



Farm Vet News

March 2022



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UK farmers have experienced stormy times over the last few weeks, both out and about with storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin, but also on national television following the BBC Panorama episode, which aired on 14 February. Whilst the footage shown was unacceptable, we strongly believe that this is an intolerable exception and does not reflect UK farming as a whole. Endell Farm Vets stands with and supports all our clients in promoting best animal welfare.

Looking forward we are gearing ourselves up for a spring and summer of more normality, with more face-to-face farmer meetings appearing. Check out our Upcoming Events and Courses section or give the office a call to discuss what is on offer.

Josh, on behalf of the Endell Farm Vets Team

Early Lambing Losses

Lamb losses have a huge impact on production, welfare and farmer morale. No two farms will have identical problems for losses and will be dependent on your individual farm, production system and season. Major risk factors for losses include birthweight, colostrum intake, dystocia, genetics, hygiene and litter size. Many of these factors are interlinked, for instance litter size and ewe nutrition or low birthweight and colostrum intake. Good management on-farm will directly affect antibiotic usage on farm, therefore it is important to risk assess each season and target areas that need improving.

Low Birthweight

Lamb mortalities are highly correlated with low lamb birthweights. The most common causes are poor ewe nutrition pre-lambing, litter size and ewe illness. Ewes should be regularly body condition scored to check they are at BCS 2.5-3 out of 5 at lambing. Investigate underweight ewes early for parasite or other diseases, and check that their protein and energy levels are adequate pre-lambing. This can be done by metabolic blood sampling with your vet four to six weeks before lambing. Scanning ewes and annual forage analysis allows the ration to be tailored but regular body condition scoring is still paramount.

Litter Size

Triplets and quads are smaller in size, have less brown fat and are therefore at a greater risk of not feeding, losing heat and hypothermia. Litter size is mainly determined by genetics and body condition at tupping. Avoid increases in body condition around tupping even if the ewes are under condition. This is known as 'flushing' which increases ovulation rate and incidence of triplets/quads. Be careful with prolific breeds, such as, Lleyn, Blue Faced/mules and Dorsets.



Dystocia

Difficult lambings lead to weakness, injury or death and can be minimised by ewe and ram selection for lambing ease. It is not recommended to get ewe lambs in-lamb in their first year as they cause a lot of foetal-maternal mismatch problems.

Hygiene

Cleanliness in the shed is important to decrease disease in lambs (eg: watery mouth, navel ill, joint ill, pneumonia etc.) and mastitis in ewes. Colostrum management, ewe worm/parasite control, fleece dagging, navel dipping and regular bedding up and liming pens between batches will generate better hygiene.

AND DON'T FORGET COLOSTRUM!

A lamb is born with NO immunity so needs antibodies from the colostrum to provide immune support. Insufficient colostrum intake can be correlated with poor supply, low birthweights, multiples, hypothermia, mis-mothering and injuries at birth. Thin ewes at lambing are likely to have poor udder development leading to lower quality and quantity of colostrum, but also let down. This ultimately leads to starvation, low immunity and increased risk of disease.

#COLOSTRUMISGOLD.

For more information please visit our website to read our blog on 'Early Lamb Losses and Reducing Antibiotic Usage'.

Strategies for Rearing Calves at Low Temperatures

Body temperature regulation in calves develops with the age. Newborns are less equipped to deal with a cold environment than older calves. Therefore, the adaptation of the young dairy calf to a cold environment is mainly dependent upon the availability of adequate housing, management and nutrition.



The thermoneutral zone is the range of temperature within which the animal uses no additional energy (above that of normal metabolism) to maintain its body temperature. If environmental temperatures fall below the thermoneutral zone (also called below the lower critical temperature), a calf will use energy which could have been partitioned for growth, to keep warm. If we want our calves to grow optimally, we need to try and avoid this from happening.

The thermoneutral zone is not only governed by temperature, but also wind speed, bedding quality and moisture. For example:

- Wet newborn calves are at a greater risk of reaching the lower critical temperature during cold temperatures.
- Bedding material can act as an insulator, reducing heat loss via conduction when calves are lying down.
- Draughty conditions at calf level can reduce environmental temperatures and increase the risk of reaching the lower critical temperature.

Nonetheless, there are a number of strategies to ensure calves stay warm enough during colder months. Sufficiently deep enough bedding allows the calf to nest and trap a boundary layer of warm air around itself. Deep nests allow for colder and better-ventilated spaces, since the animal will have part of the body protected (Nordlund, 2008).

