



THE  
WOOD  
VETERINARY  
GROUP



Many of you will be starting lambing this month or may 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.

If you missed the meeting, here are some of the areas we covered:

### Improvements to this year's lambing season – Keep 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 question to ask in these cases is **'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. This is where your record keeping comes in!

**Records** 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 why– abortion, watery mouth, scour, laid on, born with placenta over mouth (caped).

This could be recorded daily, weekly or monthly 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.

**Tip – for easy counting of dead lambs - only put five dead lambs per bag, then at least you can count the bags and multiply by 5!**

#### 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:**

#### Top Tips on Colostrum

- Feed **50ml of colostrum per kg** of lamb bodyweight **in the first 6 hours** of life and **210ml in the first 24 hours**. (Weigh some of your new born lambs to find out exactly how much colostrum they need - the range is often large!)
- Colostrum is **essential** to provide immunity to the lambs and protect them from getting infections before they develop their own immunity.

#### How can we manage colostrum intake when the ewe can't provide enough?

- The lamb's own mother's colostrum contains **50g of antibodies per litre**.
- Each ewe produces about **2 litres** of colostrum in the **18 hours** after she lambs. If a ewe has a single lamb, then **harvesting her spare colostrum** will give you a useful supply for other lambs.
- Store colostrum in small volumes (100ml is best as it freezes and defrosts evenly without damaging the antibodies - flat sandwich bags work very well and you can fit lots in the freezer!) You can then defrost multiple 100ml lots for one lamb in less time than defrosting a larger container.

### Important colostrum harvesting points

- Harvest within 8 hours of lambing
- Collect in **immaculately** clean containers
- It will last 1 week in the fridge
- Frozen colostrum will last for a year
- Defrost **SLOWLY** in warm water (less than 50°C and **NOT** in the microwave)

This then provides you with a store of colostrum with the right immunity for your farm and can be quickly accessed.

### No spare ewe colostrum on farm?

- Cows colostrum can be a reasonable alternative, ideally from the same farm & screened for Johne's.
- Cows colostrum is still better than powdered colostrum.
- Cows colostrum **must be pooled from 2-3 cows**, never just from one cow! (*this will dilute any possible effects of rare antibodies that can react with the lambs and prove fatal*)

You'll need to feed 20%-40% more colostrum i.e. 100ml/kg in first 6 hours and 350ml/kg in next 18 hours. Cow's colostrum doesn't contain the same energy and antibody quantities as ewe's!

### LAST RESORT

Colostrum supplements are available but these are most definitely **NOT** to be used as a replacement. Across the market **NONE** of them contain more than 3g per litre (*trial work M. Corke Uni. Of Cambridge*) (**remember ewe colostrum contains 50g per litre!**) They also contain higher fat levels vs ewe colostrum to try combat hypothermia.

- Supplements can be useful when there are **NO** other options e.g. harvesting ewe colostrum / cow colostrum
- Always aim to buy ovine or bovine antibody products rather than egg antibody ones
- Avoid feeding these products to lambs that have already had ewe colostrum – it dilutes the good ewe antibody concentration and actually makes things worse!

There will always be ewes with insufficient colostrum or too many lambs - look ahead and plan how you will manage this - speak to us about your ideas for clarification.

### LAMBS TO WATCH OUT FOR - unlikely to receive enough colostrum:

- Big singles or lambs that needed help lambing
- 'Hung' lambs with swollen tongues
- Lambs that have been mixed up/mis mothered.
- Triplet lambs
- Lambs from a ewe that is/was sick from 'twin lambs disease'/difficult lambing etc.
- Lambs from ewes with big teats or no milk/one quartered.
- Lambs with 'rye' or twisted neck.



Concentrate your efforts on **THESE** lambs - encourage students to use this list! 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.

### MEDICINES NOTE

#### Scabivax Forte

This is back in stock with no apparent supply issues! Please note; this **cannot** be given to ewes within less than 7 weeks of lambing.

Lambs can be vaccinated from birth.

*Any queries, give us a ring at the practice*

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

**Basic Lambing Skills Course - at Quedgeley  
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*