



Christmas is around the corner and the frosty mornings are definitely helping with the festive spirit. However, before we bring out the Christmas pudding, we have a few winter management tasks to think about.

Scanning Preparation

Scanning may be a major event in your annual sheep calendar or something that you have considered but not yet undertaken. Other areas of the country have been reporting disappointing scanning results this year. The South West Breeding Sheep Service in Devon has reported seeing poorer sperm quality from rams sampled during the hot weather. This possible sub-fertility in rams may mean we have some surprises and higher than usual barren rates especially in earlier lambing flocks.



- **When to scan?** Scanning is typically completed at **40 – 90 days** of gestation
- **Feed Requirements** This year scanning will be invaluable in planning ahead for winter feed requirements. With forage in short supply due to the summer, it is necessary to know how many barren ewes you have to avoid feeding unnecessary 'freeloaders' throughout their expected pregnancy.
- **Profit expectations** Fertility is one of the biggest drivers of profit in your flock; poor fertility results in poor lamb numbers. Finding out anticipated lamb numbers will help plan costs going forward.
- **Fertility diseases** Your scanning percentage can indicate if your flock is suffering from any underlying fertility diseases such as Toxoplasma. The total number of barren sheep and any indication of re-absorption of pregnancies on scanning will indicate the need for further investigation.
- **Lambing disease** By scanning, you will have an estimated number of singles, twins and triplets. This allows for important management decisions e.g. running separate groups to easily feed ewes according to foetus number, reducing lambing diseases such as Twin Lamb.
- **Records** You can not review losses from tupping to lambing if you do not have the information recorded. After lambing, compare your scanning results with your true lambing percentage; this may highlight health, handling or nutritional issues that might have slipped under the radar without scanning results.

For more information or for suggested contacts if you are interested in scanning for the first time, please speak to us at the practice



Dog attacks

This last month we've had a number of dog attack cases with varying severity of injuries. We understand how frustrating and outright upsetting this can be, especially when you have carefully selected safe fields and put signs up to ask dog owners to keep their pets on leads. Below are some critical points to remember when dealing with a dog attack case:



- **Collect evidence** Take photos and videos if possible to record the attack; this will be important for use in court and can be used to identify the dogs if the owner is not located/contactable at the time. Documenting the aftermath of the attack is key especially if you intend to press charges or are looking to agree a damages payment with the owner. Involving the vet, taking pictures of the injuries and recording other events e.g. abortions as a result of the attack are all necessary to build your case and make the full cost of the attack transparent.
- **Contact the police** Please report any sheep worrying or attacks as the higher the official number of instances recorded the more seriously the issue will be taken and the more legal support the industry will receive. If you have a recurring dog issue please consult your local authority for legal advice.
- **Stay legal** The law around this is complex and based on individual circumstance. Dogs are counted as property so shooting a dog could trigger a criminal damage charge. Crucially you must report the incident and any requirement to shoot a dog to the police within 48 hours. If you do not, none of the legal defences available to you will be valid in civil proceedings.

The National Sheep Association has further helpful advice about what to do on their website and in this summary document: <https://www.nationalsheep.org.uk/workspace/pdfs/industry-livestock-worrying-leaflet.pdf>

Winter Checklist – Are you Housing Ready?

✓ Lameness

Gathering stock for winter housing creates a perfect environment for rapid spread of any lameness conditions. It is vital that you are assessing your stock for signs of lameness and treating as early as possible to prevent an increase in prevalence during the housing period. Adult ewes need treatment with an injectable antibiotic (e.g. Oxytetracycline) & antibiotic spray (e.g. Oxytetracycline) to treat Footrot. We are seeing more and more cases of Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD) on farm. **If you are finding your normal treatment protocol is not resolving lameness cases, you are having to repeat treatments frequently or you are seeing any unusual lesions on feet, please speak to us sooner rather than later for advice or to confirm a diagnosis!**



✓ Footvax

If you are using Footvax as part of your lameness control protocol on farm, boosters should ideally be timed with risk periods. Therefore vaccinating at scanning or at housing is ideal to offer protection during the winter period. To gain the full benefit of the vaccine whole flock vaccination, including the rams, should be completed. Footvax can be used during pregnancy, but **not 4 weeks either side of lambing**. **To avoid unwanted side effects and to ensure vaccine efficacy, leave 2 weeks between using Footvax and any other vaccination.**

✓ Body Condition

If lambing in February/March ewes will now be in mid pregnancy. During this stage of pregnancy, ewes must maintain good body conditions to allow optimal placental development for best lamb birth weights. Housing allows control over feed intakes. Over feeding during this mid pregnancy stage can disrupt the effectiveness of the placenta and may also increase the likelihood of lambing related problems e.g. vaginal prolapses.

Conversely, reducing BCS of any over fat animals (e.g. score 4+) must be completed now. These ewes can afford to lose up to 9% of their body weight at this time. Any changes to fat body conditions must be completed before the final trimester, after which we run the risk of increasing metabolic disease rather than helping to reduce the likelihood of a difficult lambing.

- Aim for and maintain a body condition score of 3-3.5
- As a rule, ewes should not lose or gain more than $\frac{1}{2}$ a body condition score during mid pregnancy

✓ Flukicide

If you have a known fluke risk on farm a fluke treatment after housing will be beneficial.

If stock are looking poor e.g. evidence of bottle jaw / poor fleece / depressed or you have experienced any sudden deaths a Triclabendazole treatment (e.g. Fasinex) should be used (ONLY up until Christmas).

If you are unsure of your fluke risk, or would like to discuss testing options to check for fluke burden, please speak to one of us at the practice.

HEPATAVAC P

It's come around quickly! It's time to plan your Heptavac P boosters again.

First time vaccinated ewe lambs will need **2 injections 4-6 weeks apart**. The second injection and all boosters must be completed a minimum of **4 weeks pre lambing** to ensure adequate antibody levels in colostrum.

Please call the practice to place your orders



SCABIVAX

If you have a **known** Orf issue on farm now is a good time to consider vaccinating. Vaccination of ewes must be completed **7-8 weeks before lambing** to allow time for the infectious scabs to drop off. During this time ewes should be kept **well away** from intended lambing areas.

If you have any queries regarding Orf and vaccination please speak to us at the practice



**From all the Farm Team,
We wish you a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year!**

