



Farm Vet News

March 2021



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Introduction – Lucy Jerram

A year into the pandemic we are adapting to many aspects of the 'new normal' including social distancing, mask wearing and different ways of distributing information and learning opportunities. We have a number of recorded webinars available on our website and have already run a number of meetings online. While an online meeting cannot provide the same opportunity to socialise before and after the event nor provide tea, coffee or something stronger, it has benefitted our more distant farmers as they have not had to travel to attend.

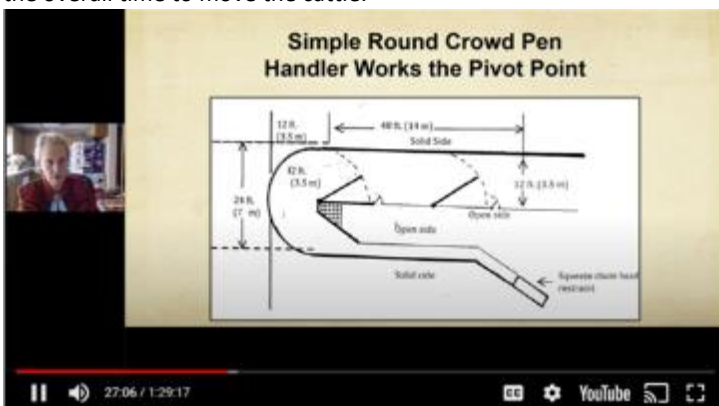
Our vets are also making the most of the available webinars, recently they were lucky to be among the 900 attendees of a talk given by Temple Grandin as part of the AHDB's 'Cattle Handling – Keep Calm and Keep Moo-ving' series. This webinar is available to watch back now (along with many others) at ahdb.org.uk/webinars by choosing the 'Dairy' link. Temple has a unique insight into the challenges of cattle handling based on how cows observe the world and move within it. She discussed the role of the dominant cow and the 'leader' cow and how the two may not be the same. Moving from light to dark buildings, moving cattle over a shaft of light or past a puddle can reduce cow flow and cause stress to cows. Taking a moment to give the leader cow a moment to take a look before pushing the herd on will likely reduce the overall time to move the cattle.

Temple also discussed using curved handling systems with solid sides as well as considering the use of 'crowd pens'. Standing at the pivot of the crowd pen uses the natural flight zone of cattle and they will move around the pivot and continue down the race. Crowd pens should not be over-filled or used to store cattle in and no animals should be left alone in it – they should always be able to see the animal in front of them to minimise separation anxiety. Using well designed handling rather than aggressive handling aids will make the system more efficient and less stressful for both people and cows. Simple solutions such as cardboard over fencing so that cattle cannot see vehicles, buckets or people outside the race can make a difference but spending money on more expensive handling can often be a great long term investment as it reduces the level of skill required by your helpers!

Being able to hear world-renowned speakers such as Dr Grandin from the comfort of your home is one benefit of our current situation. Meanwhile, we are providing the following online meetings over the next few months:

- Beef Benchmarking – Tuesday 13 April, 7pm
- Responsible Handling and Administration of Veterinary Medicines – Wednesday 28 April, 12pm
- Sheep Mastering Medicines – Wednesday 12 May, 2pm
- Dairy AMU update – date TBC

We look forward to 'seeing' you virtually soon and remain optimistic that we will be able to meet face to face for a well-earned pint later in the year!



Temple Grandin in action explaining optimal cattle handling

Our 'Responsible Handling and Administration of Veterinary Medicines' course is being held online!

Since 2019 Red Tractor has required dairies to have at least one person responsible for administering medicines to attend a use of medicines course and it is also recommended for beef and sheep (Standard AM.b.1). The course covers information on medicines handling, storage and administration as well as Red Tractor recording requirements and some case studies of common clinical presentations. The next course is being held via Microsoft Teams at **12pm on Wednesday 28 April**, for a reduced price of £25. There are still limited places available so be sure to contact the practice on 01722 333291 or info@endellfarmvets.co.uk to book your place! We will continue to run these courses regularly, so if you cannot make this date please contact the practice to be placed on our waiting list or look out in our newsletters or on our Facebook page to find out the next date.

