



Trying to remain optimistic when the lamb price is so poor is challenging. It's important during times like this to focus the mind as to where your system can be made more efficient and reduce wastage. Using all of the information that is available and being prepared to discuss and implement changes to your sheep farming system may prove extremely profitable when the price improves in future years.

Many will agree that you can't beat a sit down and a cider – so use this time for some 'professional development' and read this newsletter, information from EBLEX (soon to be AHDB) and NSA/Moredun information to learn about new developments and things to try. Just don't have too much cider as all your study will be 'undone'!

Some good news is that this weather has hopefully meant that some good hay and silage has been made. Make plans to sample this before winter. Feeding excellent quality forage can significantly reduce the amount of concentrate required and hence provide an important saving.

Brown stomach worm

Teladorsagia circumcincta or 'brown stomach worm' is seen most commonly around the summer months. It lives within the abomasum and causes damage to the stomach lining. Investigations and faecal egg counts in the practice are suggesting that worm burdens are increasing in both unweaned and weaned lambs.

Therefore be aware of the following:

- 'Dirty' faecal stained lambs
- Open fleeced lambs
- **Reduction in growth rates**
 - Less than **175 grams per day** for **grass fed** lambs
 - Less than **250 grams per day** for **creep fed** lambs.
- Lambs 'not doing'

Try not to wait until you suspect clinical signs of worms. Once the lambs appear to look poor, the

damage from parasites has occurred and other lambs that appear ok maybe in the early stages of a burden. You can be more accurate in deciding when to worm by taking a faecal egg count from the group AND measure the daily live weight gain of the lambs. This will **REDUCE** the amount of lost revenue from treating lambs when they start to look 'wormy'.

If you have a flock health plan, you will have a parasite control plan in place. However this is changeable further still depending on grazing management and weather.

You'll notice that when you submit a muck sample for egg counting, there will be a submission form for you to fill in. The forms should be available at reception and on our website. By gathering a more accurate history we can give you further specific advice about worming.

Teaser Rams

If you use teaser rams, now is the time to think about ram vasectomies. This small operation can be done at the practice or on farm, but it needs doing 4-6 weeks before you want to use them. We often use a wheelbarrow to sit the ram in as it is one of the easiest ways to hold a sedated ram so keep one handy. After the first ram, all subsequent rams on the same day are at a discounted rate.

The main benefit of a teaser ram is to tighten up the lambing period. They can advance the breeding season by 1 or 2 weeks, but to advance any further, hormone treatments to the ewes would be required.

When selecting a ram to use as a teaser he must be sound on his feet, in good health and young with plenty of libido in him (yes the oldies may have this, but you want him to last!!).

The most important thing to remember about using a teaser is that the ewes must have no sight or smell of either a ram or vasectomised ram for 4-6 weeks before the start of the breeding season. Once the ewes smell him and start cycling, their cycle can't be manipulated any further.



Breeding rams

The fertile rams also need looking after now in anticipation of the breeding season. It is essential that if they are lame, they need treating.

Lame or sick rams will have lowered fertility due to sperm production being affected by a spike in body temperature. The sperm that is used during mating has been produced 6-7 weeks previously and therefore may be damaged if the ram was unsound at this time.

Ensure they have some good grazing and are putting on condition. If you try to improve condition quickly with concentrate feed, some of the fat that is deposited will be around the scrotal region. This will increase testicular insulation and therefore temperature and reduce or affect sperm production leading to a reduction in fertility. If you give rams plenty of time to gain condition on pasture it will avoid this.

Flock check – Aborted/barren ewes

The MSD drug company is running the subsidised blood testing scheme again this year. The blood testing is free to test 6-8 aborted or barren ewes that HAVE NOT been vaccinated with either Enzovax or Toxovax. The costs to you are the visit charge and time taken to sample, but the actual lab charges are free.

This is an excellent way of determining if either enzootic abortion or toxoplasmosis has been a cause of abortion or barren ewes within your flock at lambing. The scheme runs **until the end of July** so book in a visit well in advance if you want to take advantage.

Quarantine – ensure you have enough time!

When thinking about buying new stock, whether it is replacement ewe lambs, yearlings or a new tup, PLEASE make sure you can quarantine them for at least 3 weeks before mixing with your home stock.

We still diagnose diseases on farm that have been bought in and could have so easily been contained if the sheep were kept in isolation. The most frustrating and obvious diseases are:

- **Foot rot**
- **CODD**
- **Sheep scab**
- **Wormer resistant worms.**

Ensure you have enough time to quarantine stock. Next month we'll look at how to prevent these diseases.

On Farm Practical Thurs 30th July 4.30pm

- To flush or not to flush?
- The ram exam – how to do it?
- Launch of the Profitable flock scheme

Invite and details to follow

Small Flock Keepers Workshop Thurs 6th Aug 5.45pm

- The risks of buying new stock.
- Diseases – how to keep them out!
- Preparing for mating.
- Launch of 'The Healthy Flock Scheme'

Invite and details to follow