THE WOOD VETERINARY GROUP

SHEEP NEWSLETTER October 2015

October is here with some welcome dry weather, to start with at least! In this newsletter we would like to go over some results from a recent post mortem study – The Fallen Stock Project. This was conducted by sheep vets in the North of the country and funded by AHDB (Eblex). The results of this are really interesting reflect many of the cases that we see each year here in our practice.

In total 846 carcases from lambs and ewes were post mortemed at a fallen stock centre from 497 farms.

The main findings are as follows:

- **Lamb abortions** – Toxoplasmosis, Border disease virus and Enzootic Abortion were the most commonly diagnosed causes of abortion.
- **Lamb deaths** – Worms (Parasitic Gastroenteritis, Coccidiosis, Pulpy Kidney (Clostridia) and Pasturella (Septicaemia and Pneumonia) were the most commonly diagnosed causes of death. In both groups the numbers of undiagnosed cause were towards the top of each list.
- The incidence of pasturella peaked in lambs in **October** and **November**...i.e. NOW.

So what do these results tell us?

The main causes of death and abortion in lambs are **preventable** by means of farm specific advice via your **veterinary health plan** and relatively **inexpensive vaccines** (compared to a dead lamb). These results are unsurprising to most of us and this is disappointing knowing that they are preventable.

In the next newsletter we will talk about the ewe deaths in this study and also Border Disease. This is a virus that is appearing more often during on farm investigations and so we will look at this more detail.

Plan for autumn 2015!

Based upon these results we should review our plans going into autumn for store/fattening lambs and ewe lambs.

Ovivac P (Store lambs/rams) or **Heptavac P** (rams, breeding ewes and ewe lambs). Make sure all stock has had TWO injections 4 weeks apart. ***Myth buster ' just one injection is enough' – no it is not, if it was they wouldn't still succumb to it and die (the immune system needs a recognition and then memory dose).***

Faecal Egg Count to determine the need to worm or worm based upon live weight gains/condition. ***Myth buster 'using a white drench that does fluke as well will work'. No it won't – 90% of farms in the UK have white wormer resistance and (Albendazole) white drench only kills ADULT fluke. Immature fluke are the problem now and need Triclabendazole treatment.***

Fluke treat ewes and lambs from now into October, especially those on lower lying or wet pasture. Use a flukicide – Triclabendazole (Fasinex, Tribex). **Myth buster 'using closantel now will help prevent resistance'.** ***No it won't, it will cause potentially more deaths because this drugs doesn't kill immature flukes. The risk now is from immature fluke moving through the liver causing severe damage.*** **N.b meat withdrawal for Triclabendazole is 56 days.**

How to achieve a successful lambing % 2016

Many people will now have their tups in with the ewes, or they will be preparing them to go in for tupping. Using a raddle marker or paint on a ram will enable you to tell if the ewes are returning at the next cycle, i.e. fertilisation failed. This is an essential part of management as it will affect feeding, vaccination timing and labour at lambing time. If you have noticed that ewes have returned and been re raddle marked then the ram/rams used must be questioned. We can test the semen of a suspect ram to determine whether he has a problem and potentially prevent the same problem happening next time –contact the surgery for more info if needed.

What to expect:

- **98% of the flock should be pregnant after 2 cycles (34 days).**

Implantation of the fertilised embryo within the uterus occurs at around day 19 after mating. Failure to implant will result in the loss of the embryo, i.e. a barren ewe or reduced litter size if just one embryo is lost. This can be caused by:

- Stress from handling/gathering in the immediate post mating period (i.e. 30-40 days after tupping).
- Prolonged stress e.g. from wet weather, transport.
- Inflammatory disease – sheep scab, liver fluke, lameness.
- Severe under nutrition.
- Selenium or Iodine deficiency.
- Toxoplasmosis or Border disease.

The effects of these issues will be seen as a high barren rate at scanning or lambing and definitely need investigation to prevent reductions in flock productivity and profitability.