



Sheep Newsletter

As always the weather can have some of its' greatest effects at lambing and during turnout and this year is no exception. The heavy wet downpours have preceded some outbreaks of mastitis. The ewes are coming up to peak lactation with the lambs feeding frequently and the teat canals open. This, combined with wet and muddy under udder conditions have meant that the risk of mastitis has increased.

Mastitis treatment and control plan:

- If there is no grass available, continue to feed the ewes – a good plentiful flow of milk is essential to preventing mastitis.
- Move grazing areas more frequently if possible.
- Check ewes twice a day for signs of mastitis – hungry lambs, hind limb lameness, dull, not coming to feed.
- Caught EARLY it is possible to treat and save the udder for the remainder of the lactation.
- Caught late it will be a save the ewe procedure.

TREATMENT:

- **Strip the udder as much as possible.**
- **Infusing a mastitis tube is NOT recommended and can lead to introduction of more bacteria.**
- **INJECT an anti-inflammatory i.e. FINADYNE and an antibiotic – Amoxicillin, Duphaphen and Streptomycin. The antibiotic is needed everyday for at least 3 days. There are other drugs that can be used off licence but these have a long withdrawal period and are no better than the other drugs if the mastitis is not caught early.**

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 10⁰C 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.