Normality at Lambing – Harry Smith

Normal Parturition

• Stage 1

The ewe may become restless and separate herself from the flock, as her cervix dilates in preparation for birth, and a string like mucus is expelled from her vulva. This stage usually lasts for two to six hours.

• Stage 2

A water bag will protrude out of the vulva and should rupture quickly. The ewe will lie down as she starts to push and front limbs of the first lamb protrude, followed by the head until the entire new-born is delivered. This stage typically takes less than an hour however, varies from 30 minutes to two hours. For ewes with multiple lambs, we expect approximately 20 minute intervals between siblings.



• Stage 3

The placenta and foetal membranes should be expelled within two to three hours after giving birth. Ewes will often eat their placenta, this is completely normal and is a good source of nutrients. If a ewe doesn't expel her placenta within 12 hours it is considered retained and veterinary advice should be sought.



The first stage of labour can take anywhere from two to six hours and is usually longer in first time mums.

Typical duration of each stage of parturition:

| Stage | Duration |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Stage 1: Cervical dilation | Two to six hours |
| Stage 2: Expulsion of foetuses | Thirty minutes to two hours |
| Stage 3: Expulsion of placenta | Two to three hours |

Example Situations Where Veterinary Advice Should Be Sought:

- The ewe is taking longer than the expected time for each stage.
- The lamb appears to be too big to be delivered naturally.
- You cannot safely manipulate the neonate into a suitable position for delivery (malpresentation, eg: breech).
- Incomplete cervical dilation not responding to 10-15 minutes of attempting to open it with gentle manual pressure.
- Any concerns regarding a tear.
- Evidence of excessive bleeding from the vagina or uterus.

These are only guidelines and deciding when to step in or seek assistance is tough. If you are concerned or unsure, our vets are on hand 24/7 to either give you advice over the phone or visit on 01722 333291.

Five easy steps to help keep your vet bill low:

1. Annual Flock Health plan and regular vet communication (prevention is better than cure).
2. Have the animal ready in a pen and/or ready for restraint (you are paying for your vet to help chase a sheep in a field).
3. Have easy access to lights, water, head rope/ropes etc.
4. Have a clean bucket of water ready (we will ALWAYS ask for one).
5. Have another pair of helping hands nearby.

CEVA's Assure Ewe Scheme

We are pleased to be able to offer Assure Ewe Testing for Enzootic Abortion until 30 September. The Assure Ewe testing scheme provides free laboratory testing for enzootic abortion (EAE), making the process more affordable to farmers. Over the past four years, 62% of flocks tested under the scheme returned a positive result but less than half of ewes intended for first time breeding are actually vaccinated. Finding out whether you have the disease on farm can be a useful first step to determining the need to vaccinate against EAE, the most commonly diagnosed cause of abortion in UK sheep.

EAE costs the UK sheep industry £20 million a year and while ewes will develop some immunity after initial infection, the APHA surveillance unit found that 3,000 farms over a 10 year period had repeat occurrences of EAE (this is likely just the tip of the iceberg as many farms will not have tested). Losses in individual flocks can reach as high as 25% percent in a season. CEVA estimates that each EAE abortion costs the farmer £85 when accounting for tupping ewes, supporting pregnant ewes, tidying up the abortion, veterinary investigation, lamb disposal, treatment of the ewe and purchasing a replacement. This estimate does not account for the loss of earning from that potential lamb sale! In an era where prophylactic antibiotic use is not acceptable, vaccination prevents the temptation to reach for the long acting tetracycline, and is significantly cheaper in the long term.

The scheme is available until 30 September 2021 for flocks with 50+ breeding ewes; it funds EAE testing of <6 ewes per flock where abortion has been identified. Farmers may choose to test for other abortive agents after discussion with the Endell Vet team.

RVC Survey

A study is being performed by students and staff at the Royal Veterinary College analysing to what extent training influences vaccination techniques for UK sheep farmers.

If you own sheep and have five minutes spare, please follow the link through the online version of this newsletter below, to complete the questionnaire:

<https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90314588/RP2PROJECT>



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