



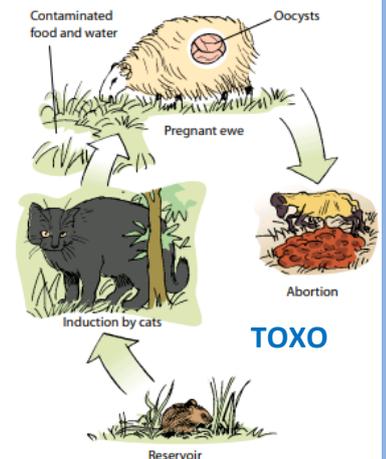
The breeding season is fast approaching and this month we discuss preparation for tugging. Hopefully you have been maintaining ewe and ram body conditions despite the poor grass availability; our rain dances in the practice appear to finally have paid off! Fingers crossed we have some green pastures again soon!

## Ewe Vaccination

Vaccination for abortion protection needs to be completed this month for any replacements, new stock and older animals that may have lapsed. The two most common vaccines against abortion are **Toxovax** and **Enzovax**.

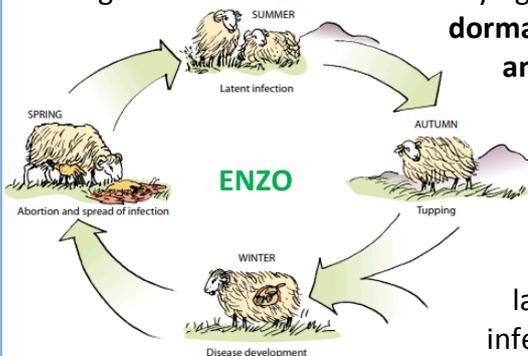
### Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasma is a **small parasite** that is found in the environment and can lead to **abortion** or the birth of **weak lambs**. Ewes become infected by ingesting feed and water that has been contaminated with Toxoplasma oocysts. The parasite lifecycle involves rodents and cats; with cats passing out thousands of infective eggs in their faeces. These eggs are very hardy and can **survive in the environment for up to 18 months**; it only takes a single brief visit from a local cat to significantly infect a farm or pasture!



### Enzootic Abortion (EAE)

In comparison to Toxoplasma, Enzootic abortion is caused by the **bacteria Chlamydomphila abortus**. The disease is typically bought in with replacements already infected from farms of origin or from their dams. Annoyingly, the complex problem with EAE is the **bacteria's ability to lay dormant in the ewe** – this latent infection means that newly infected **animals may not show any sign of abortion that same season**. Ewes typically abort in the last 3 weeks of gestation but not until the season after infection. In shearlings abortion may not become apparent until 2 years after initial infection. The bacteria can be spread from ewe to ewe for up to 2 weeks post lambing through infected afterbirth, in vaginal discharge, on bedding and on wet lambs. This means any ewes carrying the bacteria can continue to infect others; potentially leading to repeat difficulties on farm even when the problem appears to be 'resolved'.



## Why Vaccinate?

From studies completed in 2011, **almost 100% of UK flocks were shown to have a degree of exposure to Toxo** and over **62% of flocks tested in 2017 were infected with Enzootic Abortion**. Even if you have not experienced outright 'abortion storms', the insidious nature of these diseases can be causing you marked losses on top of obvious abortions through the number of barren ewes and weak, non-viable lambs. Where Toxoplasma is present on farm, vaccination has been shown to produce **over 6% increase in the number of viable lambs** (AHDB figures). With potential for increased production rates and achievable **reductions in abortion** rate it is easy to appreciate how the initial cost of vaccination can easily pay for itself in benefits.

**Toxovax (repeat after 2 years)** and **Enzovax (repeat after 3 years)** must be given no later than **4 WEEKS BEFORE TUPPING** to ensure full benefit of the vaccine. There have been some changes to the way we order the vaccines in practice.

**Please ensure you order EARLY to allow time for delivery.**

**Speak to us for more information**



## Ram Checks

In preparation for breeding, the boys need a thorough check over too. **Now is the opportunity to resolve any issues and decide if replacements need to be sought!**

Sperm quality and maturation are closely linked to body temperature. Any infections, illness, painful or stressful conditions can cause a spike in core temperature, negatively affecting fertility. It can

take a **full 2 months** for normal good quality semen production to resume. For systematic checks (and to assess potential new rams!) try following these points:

### 5 'Ts' of Ram MOT:

#### • Toes

Check his mobility – is he sound? Treat any lameness issues and foot health promptly. Assess for stiffness – older tups may suffer from arthritis impeding serving ability.

#### • Teeth

Check for missing teeth / broken mouth – is his jaw undershot? Do his teeth meet his dental pad? He must be able to eat to maintain condition adequately. Broken mouthed rams should be replaced.

#### • Testicles

The testicles must be fully descended, symmetrical (no swelling or lumps) and should

move freely in the scrotum. The scrotum skin itself should be healthy – thickened skin due to scrotal mange or excessive hair means the temperature in the scrotum is too high, impacting on sperm quality. Depending on breed and age, there are also minimum scrotal circumference requirements to ensure good testicular function and sperm production.

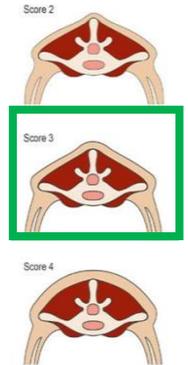
#### • 'Tone'

What is his body score? Tups will lose nearly half a body condition score per week during mating season. It is important that they start the season fit so **aim for BCS of 3.5-4**. If rams fall below this, allow them to gain condition gradually – pushing cake too hard can lead to scrotal fat accumulation, insulating and raising the temperature around the testicles impacting on sperm production.

#### • Treat

Assess for any injuries or infections e.g. poll sores and treat – antibiotics do **NOT** affect sperm quality! Worm where necessary based on FECs and complete any vaccinations e.g. Heptavac P for pasturella and clostridial protection.

**If you have any concerns about your rams or want more in-depth breeding assessments, please contact us at the practice to arrange for a Breeding Soundness exam.**



## Market Snapshot

With the long period of hot and dry weather, many of you have commented on lambs being slow to finish due to lack of quality grazing availability. The overall average number of Spring Lambs being sold in England and Wales in the last month is down in comparison to 2017 – so you are not alone; nationally everyone is holding lambs on farm longer to avoid creeping to finish. Reports from slaughter houses suggest lambs that are finishing at best weights are those that are also being fed supplementary cake. In terms of price per kilo, the average prices for England and Wales are down in comparison to last year's figures with a difference of 29.4 p/kg in mid July. This is now levelling out with a difference of only 5.6p/kg for the last week of July.

Reports completed earlier in the year suggest a greater quantity of New Zealand lamb is being exported to China this year in comparison to 2017, lowering imported lamb volumes. This combined with poorer lamb numbers from up North due to the snow and poor weather early in the year, should hopefully open up the market for us and help stabilise lamb prices going forward into late Summer.

### Late Summer Flock Workshops

Advanced: **Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2018**  
12.00pm – 2.30pm at the practice

Basic: **Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2018**  
12.00pm – 2.30pm at the practice

Topics Covered:

**Foot Health – Confident Diagnosis and Best treatments**  
**Lameness Assessments – Where do you need to focus efforts?**

£20.00 + VAT per person or **FREE TO ALL HEALTH SCHEME MEMBERS**

To join us for late lunch and discussion please call Flick or Wendy on 01452 543999 or email [largeanimal@woodvet.co.uk](mailto:largeanimal@woodvet.co.uk)