Bedding depth can be assessed by looking at calves when they are lying down – ideally it should be deep enough that the legs of the majority of calves are not visible.

Draughts can be avoided by ensuring housing incorporates solid side panels approximately 1.2m in height at the calf level. Calf jackets may also be of use, but are of most benefit for calves between one and four weeks of age and sick individuals, and they require excellent hygiene to prevent the spread of infection (particularly those associated with diarrhoea).

Increasing the plane of nutrition is one of the easiest methods of optimising the growth of calves in cold conditions. The (metabolisable) energy requirements for maintenance of a calf under thermoneutral conditions (15-20°C) are approximately 1.75 Mcal/d for a 45kg calf (Drackley, 2008). For each 5°C drop below 15°C, feed calves (less than three weeks of age) extra energy by providing an extra 50g of milk replacer or 0.33L of whole milk per day (AHDB, 2019). Our team of vets is always more than happy to consider the energy content of your milk feeding regimes, if they can be improved as well as any other factors about calf health and housing. So please don't hesitate to get in touch if you'd like to discuss this topic further!

Seasonal issues

Chronic liver fluke leading to ill-thrift and death in sheep



Routine screening for evidence of liver fluke infection should be considered at this time of year to make sure that ewes are not affected, in particular in the last six weeks of pregnancy when it is crucial to prevent loss of body condition. Thin ewes at lambing time can lead to increased neonatal mortality due to reduced lamb birthweights and colostrum availability. At this time of year, we see more 'chronic fluke' caused by adult parasites and therefore we are more likely to find eggs in a faeces sample compared with the autumn time when we see more 'acute fluke' caused by the larvae (and therefore not egg producing). Also keep in mind that there are many more products available that kill adult fluke, including some of the common wormers, so please speak to one of our vets before automatically turning to use Fasinex which contains triclabendazole, to which there is a large amount of resistance.

Listeria in out-wintered stock

Listeria is found in the environment and ingestion of soil and spoiled silage can increase exposure causing listeriosis. Signs of listeriosis are depression and separation from the herd/flock, loss of appetite, fever, circling animals, salivation and facial paralysis as well as abortions and stillbirths. Feeding on the ground, wintering on brassicas, sheep standing on silage bails and muddy conditions around troughs can all predispose cattle and sheep to getting listeriosis. Using drier areas for feeding or moving the feeding areas can help, as well as providing pregnant cows and ewes with well-preserved silage from undamaged bales.



MSD Flock Check 2022

Abortion and barren rates, as well as the birth of weak or sickly lambs, greater than 2% suggest an infectious cause. The two most common causes of abortion in ewes are still Enzootic Abortion (EAE) and Toxoplasmosis despite vaccines being available for both. MSD has just launched its annual 'Flock Check', which is available until the end of June to flocks with more than 100 ewes; they will pay the cost of the laboratory fees to check for these diseases. The laboratory looks for antibodies so ewes that are already vaccinated for EAE and/or toxo cannot be included. You will need to cover the cost of one of our vets coming out to taking blood samples from six to eight barren or aborted ewes, but if the ewes are penned up and ready to go, it should be quick! Please call the farm office to discuss this further if you have concerns about empty or aborting ewes.

Bumblefoot

The recent wet and stormy weather combined with the current Avian Flu restrictions in place for all poultry (likely to last until at least



April) means we are seeing cases of Bumblefoot on the rise. Known as Pododermatitis, this occurs when the bottoms of the feet become uncomfortable, inflamed and infected, causing severe pain and lameness across poultry species.

Birds shouldn't be kept on soiled and wet bedding as this softens the foot and increases the risk of bacteria entering through cuts and abrasions, leading to Bumblefoot. Apart from keeping things as dry as possible and replacing bedding before it becomes dirty, you can decrease the risk by providing level, well-maintained perches to prevent uneven weight balance and injury (eg: splinters) and removing sharp objects from their enclosure.

The best treatment is prevention; discomfort and a recently formed black mark on the sole of your bird's foot might be an early sign. These early stages can often be treated with bathing and bandaging. Treating cases before they develop into advanced stages is vital, as these may require veterinary surgical removal. Please contact our office on 01722 333291 if you are concerned.



TB Advisory Service

DEFRA funded project, offering FREE, bespoke, practical and cost-effective advice from Endell Farm Vets

If the thought of TB keeps you up at night, then the TB Advisory Service is here to help you. Whether you are currently experiencing a breakdown, or are worried that your next TB test will find a reactor, a TBAS visit can offer practical and cost-effective solutions to decreasing the impact that TB has on your farm.

