



Tupping Performance

In October's newsletter we established our flock targets for tupping. All ewes to be mated in the first 17 days and 98% of the flock pregnant within two cycles. To evaluate the success of the mating period, initially raddle marker can be an encouraging sign if all ewes are coloured. Swapping raddle colours can indicate if ewes are holding to first services or there is a fertility issue in either ewes or rams. This is always useful to trigger a change of plan early on by swapping tups or increasing tup power if >8% of ewes return after their first service. However, to get concrete evidence of whether we have met targets, ultrasound scanning is a vital step between **40 – 90 days** of gestation.



Why Bother Scanning?

- **Profit Planning** - fertility is one of the biggest drivers for profit. Poor fertility will mean low lamb numbers sold the following season. Scanning allows the removal of non-productive ewes from the flock. Carrying empty ewes through the winter will negatively impact on forage supplies available to pregnant animals and use up valuable grazing needed for ewes in peak yield and finishing lambs in the spring. Even in the face of a poor scanning result we can minimise the economic impact by culling empty animals out promptly after scanning.
- **Fertility Diseases** – scanning percentage gives an early indication of any underlying fertility diseases. Your scanner should not only be able to give you the number of barren ewes but also whether there is any indication of re-absorption. This can suggest diseases such as Toxoplasma and the need for further investigation through blood tests.
- **Nutrition Planning** – Scanning will yield a number of expected singles, doubles and triples as well as barren ewes. The predicted number of lambs is crucial to make management decisions for feeding ewes in the run up to lambing. Running separate groups to feed to lamb number can completely eradicate any Twin lamb or Hypocalcaemia disease in the lambing shed. Targeted feeding management also supports good colostrum production.
- **Records** – recording expected lamb numbers early in gestation will highlight where any lambs or pregnancies have been reabsorbed in the run up to lambing. This can point towards health, handling or nutritional issues that go unnoticed without scanning. A really useful benchmark figure when investigating poor lambing performance.

Forage and Grazing Considerations

When it isn't torrential rain, it is tempting to leave stock out as long as possible, but we need to consider protecting next year's grazing and allow it time to recover. If pastures are over grazed now, they will not perform as expected in the spring. This is especially important as good quality grazing with adequate sward length is one of the main drivers for peak milk yield. Move ewes away from priority pastures by late autumn.



To target maximum dry matter **fields may need 120 days stock free to regenerate**. By late November/mid December **aim to have up to 80% of your required pasture 'closed'**. Electric fencing can be useful to split pastures.

Forage Analysis

Prior to feeding heavily pregnant ewes it is vital to know the quality of your forages – especially if you are in short supply. This will allow you to identify any issues and properly balance the amount of concentrates required during pregnancy. Early analysis will enable good planning of required concentrate amounts and also to make it easy to manage body condition scores. If analysis highlights poor quality forages, even in adequate supply, there is time to source another feedstuff prior to feeding.

Fluke and Parasite Update

Fluke

Our regional risk for autumn is still low as we head into November. However, if you have had fluke in the past or are grazing fields that are currently water logged or have been under water recently then this will not apply to you. Be vigilant for clinical signs and test where you are unsure whether to treat or not.

Parasitic gastroenteritis (PGE)

As we have had a long period of wet weather in relatively mild temperatures, roundworm larvae survival is predicted to be high this autumn. This includes *Trichostrongylus*, *Teladorsagia* and *Haemonchus contortus* (pictured with its characteristic barber's pole twist of ingested blood) alongside an autumn hatch of *Nematodirus*.



Monitor for signs of weight loss, anaemia, scour and death:

- *Haemonchus* in particular sheds massive amounts of eggs, contaminating pastures rapidly
- *Haemonchus* affects animals of all ages including ewes and will create high death rates and severe anaemia
- *Trichostrongylus* outbreaks can affect replacement ewe lambs and yearlings
- Be vigilant of tups that have been working hard and have taken on a high parasite burden. They will lose weight rapidly going in to winter

Treat and Prevent

- Use lower risk silage aftermath if still available
- WEC groups of animals if status is unknown
- If treatment is required, avoid long acting Macrolytic Lactone group at this time of year
- Leave animals on the affected pasture for 2-3 days after treatment and leave 10% of the group untreated
- If treatment is required then retest around 10 animals to check wormer efficacy

Anti Inflammatory Update

Just over a year ago, Finadyne (Flunixin) injection and its equivalents were removed from the market for containing a binding agent deemed possibly carcinogenic. It has now been relicensed for food producing animals without this binding agent. Flunixin is a fantastic NSAID injectable that was sorely missed for a number of conditions including toxic *E. coli* mastitis.



In all other respects the product has not changed although the safety data has been extended to allow one injection every 24 hours for up to 5 consecutive days.

As there are no licensed anti inflammatory/pain relief products for sheep we are using them under the Veterinary medicines cascade. As such it carries a 28 day meat withdrawal.

Speak to your vet as how to incorporate it back into your farm treatment protocols