



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.

This year's parasite control plan

Unfortunately we are now seeing more cases of resistance to Moxidectin (Cydectin). This is bad news as this is our only persistent acting anthelmintic. It's persistence of action is why many farms need to use it. This is because 'safe' or 'clean' grazing is limited on many farms.

The parasite control plan for your farm is completely unique and those of you that have active flock health plans will have discussed this in some detail. However it needs reassessing each year as the risks and diseases change.

Consider the following when planning your worm control:

Ewes at turnout.

- Do you have 'Safe' 'Clean' grazing available? I.e. **NOT grazed AT ALL by sheep last year or RESEEDED PASTURE.**
- If ewes and lambs can be turned out onto **safe pasture**, then a **short acting** wormer can be used at turnout i.e. ivermectin (Noromectin etc), monepantel (Zolvix) or levamisole (Levacur). ***N.b not a white drench.***
- If this is not possible and the pasture is not safe, i.e. grazed last year by sheep, then a **persistent** (Moxidectin) wormer is required.
- **NOT ALL EWES NEED WORMING**
- Don't worm ewes in good body condition.
- Don't worm ewes with single lambs
- A good protein intake from either concentrate or good forage will reduce the egg output from the ewes and hence the need to worm.

We know that the majority of sheep farmers have limited access to safe grazing and so have to use a persistent wormer. Therefore to ensure that we can continue to use it we must follow some rules



based upon SCOPS principles (see www.scops.org.uk).

- Target young ewes, ewes in poor condition and twins/triplet bearing ewes.
- Save any 'safe' pasture for triples and leaner twins.
- Treat for the heaviest ewe in the flock.
- Check your worming gun is accurate.
- Worm at turnout to counter the effects of the periparturient 'spring' rise in egg output from the ewes.

There is ongoing research to accurately predict when this occurs as it is known to be related to peak lactation AND protein intake – it maybe that worming the ewes is more effective at 2-4 weeks post lambing.

However, we know how difficult it is to handle ewes and lambs at this time and so treating at turnout is the most realistic time, unless further research becomes available. In the next newsletter we'll discuss a parasite plan for lambs.

We're aiming to ensure that some worms are NOT exposed to a wormer and hence keep the population of worms on the pasture and in the ewes a mixture of resistant and susceptible worms.

This years lambing so far....

Unfortunately so far this year we have seen an increased number of abortions. Usually these are seen at the start of lambing, but they can go on to occur throughout the lambing period. We often accept too many 'slips' and losses and put them down to a 'normal' occurrence at the start of lambing. When infectious causes are the problem, they will increase in number year on year and can cause devastating losses in subsequent lambings.

We suggest attempting to investigate the problem. Along with abortions a classic feature is also an increased amount of weak lambs, still born lambs and early lamb deaths.

- **ASSUME all abortions are due to an infectious nature and ISOLATE the ewe and remove aborted material.**
- **Phone for advice if you experience more than 3-4 abortions in the same week.**

BLUE TONGUE VIRUS – this is thought to be a threat to our UK flock this year. However we currently have no definite control plan or information regarding vaccination. This is an ongoing developing situation and we will update you frequently.