



### How robust is your sheep farming system?

We have a lot to contend with in the sheep farming year. The weather, input costs and lamb price are regular factors that influence the profitability of your sheep business. An added extra this year and potentially for years to come will be the outcome of the remain or leave EU referendum.

One of the only things we can try to control and influence is the robustness of the flock. Think about the following points and decide where the risks to your flock and ultimately profit margin of you business lie.

- **Wormer use** – the worms that I use on my lambs work? Is it a guess or have you tested them? A simple drench test will find any failures in your wormer **BEFORE** you see clinical losses. All farms should test the wormer that they regularly use by the end of this season – and record the answer. If you don't know, then your flock is not robust/protected from the effects of ineffective wormers and you will be losing money.
- **Abortion losses** – do you vaccinate for Enzootic abortion and/or toxoplasmosis? They are still **THE MOST** common causes of abortion occurring in flocks each year and cause you to lose money from obvious lamb losses and the birth of weak/poor lambs. Unless you are a completely closed flock the risks to your flock from abortion are there. At least knowing what is going on will help with management. The Flock Check scheme runs until the 31<sup>st</sup> July where the lab fees are free to test 8 ewes that aborted/were barren at the end of lambing – speak to us for more details.
- **Quarantine for new stock** – Do you isolate ALL (ewes, rams, ewe lambs, store lambs) new stock brought onto the holding for at least 3 weeks? **If not WHY NOT?** There are no excuses, plan so that you can quarantine them and treat them with the appropriate drugs. Buying in stock is THE best way of bringing in disease to your flock. You may not see any immediate problems, but failing to have a plan in place will **COST** you money and often leaves a legacy of problems.

Your home flock health status is only as good as the worst source from which you bought in stock. So ask questions to the seller, inspect all feet, look for lumps around the head, hair loss areas, **TREAT** for scab, resistant worms and fluke. Speak to us or consult your flock health plan.

- **Lameness** – do you know what the actual lameness levels of the flock are at any one time? Evidence for the production losses from a case of lameness is a ewe is overwhelming but is regularly ignored.

When you see a lame ewe, what is your plan? Do you **a.** Decide to treat when you next gather the sheep? **b.** Decide to treat when you have a few more go lame, or gather next week? Or **c. Treat that day on your shepherding round, or at the next available time i.e. the following day?**



You know we'd like you all to answer C and we appreciate that time pressures, weather conditions etc will affect the speed at which you treat. However it is so important that treatment is asap to prevent spread of footrot/codd, improve milk production/growth rates of the lambs, help the ewe maintain body condition and be pain free. Therefore it should be a priority.

**Nematodirus alert** – Almost all areas of the UK are now red on the [www.scops.org.uk](http://www.scops.org.uk) map, therefore suggesting that hatching is occurring. Therefore if you haven't done so, a treatment with albendazole/ricobendazole will now be required in lambs that are 4 weeks old and above.

**Just to confuse things** – Strongyle populations will also be building up on permanent pastures and so it may be necessary to now do a **faecal egg count** on the lambs before worming and in conjunction with assessing daily liveweight gains to determine whether a strongyle treatment is needed.

### **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.

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.



### **BLUE TONGUE VIRUS**

- There is now a high risk chance that the blue tongue virus serotype 8 will reach the UK by late summer.
- Two companies have committed to making a vaccine against this strain and it is **LIKELY** to be available by mid July.
- **HOWEVER** – it won't be an unlimited supply and so vets across the country are now seeking an idea of likely demand. More details about the disease and vaccine will follow in the next newsletter.
- Sheep can be vaccinated from 6 weeks of age and will require 2 doses 3 weeks apart.

**Fly strike.** Cases have been recorded on farms across the practice in the last few weeks. Therefore when using a product from now onwards it needs to be a product that will TREAT and PREVENT as eggs are already being laid.

#### **Cases of strike - Treatment:**

- Clip away the wool UNTIL dry normal coloured skin/fleece is present (maggots often extend further than you think). Or shear out completely.
- Scrape away the maggots and clean the area.
- Apply antibiotic spray (Engemycin).
- **If the ewe/lamb has a large area affected and is obviously sick – inject anti inflammatory (e.g. Flunixin/finadyne) and an antibiotic (e.g. amoxicillin/amoxypen).**
- Application of the following chemicals will kill any fly eggs elsewhere on the body that you can't see:
  1. Coopers Spot On (Deltamethrin).
  2. Crovect (Cypermethrin –treats and prevents).
  3. Organophosphate dip/shower – treats and prevents.

Lowland and upland sheep must be checked daily during the summer. Severely affected sheep with fly strike are a huge welfare issue if treatment is delayed or missed.

Unfortunately new or inexperienced sheep keepers are unaware of the signs or seriousness of this condition. If you see a neighbouring sheep with suspected strike, please try to ensure the owner, if new to sheep has taken appropriate action.

#### **Sheep Veterinary Society Spring Conference – Skipton.**

This Spring conference provided huge amounts of interesting new science and case studies/reports aimed at the many sheep vets that attended. The increase in attendance of sheep interested vets was very welcome and it so important for the sheep industry. Technological advances in the science of sheep farming are changing rapidly and we need to be able to transfer this knowledge and use it appropriately to improve sheep health and your enterprise profitability. Phil Stocker from the NSA always attends the SVS conferences and recognises just how important this link is for the future of sheep farming.

#### **Testing sheep saliva for worm burdens!!**

Promising work from The University of Glasgow has developed a test that looks at salivary levels of IgA immunoglobins. Levels of IgA in saliva are related to the length of worms present in the sheep. REDUCED worm length in the sheep is directly related daily live weight gains – as measured on a flock of 2600 lleyn lambs. Therefore the implications are that by testing individual salivary samples of lambs we can determine which lambs are likely to need a worming treatment based upon the length of worm population present.

The amount of eggs produced by a worm is related to its body length (shorter length, less eggs). Individual lambs have genetic differences in the response of their immune response to worms, with some lambs own immunity able to reduce the worm body length and hence express a lower amount of IgA in their saliva. These lambs with low IgA have also been found to have higher growth rates. Therefore they are resilient to the effects of worms and less likely to need worming treatments.

This has positive implications for reducing the number of treatments and selective breeding for wormer resistance!!

Confused? – watch this space for further updates and in the meantime go and have a cider.