



It's forage making time – hopefully, although prolonged periods of sun seem far away. Plan now to analyse the forage that you make this year. All aspects of the business must be considered if we are to improve the robustness of the flock and bottom line. Feed costs are always pivotal in their effects on the profit margin per ewe.

By accurately analysing the forage, i.e. from different fields, multiple bales etc, you will have an idea of the quality and the amount of additional feed needed. Huge savings can be made in this area in terms of the amounts and constituents of compound feed required. If forage quality is poor, then additional feed can be calculated to prevent LOSSES in terms of ewe diseases, increased mastitis and improving colostrum quality and milk production.

Parasite control

Do the lambs really need worming? Weighing lambs at regular intervals and calculating daily live weight gains can easily determine lamb performance and help you TARGET treatments. This often results in only 40-60% of the group requiring a treatment, leaving near fat lambs out of withdrawal and reducing the selection pressure for resistance. **You don't need electronic scales for this.**

Making use of aftermaths will also reduce the need to treat. Do NOT treat and then move immediately onto clean ground. Either move and treat (only if needed) after a week OR treat and leave on dirty pasture for a week before moving.

Aim – to ensure a mixed population of worms on the new ground, not just a population of worms that have survived a wormer treatment

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.

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. This is still not the norm on many farms and breakdowns in health is common. **THIS CAN BE A HUGE COST!**

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**

The 'iceberg diseases' such as Johnes, CLA, MV and OPA will creep up in a flock over time. In general they will cause weight loss and ill thrift.

Ensure you have enough time to quarantine stock AND ask questions from the seller:

Is CODD present on the originating farm?

Does the flock monitor for Maedi Visna, CLA, Johnes or OPA?

Does the originating farm have a history of fluke?

The answers to these questions don't mean that you won't buy the stock but they do mean that you are aware of the potential risks and the best courses of action to take when buying the stock. Show them this list and tick off the answers.

Vaccination history – this is important **BUT** it is better that all vaccines are administered by

yourself to **ENSURE** that they have been given properly, at the correct time and stored properly. What you use will have been discussed as part of your flock health plan. Speak to us if unsure. In a recent survey only 1/3 of farms using vaccines had administered them correctly, to the correct stock at the correct time – **is this you?**

Check the boys now!

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 **gradually**. 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.

REMINDER

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.

Premium Flock scheme members will have these blood samples taken at the weaning visit.

Late Summer Flock Workshop – featuring discussions on the following topics.

- Don't waste a cull ewe: What influences your decision?
- What's your worm count? – Bring a sample to test – for free.
- Preparation plan for tupping – plus Q & A session on health topics.

**At Wood Vet Group – Quedgeley
Monday 8th August 11 – 2.30pm.**

Lunch provided. Cost £20 (inc free muck FEC sample) – free to Flock Health scheme members.

Book your place on largeanimal@woodvet.co.uk 01452 543 999