The service is available to owners of cattle, deer, goats, camelids, pigs or sheep in England. We can offer farm visits, telephone advice and badger sett surveys to provide a set of personalised recommendations.

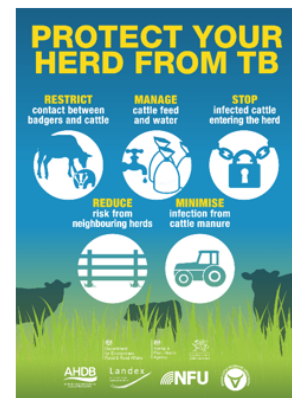
The TB Advisory Service is a DEFRA-funded project that offers FREE, bespoke, practical and cost-effective advice to all eligible farmers in England to help reduce the risks associated with TB.

FREE,
bespoke
advice for
your farm

Oliver White
MRCVS
bTB Advisor

Mel McPherson
MRCVS
Accredited TBAS
Advisor

Josh Williams
MRCVS
bTB Advisor



If you would like to arrange your FREE visit to discuss ways that you can take back control against TB, please contact our team on

01722 333291, option 1

For more info visit
www.tbas.org.uk



Upcoming Events and Courses

The Basics of Lambing

One-hour practical sessions held at Newton Wood Barns, GU34 3EW

Wednesday 16 March

Wednesday 13 April

Cost £50 incl VAT per session

Responsible Use of Medicines

Online Course

Thursday 24 March, 11am

Thursday 28 April, 2pm

Friday 27 May, 10am

Cost £25 incl VAT per person

MilkSure Part 1

Online Training

Monday 21 March,

10.30am-1pm

Total cost for Parts 1 and 2

£350 incl VAT

DIY AI Course

Face-to-face two-day practical course

23 and 24 March

Cost £450 incl VAT

If you would like to attend, please ring the office to book your place (01722-333291, option 1).

Please visit our website if you would like to read the full blog articles summarised in this newsletter.

APHA Endemic Disease Alerts: Winter Dysentery

The APHA has received reports of diarrhoea in more than 20 housed dairy herds in England, Wales and Scotland, over the past few weeks. They suggest that the pattern of acute onset diarrhoea, with variably severe milk drop, is suggestive of 'winter dysentery', however other possible causes, including nutritional factors, should also be considered.

Fact File: Winter Dysentery

- Thought to be caused by Bovine Coronavirus (Hodnik and others, 2020)
- Highly contagious – clinical signs have been reported in up to 100% of livestock (including youngstock) on an individual holding
- Clinical signs – watery diarrhoea ± blood or dysentery; milk drop (4-7 litres/cow on average); condition loss; reduced appetite; increased temperature uncommon
- Rapid spread, but usually resolves in two to three days in individuals
- Very rarely severe enough to cause death
- Supportive therapy (oral fluids and NSAIDs) may be necessary

Testing for Infectious Diseases

Paired blood samples two to four weeks apart from five to six affected animals enables identification of rising antibody levels against coronavirus infections, if it is involved. Other infectious diseases to consider include BVD, Schmallenberg virus and/or Salmonella. However, in all cases your vet can advise on the best samples to take and what is worth testing for.

Non-infectious Causes

Feed-related causes are also to be considered and investigated, for example sudden changes of constituents and too high inclusion rates of concentrates, which risks acidosis (SARA). Spoilage, caused by moulds for example, is also possible but more commonly affects individuals rather than causing a herd-wide outbreak. Potential management and nutritional factors should be investigated.



Important Notice: Gamaret

Please be aware that the milk withhold for Gamaret Intra-Mammary Tubes has INCREASED to 108 hours

Wiltshire RABI county committee invite you to a

Farm Walk

Where: Lyburn Farm, Lyburn Rd, Landford, Salisbury SP5 2DN

By kind permission of the Smales Family

When: Wednesday 6th July 2022

Time: Arrival for 6.30pm for a 6.45pm start.

Price: £15

What's included? The itinerary is a tractor and trailer ride around the farm which takes around 1.5 hours, whilst looking at the issues of organic vegetables, visit the reservoir, pumpkin fields, the cows and return to the farm to hear about the cheese. Followed by a soft drink and cheese supper.

To book your tickets please visit:

<https://wiltshirefarmwalk.eventbrite.com>

Or contact Laura Ractliffe on 07919 478518 or

laura.ractliffe@rabi.org.uk

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