



Sheep Newsletter

Many of you will be starting lambing this month or even be well into lambing. Hopefully it's going ok so far. Thank you to those who attended our lamb skills training workshop last month. Hopefully it provided you with some practical ideas and knowledge to help reduce lamb losses and lambing time.

Improvements to this years lambing season – Records!!

If you've scanned you will know how many lambs to expect this season with the aim being to rear as many of them as possible. We are often called to investigate problems when the number of lambs reared or sold is poor.

The first questions to ask are *'where did the majority of the losses occur?'* Very often you have a gut feeling that you lost 'more than usual before turnout' or 'most after weaning' but without actual numbers and hard evidence we could end up investigating down the wrong path at extra expense.

Records therefore are essential –and they can be collected easily – honest! A wipe board at the end of the pens or in the shed with a tally chart of the following will give lots of useful info:

1. Numbers born alive.
2. Numbers born dead.
3. Numbers died.
4. **Reasons** – abortion, watery mouth, scour, laid on, born with placenta over mouth (caped).

This could be a daily, weekly, monthly tally and the info transferred into the diary (vet students love this kind of job!). This small amount of data will give us a huge insight into how the ewes have performed in this first 48 hour period and the potential issues that are occurring. It will also help identify a problem that can be stopped **BEFORE** you reach the end of lambing.

Lamb deaths – go for another 2% reduction this year!

The target for lamb losses from scanning to sale is 10 - 15%. Many flocks are achieving this and many flocks lose a lot more. This is profit and worth working on.

The main reasons for losing lambs in the first 0-48 hour period often relates to the amount of colostrum that they do or don't consume. **COLOSTRUM:** At least 50ml/kg (ideally 100ml/kg) in first 6 hours **THEN** 210ml/kg in remaining 18 hours. So a 4kg twin lamb needs 200ml in first 6 hours then 800 ml in remaining 18 hours to complete the 24 hour period after birth.

The following lambs are unlikely to get enough colostrum:

- Big singles that needed lambing.
- Lambs that were 'hung' and have a swollen tongue.
- Lambs that have been mis-mothered when you find them.
- Triplet lambs.
- Lambs from a ewe that is sick/twin lambs/hypocalcaemia/difficult lambing.
- Lambs from a ewe with big teats/no milk/one quartered.
- Lambs with a 'rye neck'.

So concentrate your efforts on these and encourage your students to work with this. Milking colostrum off the ewe is by far the cheapest and most effective colostrum to give – in every case attempt to give the lamb some of the ewe (or another ewes) colostrum in the first instance.

If the ewe has no colostrum or she dies, an artificial colostrum **alternative** is required. If she has colostrum but you feel she doesn't have enough i.e. in the case of strong triples, then a colostrum **supplement** can be given.

Artificial colostrum – we regularly get asked about the best products to use. When looking at the details on the packet, very often they are vague and offer little information. Think about the following when buying artificial colostrum;

- You get what you pay for. The best and **most effective** products are *usually* the **most expensive**.
- A colostrum **ALTERNATIVE** has a higher protein level (–aim 76% protein) than a colostrum **supplement**.
- Products containing whey protein and bovine/ewe colostrum derivatives are superior to egg protein additives.
- **Bovine or goat colostrum can be used as an alternative**. And it is better than a powdered colostrum. Don't use the colostrum from just one cow. Use a pooled mixture from 2-3 cows to dilute any possible effects of rare antibodies that can react with the lambs and prove fatal. Feed 20%-40% more colostrum than ewes colostrum, i.e. 100ml/kg in first 6 hours and 350ml/kg in next 18 hours.

Basic Lambing Skills Course – at Wood Vet Group. Tues 16th Feb 3.15pm-5.30pm.

Please phone the practice to register.

- Suitable for small holders, students and novice lambing shepherds.
 - Practical lambing solutions and first aid.
- Cost - £20 plus vat – free to scheme members

Medicines note

Scabivax Forte

This is back in stock with no apparent supply issues and so all orders will be scabivax forte and NOT the old type of vaccine that was used last year.