucked out and disinfected before bedding
- Clean individual pens between ewes to reduce contamination
- Ensure ewes are clean – trim any with dirty tails and try to house away from other ewes and lambs

There are number of ways you can work with your vet to reduce the chances of outbreaks of lamb scour. Planning to avoid these issues is a year-round task, as ewe body condition has a direct effect on lamb birthweight, viability, and colostrum production. Body condition can be slow to change, so ensuring ewes are in good condition all year is important. Feeding then becomes even more important in the latter half of pregnancy, and particularly the final third. We can work with you to ensure your diet is suitable for the stage of pregnancy, providing enough energy and protein for the ewe and lambs. We can also help to review lambing shed hygiene to highlight any aspects that may have gone unnoticed. Speak to one of the vets if you would like advice on how to avoid lamb scour and watery mouth this lambing time.

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