



Spring's nearly here, although the weather seems to be confused! For some of you the end of lambing is nearly in sight but for others just starting, we hope you have a successful first few weeks. We had our 2<sup>nd</sup> Lambing meeting of the year for **novice sheep keepers** in which we discussed how best to prevent lambing losses. Here are some of the key points covered:

### WHEN TO INTERVENE?

Preventing losses starts with good observation and knowing when to assist the ewe:

**GESTATION= 143-147 days**

The onset of labour is subtle and can last up to **6HRS**. The water bag can be visible for **1HR** before breaking, at which point the lambs should be engaged in the pelvic canal for delivery. Delivery should take **10MINS – 1HR** per lamb. Within **3HRS** of lambing, the ewe should expel the foetal membranes/cleansing

**If at any point the ewe is straining and vocalising for MORE THAN 2 HOURS with no progress this should prompt gentle investigation – with a GLOVED hand and plenty of LUBRICATION.**

- **What can you feel?** e.g. non-progressive cervix dilation, feet, head, tail?
- **Make a judgement!** recheck again in a few hours if normal findings or get us involved!

### LAMB FIRST AID

Once the lambs are delivered, we now have to keep them alive!

- **JOB 1** – Clear the airways! Rather than swinging lambs to clear mucus (this puts extra pressure on their diaphragm and delays breathing) stimulate sneezing by pinching hard between the nostrils, or gently poking straw up the nose. Lambs should be placed in a recovery position with all 4 legs tucked underneath (See Picture). Rub both sides of the lamb's



chest intermittently to clear mucus effectively.

- **JOB 2** – Dip Navels! Aim to dip navels **ASAP** with **10% STRONG IDODINE** or within 15mins of birth.
- **JOB 3** – Colostrum! Lambs from difficult deliveries, yellow meconium stained fleece or not standing **WITHIN 30MINS** need assisted feeding with colostrum. Remember mum's colostrum is best!
- **JOB 4** – Recheck! Walking round pens to check for hollow/empty lambs is crucial. Regular checks also allows for early hypothermia detection – cold, floppy lambs. **Use your thermometers!**

**HYPOTHERMIA = Temperature of under 39°C**

<b>UNDER 6 HOURS OLD</b>	
<b>37°C – 39°C</b>	Suckle reflex present Tube colostrum every 2-4hours
<b>Less than 37°C</b>	Suckle reflex present Warm lamb until responsive Tube 50-100ml colostrum
<b>OVER 6 HOURS OLD</b>	
<b>Less than 37°C</b>	<b>Suckle reflex present</b> Warm lamb until responsive Tube 50-100ml colostrum
<b>Less than 37°C</b>	<b>NO suckle reflex- lamb is dying!</b> Intraperitoneal glucose – 30ml of 20% glucose ( <b>MUST give glucose before warming to prevent coma</b> ) Warm lamb until responsive Tube once suckle reflex returned!

**Ask us at the practice for lamb feeding tubes and intraperitoneal glucose kits!**

### LAMBING AND ANTIBIOTICS – RESPONSIBLE USE?

As always, we try to use antibiotics in such a way that prevents resistance developing in our flocks. Two areas that we frequently discuss antibiotic use during lambing time are **WATERY MOUTH** and **JOINT ILL**: Here are some tips!

**WATERY MOUTH** - Watery mouth is an E.coli infection that makes lambs weak, unwilling to feed, constipated and bloated, with cold, wet mouths.

E.coli is an environmental pathogen – it is always present, especially in indoor, busy lambing pens! Lambs become infected orally from nibbling dirty straw, teats and fleece – the E.coli build up and die releasing toxins.

Early recognition is key to treating successfully:

- Inject 0.5 ml of Amoxypen LA into muscle, 0.5ml Findayne into muscle & Spectam (Spectinomycin) orally
- Bottle or tube with 50ml warm rehydration fluid (Rehydion gel or other electrolyte solution)
- Place under heat
- Repeat fluid 4 hours later
- Tube or bottle with milk 4 hours later (8 hours from first treatment)– small amount of milk – 50 ml



The lamb's mouth should be dry and be on its feet in 12 hours – do not leave off milk for more than 12 hrs

WHERE POSSIBLE KEEP WITH THE EWE

**Resistance: Approximately 30% of E.coli in watery mouth submitted for post mortem are already resistant to Spectinomycin and so we need to stop Spectam resistance. How can you do this at farm level?**

Blanket treatments should not be used especially in the first week or two of lambing. Where cases are arising then use Spectam in triplets and then doubles.

Reduce likely risk of cases by ensuring good colostrum intake in new born lambs and keeping lambing yards and individual pens as clean as possible.

#### JOINT ILL

Joint ill is an issue year on year. Lambs become infected orally or via their navel. Lambs look sick, may be lame and remain lying down for long periods of time – in the very early stages, hot swollen joints may not be immediately obvious. It is important to feel and compare joints on any suspicious cases. Like watery mouth, environmental pressure is the main cause so hygiene is key. Ensure lambing pens are cleaned out, lime spread and freshly bedded up between ewes. Navels should be sprayed at birth with **10% STRONG IODINE**. If the navel is not crisp and dry, repeat iodine again as often as required. Colostrum intake is key for this condition too – poor intake will only make lambs more susceptible to environmental infections ([remember from last month, we are aiming for 50ml/kg within 6 hours & 210ml/kg within 24hrs](#)).



#### Treatment:

DAILY injectable antibiotic treatment –e.g. PENICILLIN / AMOXYPEN/ PEN&STREP with anti-inflammatory drug such as METACAM/FINADYNE (3 days) is needed.

**Treat for at least 7 DAYS with antibiotics** – treat past the point of visible improvement to avoid relapses.

**Early treatment results in good responses – joint damage can be fast and permanent if not caught early!**

#### MSD BARREN EWE CHECK



For those of you who scanned, or know your barren rate – MSD's Barren Ewe Check is running again. A barren rate of more than 2% makes you eligible. MSD will subsidise **up to 8 BLOOD** samples from barren ewes **not previously vaccinated** with Toxovax to check for Toxoplasma infections.

**AVAILABLE UNTIL MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup>**

**Call us for more details**

#### Farewell from Phillipa

Sadly I'm afraid I have to bid you all farewell as I leave the practice at the end of March to concentrate on raising my two boys Jack and William and some part time veterinary work. It has been an absolute pleasure working with you all. I have learnt so much from you and your sheep systems and I hope the feeling is mutual. As a proactive and receptive group of producers it has been fantastic to work together and I am always proud at vet/farmer meetings to recognise WVG clients as they stand out as the knowledgeable ones! Woods will continue to support you in your enterprises and proactive health planning. All the very best for your future farming. Phillipa

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