



Sheep Newsletter April 2015

It could be a bit warmer but at least the weather conditions so far are ok, fingers crossed! Lambing seems to be going ok on the majority of farms so far. We are having a few issues relating to joint ill and coccidiosis.

Joint ill

The majority of farms are seeing this in lambs after turnout at around 7-21 days of age. At this stage it is most commonly caused by *streptococcus dysgalacticae* – a bacterium that can be found everywhere in the environment and gains entry to the body within the first 0 – 48 hours. The following clinical signs are often seen;

- Obvious lameness on one or more legs – which isn't scald when examined. Swollen and hot joints.
- Pain on ALL four legs (on tip toes) which is often due to infection in the cervical spine region.
- Poor, depressed and dull lamb.

This is the appearance of the joint at post mortem– it is obvious as to why this condition is so painful and why antibiotic therapy is unsuccessful in cases that are treated too late or not for long enough.



It gains entry via the mouth or the navel.

- Colostrum – quality and quantity is essential in preventing joint ill to neutralise the bacteria and prevent its growth within the circulating blood.
- Dipping or spraying TWICE with a strong 10% iodine solution is essential to block this path as a means of entering the body. The sooner the navel dries the better.
- Environment – ensure hygiene is excellent. Increased bedding down in the lambing yard, cleaning and disinfection of individual pens.
- Moving lambs outside – how clean is the trailer? Outbreaks have been linked to cases where lambs less than 48 hrs old have been moved out to grazing with a wet navel in a dirty trailer!

Treatment:

Treatment ASAP is essential – if delayed or the joints are very enlarged then it may be better to euthanase the lamb rather than treat on welfare grounds.

1. Pain relief on the first day of treatment – 0.2ml finadyne or metacam.
2. Antibiotics – amoxypen, duphaphen and strep or norocillin. It is ESSENTIAL that the lamb receives daily injections of high dose antibiotics for at least 7 days, ideally 10 – even if the lamb looks better.

Therefore it is better to re-house the ewe and her lambs for the treatment period – unless you are particularly athletic and able to catch a recovering lamb!

Coccidiosis – risk period from 4 weeks old.

Coccidiosis is caused by a protozoal parasite. It is ingested by the lamb and migrates to and emerges from the small intestine wall causing **damage** to the lining of the intestine. Cocci eggs (oocysts) are then shed in the faeces.

When low levels of these oocysts are in the environment, the lambs will ingest them and will have a chance to develop immunity – i.e. become infected but not AFFECTED.

A high environmental challenge is far more likely to cause disease.

Risk Factors for infection:

- Lambs that have been housed for 4 weeks plus – i.e. pet lambs.
- Pasture that has a history of cocci.
- Wet weather and wet poached areas around creep feeders, gateways, water troughs.
- Ewes with inadequate milk supply.

Clinical signs:

- Sudden onset scour/diarrhoea
- Grey pasty blood stained scour
- Lambs straining to pass muck
- Dull, thin, poor coat
- Dehydrated (hanging around water troughs), death.
- Where the challenge is moderate, lambs may not scour but may just appear poor and 'not doing'.

A small number of lambs with the above signs are often the 'tip of the iceberg' and action is required. Once the intestinal damage has occurred, the lamb will suffer a severe growth check.

Diagnosis:

This is often made on history, clinical signs and on post mortem by looking at the

appearance of the damage to the small intestine. Faecal samples with high cocci levels (50000 opg plus) are indicative but not conclusive. There are 2 species of cocci which cause disease, but up to 10 species which contribute to the faecal egg count.

FREE COCCI SPECIES testing

Bayer is offering free testing of muck samples for the disease causing strains of COCCI. Please speak to us at the Practice for more info.

Treatment/Prevention:

- In feed coccidiostats can be added to lamb creep at the start of lambing to prevent the older lambs shedding eggs onto the pasture.
- Treatment of lambs from 4 weeks of age with either **Vecoxan** or **Baycox**.

The timing of this dose is problematic and depends entirely upon your farm situation and how much previous exposure to the disease has occurred. Speak to us first before embarking on treatment.

When do we need to worm lambs?

The worm that lambs usually first encounter is **NEMATODIRUS**. The hatch of eggs on pasture occurs after a 5-7 day period of temperatures above 10°C following a cold snap. In our area we are still classed as low risk with no imminent hatching as yet, and therefore no need to treat yet.

See www.scops.org.uk for more info.

Infection occurs in lambs when the hatch coincides with 6-8 week old lambs that are grazing sufficient grass. More details will follow when we predict the hatching is occurring.