



We hope these last few weeks have been productive allowing you to harvest good forages for the winter ahead. This month we turn our attention to the rams and start planning ahead for the new breeding season.

Ram Management

Now is the time to check tups in preparation for the upcoming breeding season.

Sperm production and maturation takes **6-8 weeks**, so it is important to make sure that before mating that rams are healthy – Stress, painful conditions or any illness can cause a spike in temperature which will have a damaging impact on sperm production and therefore fertility. It can take 2 months following a fever before normal semen production is resumed. For chronic conditions, this period may be even longer.

Any Illnesses / Lameness need treating NOW!



Rams will typically **lose half** a body condition score per week during the mating season, so it is essential that they join the ewes at BCS **3.5-4**. Bear in mind, if we try to improve condition quickly by pushing concentrate feed, we risk

New Stock

If you are looking to bring in any new rams, you need to consider acquiring them as soon as possible. New rams need to arrive at least 8 weeks before the start of the breeding season. This will give them time to adapt to their new environment and feed, and will give you the opportunity to quarantine and assess any unexpected breeding soundness issues!

ALL new stock – EWES and RAMS must be quarantined for a minimum of 3 weeks

Do you have a designated quarantine area? Do you routinely quarantine? **If not, why not?**

Health breakdowns due to new stock cause economic loss each year and are frustrating if you end up treating the entire flock instead of a few.

having over fat rams. Fat rams (over BCS 4) will have reduced libidos. This is obviously damaging to service rates but also, excessive fat can be deposited around the scrotum – this causes testicular insulation and unsuitably high testicular temperatures; which will have disastrous effects on sperm production.

Body condition score rams now to allow them to gain condition gradually on good quality grazing

Breeding Soundness

It is a good idea to have new rams, and even the proven older boys, checked for breeding soundness well in advance of the breeding season. This not only allows you to ensure your stock are in good condition to secure good performance this year, but is a particularly good idea if poor reproductive performance was noted last season.

Completing this exam **6-8 weeks** before the intended start of the mating season will allow time for replacements to be sourced.

Speak to us at the practice for more information and to book a breeding soundness examination.

Don't be shy to ask questions about stock health and history – they will be joining your flock, the more information you have, the more problems you will avoid buying in.

Checks for all new & quarantined stock:

- ✓ Examine **Teeth, Testicles** and **Udders**
- ✓ Check for scald and footrot – **pasty material between toes? foul smell? underrunning of horn?**
- ✓ Check for sheep scab – **wool loss? itchy sheep?**
- ✓ Check for CODD – **history on originating farm? Red lesions at coronary band?**
- ✓ Ask about fluke – **history on originating farm?**
- ✓ Ask about flock monitoring schemes – **MV, CLA, Johne's?**

Parasites: Always worm and consider fluke treatment for newly introduced stock. **Talk to us about appropriate worming/fluke products to use in quarantined stock for your farm**

Vaccination: Knowing the vaccine history of the new stock is always important – however,

vaccines are best **completed by you** on arrival to ensure that animals are correctly protected at the right time of year. It is all too easy to vaccinate incorrectly providing little or no flock protection.

Speak to us about vaccination programmes

Teaser Rams

The onset of the breeding season is influenced by the re-introduction and smell of sexually mature rams. Ewes must be **kept away from rams for a minimum of 4-6 weeks**. On reintroduction most ewes will have a silent oestrus within days, normal behavioural oestrus activity will then happen in **two peaks** between **18 – 26 days** after ram introduction.

This is where the use of a vasectomised or teaser ram comes in – by introducing sexually mature but non-functional rams, we can hope to advance our oestrus period by up to **two weeks** and also **tighten up** the lambing period.

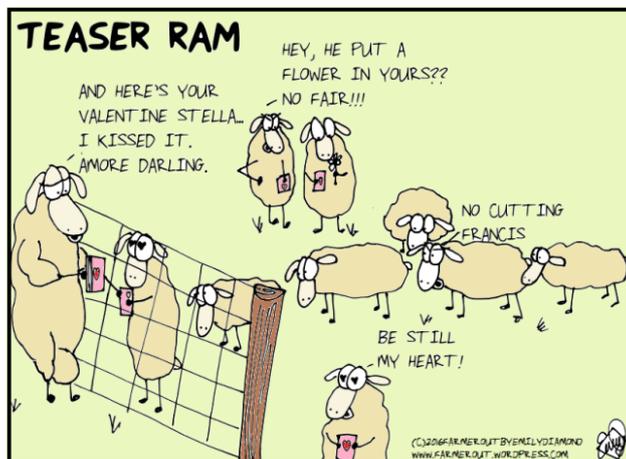
It is important to select healthy, fit rams to be teasers with plenty of libido– while it may seem like a good use of older boys or a ram deemed unsound for breeding; these animals are inappropriate to be used for this purpose – **we need the boys to last!** Consider a different breed to ensure there are no mix ups

Vasectomy Procedure

If you routinely use teaser rams or are thinking about trialling some this year – **now** is the time to consider getting the boys booked in.

The rams need to be vasectomised **4-6 weeks** before you want to use them to allow for healing.

After the first ram, all subsequent rams on the same day are at a discounted rate. Speak to us to book.



Rules of using a teaser ram:

- **ALL** rams including teasers **MUST** be out of **sight, sound and smell** of the ewes for 4-6 weeks before the start of the breeding season. e.g. from July/early August.
- Leave the teaser in for **min 48 hours** but **NO LONGER than 14 DAYS**.
- For the full 'ram effect' 1 teaser to 50 ewes.
- Swap the teaser ram for the fertile ram on the **same day**.
- 1 fertile, experienced ram to 25-30 ewes
- Inexperienced ram lambs will need fewer ewes each (ram lambs not to be put with ewe lambs)
- Expect 2 peaks of mating activity at **18 and 26 days**.

Forage Analysis

This is the ideal time of year to analyse your forages:

- Buy the right cake to match you protein deficit
- Target use of better and poorer forage to the right groups of animals

This should include a range of samples from different fields / multiple bales

Speak to us for further advice

Toxovax & Enzovax

It's coming up to the time to start boosters and initial vaccination of replacements ewes

Remember that you will all be ordering in a very short window of time so let us know as early as possible the number of doses required

Speak to us at the practice for more information about vaccination and order placement.