

New documents to accompany pig movement licences

Since January 1st 2021, certification to accompany pigs and all related products for export to the EU is changing. Whilst this may seem that it will not affect many smaller pig holdings, if your pigs are being slaughtered at a commercial abattoir or headed to market, documentation to accompany your movement licences are changing. There is an additional form to be filled out by a vet to confirm the biosecurity in place on your holding called a 'quarterly vet certificate'. To discuss how this may affect you and what actions you need to take, speak to vet Yasmine on **07816 958011** or **01477 571000**.

Lambing Courses

Each year we offer lambing courses, to help prepare anyone who may be involved in lambing sheep and equip you with the information you need for a smooth lambing time.

Due to current COVID-19 restrictions, we are aiming to run a slightly shorter online lambing course covering care of the pregnant ewe before and after lambing, care of the new-born lamb, and common problems when assisting a lambing. The meeting should also allow some time for discussion, questions and sharing your own hints and tips with each other.

We are running two online sessions (covering the same material) so hopefully there will be a time and date to suit everyone:

- 9am - 10.30am Wednesday 24th February
- 7pm - 8.30pm Thursday 11th March

The cost for attendance is £40. Access for the Zoom meeting will be sent via email following payment. To express an interest or book your place, please give us a ring at Holly Tree on 01477 571000.

Bryan's fancy foot-work!

Many of you will have experienced Bryan's attention to detail and constant effort to offer the most up-to-date practices when it comes to cattle foot trimming. Recently he got the chance to try out a new block he has sourced. As you can see, with ulcers on both toes, a standard block could not be placed, so a horseshoe block was used. This takes weight off the affected area, spreading the weight to the wall horn of both toes whilst taking pressure off the area around the ulcer.

Unfortunately, we can't print a video, but take our word for it that the cow was almost sound when walking out of his crush! Great work by Bryan once again, and he's ready and waiting to help however he can preventing and treating lameness on your farm.

Give him a ring via the offices or on his mobile: 07506 139047.



Lamb Losses – what causes them? and what can you do about it?

Unfortunately, not all lambs survive those first few early days of life, whether it be because of disease, cold or just those irritating accidents like being laid on. Though we can't do a lot about the weather (particularly if you already lamb inside), and even the best shepherd couldn't watch every ewe in every pen 24/7 to stop those unfortunate accidents.

The industry target for lambs born alive but lost between 0-48 hours old is 6% or less and many farms are proving that this is possible. In 2011, this was found to be around 15% in Welsh flocks, and in the UK a range between 4-21% in lowland flocks.

So, what causes lamb losses in those first few days? In this article we will cover the common causes of early losses, and what you can do about them.

Watery Mouth disease - AKA Rattle belly

- Lambs are lethargic, fail to suck, salivate a lot, bloat, and often retain their meconium (first muck)
- It is caused by a dramatic and rapid overgrowth of *E. coli* and the release of associated toxins. Infections originate from environmental bacteria, particularly in dirty, wet pens/sheds and from dirty fleece on ewes back ends' and tails.
- The bacteria can overgrow rapidly in the gut due to inadequate or delayed colostrum intake, and the risk is higher in lambs of low birthweight, or from ewes in poor conditions, from difficult births or due to mismothering.
- Treatment – the disease is often fatal, with lambs quickly progressing into a coma then death. Affected lambs require frequent oral rehydration at 50ml/kg, an enema to aid defecation and early cases can sometimes respond to antibiotics.
- Control – preventing disease is far better than trying to treat. By far the most important aspects are hygiene, and colostrum. Ensuring lambing sheds are clean throughout lambing – even moving ewes to other sheds/outside towards the end of lambing (weather permitting). Lambs also need to receive enough colostrum - 50ml/kg in the first 2 hours, reaching 200ml/kg by 24hours.
- We can assess colostrum absorption in lambs by taking blood from those lambs up to 7 days old which can flag up a possible issue with intakes or with ewe nutrition leading to poor quantity/quality.
- Routine antibiotic treatment of lambs is no longer appropriate, and the industry has made huge steps to reduce reliance on this outdated practice. There are much better ways to prevent watery mouth – with the main being correct ewe nutrition and colostrum intakes – it is nearly impossible to give a lamb watery mouth if it has had adequate colostrum.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

