



THE  
**WOOD  
VETERINARY  
GROUP**



## SHEEP NEWSLETTER December 2015

The festive season is nearly upon us again. Time does seem to fly when you're having fun?! Jokes aside it has been a difficult year in terms of financial return from the lambs produced. The price received per kg of lamb produced has not matched the costs of production this year for the majority of farmers.

Importantly, on many farms the true costs of production are unknown. For profit driven enterprises this is a precarious position to be in and this year we would definitely recommend investigating production costs. AHDB have recently launched Stock take lite, which is a free facility that allows you to calculate your costs of production and give you an indication of your costs. See this website for more details.

<http://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns/tools/stocktake-lite/>

### **Barren ewes**

Scanning will be taking place or have been completed on many farms. A scanning barren rate of **3%** or above warrants some investigation. There are many reasons why a barren rate may be higher than usual. Therefore speaking to us at the practice would be a good place to start before deciding to worm treat, mineral drench or otherwise.



### **BARREN EWE CHECK SCHEME – MSD Animal Health**

This will run again this year from 1<sup>st</sup> January to March 2016.

MSD will pay the lab costs to blood test up to 8 barren ewes to check for Toxoplasmosis. For an extra charge they can also check for Selenium Cobalt and Copper. A visit and the short time taken to test will need to be charged. To qualify, your flock should have suffered a barren rate of 2% or above and NOT be vaccinated for Toxoplasmosis.

Each year we find new breakdowns with toxoplasmosis. If you know you have a problem with this you can then plan much more effectively and make significant financial savings by addressing the problem in the flock. Please phone the practice for more information.

### **Ewe nutrition and body condition.**

Ewes are now in mid pregnancy, if lambing in March and they should be maintaining their condition well. Aim for a body condition score of 3-3.5 for ewes now and aim for them to keep this condition. Over fat ewes (score 4 plus) can actually afford to lose up to 9% of their body weight in this period.

Lean ewes need looking after! They are only going to get leaner.

During this mid pregnancy stage, the placenta is developing rapidly. Any actual increase in nutrition or over feeding can affect the effectiveness of the placenta and also contribute to problems at lambing such as prolapse and difficulty lambing. **Gather the ewes and check the condition now to make sure they are on track.**

Once in the final trimester, body condition must not be reduced, as this may lead to metabolic conditions and will not reduce the risks of prolapse. Farmers in the practice **profitable flock schemes** will be able to take advantage of the inclusive metabolic profiling of 12 ewes at around 4 weeks before lambing to check the success of the diet in terms of protein and energy supply and make any alterations.

### **Scabivax supplies**

We have been assured by the suppliers of Scabivax Forte that there are NO issues this year with their supply and we won't be using the 'old style' scabivax again. We appreciate that some of you had significant issues with that product which was annoying and stressful at the busiest time of the year. MSD have apologised for these problems and they won't use the 'old' vaccine again.

### **A review of 2015**

- The weather has been relatively kind to us this year with good lambing weather and good grass growth once it had started.
- Flocks seemed to have an increased number of mastitis cases at around 2-6 weeks post turnout. Some of these cases were acute and resulted in ewe deaths and some responded to treatment when picked up early. The cases tended to coincide with the ewes being in peak lactation with udder capacity at its most and the ewes working hard, combined with periods of heavy rain and downpours causing wet/muddy environmental conditions increasing the challenge of infection when ewes are lying.
- Levels of lameness are reportedly lower across the flocks in the practice. This is directly related to the improved diagnosis of lameness, increased uptake of the use of footvax and the increased awareness of treating lameness early.
- Trace element deficiencies appear to have been an issue this year in terms of what we have found on blood tests. A number of flocks tested low for cobalt and iodine with Selenium levels being ok on the whole. This has given us a baseline for these flocks and we can re test next year. Flocks that have joined the **profitable flock scheme** will be able to test their ewes or lambs as part of their subscription and so determine the need to treat for trace elements.



**Have a fantastic and restful Christmas ready for lambing in 2016!**