Umbilical Infection - Navel ill

- Largely down to unhygienic conditions around the time of birth or with inadequate navel treatment. Cases can increase during poor weather and are often higher in male lambs as urination prevents the navel from drying.
- The infection can stay localised to the navel or can spread to many other locations in the body – sometimes delayed for weeks before causing problems.
- Treatment of early cases can be successful; however, this must be detected early and needs to continue for at least 5 days.
- Prevention – Navel ill is best prevented, and that is best done using a 10% iodine solution to the navel as soon as possible after birth – ideally under 15 minutes. For best results, this should then be repeated after 2-4 hours. Blue spray is not effective for preventing navel infections and will only lead to increased resistance to antibiotics on the farm.



Infectious polyarthritis – Joint ill

- Bacteria can colonise any joints not just those of the legs, however the knee, hock, fetlocks, and stifles are the most affected.
- The infections enter the joint through the bloodstream, with bacteria entering via the gut, airways, or navels. The challenge of bacteria is much higher when hygiene is poor, or colostrum intake is inadequate.
- Streptococcus dysgalactiae is the most common cause of joint ill, with infections picked up early in life. The joints are usually hot, swollen, and painful and affected lambs will quickly lose condition and stop growing. We can also see cases caused by Erysipelas. The cases can be differentiated by taking joint samples for culture – we can also assess antibiotic susceptibility at the same time.
- Treatment is often with penicillin, administered daily for at least 5 days (i.e., not long acting). Anti-inflammatory is also important for improved recovery.
- Lambs with joint ill will often exhibit some level of lameness despite 'successful' treatment due to the damage caused to the joint surface. If lameness is still extreme after a long course of antibiotics, the lamb should be euthanased for welfare reasons.
- Prevention – this is focussed on reducing susceptibility to infection and exposure to bacteria. Ensuring colostrum intakes and thorough navel care is paramount to success. As with oral antibiotics, injecting for prevention of joint ill is now an outdated practice and no longer accepted across the veterinary and sheep farming industry. Efforts should be made to tackle the disease without relying on antibiotics, instead using these for treatment – and we are here to help you with that – just give us a call!

Hypothermia (moderate = 37-39°C, severe = <37°C)

- Cold is a huge killer of lambs, but there are a few things we can do to help them stay warm. Lambing inside has big benefits, as does a belly full of colostrum. If a lamb does get cold, knowing how to warm it up correctly is vital. For moderate hypothermia, a feed of warm colostrum and spell under a heat lamp will work wonders.
- For severe hypothermia, things are more complex.

If under 6 hours old, lambs still have brown fat to provide energy, so efforts focus on heat and drying. Move the lamb under a lamp, drying the fleece and, once they are able to hold their head up, tubing with some warm colostrum.

If they are over 6 hours old, the same applies as above, however we need to provide some extra energy as the brown fat will already have been depleted. This usually takes the form of an injection of glucose directly into the lamb's abdomen. Have a chat with one of the vets if you're not sure how to do this – it is quite uncommon to need to if you lamb inside thankfully.

Whilst some losses can be tolerated, it's important to investigate early if losses are increasing to try to prevent losses going forward. To tackle this, we are offering a new service this year, at a reduced introductory rate. For just £30 we will post-mortem up to 3 new-born (up to 2 weeks old) lambs to investigate the causes. To be able to offer this reduced price we aim to tie it in with other visits in the area – or do them whilst we are already on farm for other reasons, so we may not come immediately like we do with other calls. We can also offer this service at the Whaley Bridge branch; however, we will need you to wait and take the lambs away with you afterwards for fallen-stock collection from your farm. If we suggest samples are taken for testing, these will be charged as usual according to lab fees. If you have any questions, please get in touch on the usual numbers or via any of the vets.



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