



THE  
**WOOD  
VETERINARY  
GROUP**

# SHEEP NEWSLETTER APRIL 2020

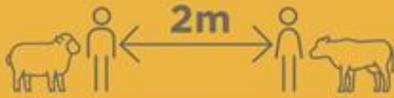


## STOP

We are all working  
in a critical food  
production industry.

Help us all to keep safe  
by maintaining a 2m gap  
at all times.

vetPartners



### Covid 19 Update

It would be impossible to send out a monthly newsletter without focusing on the global pandemic of highly contagious Coronavirus. As an industry it is vital that we maintain a strong food supply to an already struggling and panicked nation and in light of this we want to reassure you that your farm animal veterinary team at Woods will continue to provide you as close to “normal” services as is safe to do so over the coming weeks and months.

To ensure the ongoing safety of yourselves, other clients, and our team we have made some changes to how we operate. We ask that you help us by engaging with these measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and keep our veterinary team supporting your businesses and providing essential services. Please see the Farm Newsletter for details of these changes.

### Turnout

As the rain seems to have finally stopped allowing the fields to start drying up, hopefully most of you will have successfully turned out ewes and lambs. This is a welcome relief after sheds were full to the brim causing peaks in cases of watery mouth, navel ill, joint ill and mastitis. It also takes advantage of the fresh spring grass growth to boost peak lactation and ewe condition.

#### Our 5 Top Tips for Successful Turnout:

##### 1. Targeted Ewe Worming

Worm ONLY ewes that fit one of the following criteria:

- BCS 1.5 or below
- First time lambers (either ewe lambs or yearlings in their first year)
- Mothers of triplets



We know from extensive studies, that blanket worming of all ewes at turnout does not significantly reduce the worm burden on the pastures for new lambs and only increases the development of wormer resistance so worming ewes at turnout should be a very targeted exercise also saving unnecessary wasted cost.

Record BCS and the worming decision for each ewe at turnout so that these ewes can be monitored and potentially selected for early weaning to ensure BCS is recovered for the following tupping. NB it takes 6-8 weeks to increase BCS by one score on good nutrition when not feeding lambs.

##### 2. Maintain nutritional support for ewes

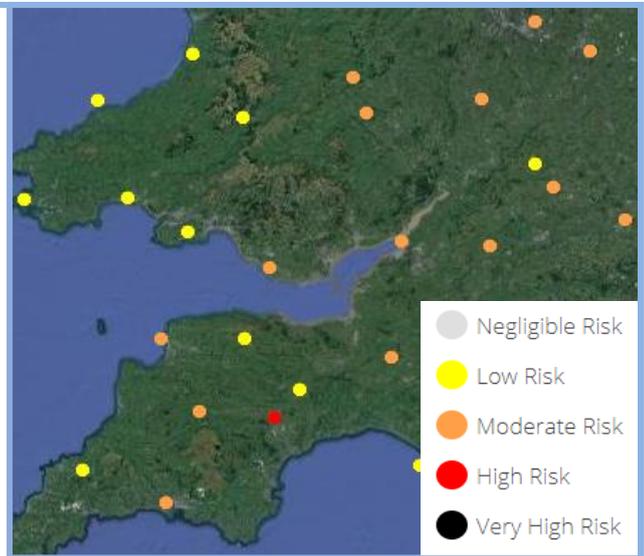
During late pregnancy dietary intakes drop due to foetal weight occupying much of the abdomen. After lambing, ewes will increase feeding by around 50% to recover body condition and drive good milk production. Peak lactation occurs around 3 to 4 weeks post lambing and then starts to naturally drop off as lambs investigate forages. Maximising peak lactation to give the highest possible milk production results in far greater lamb growth rates. It also reduces the chance of mastitis from hungry lambs causing teat end damage and exposure to environmental bacteria. Pasture sward length is also very important to allow ewes to access the dry matter in the fields – sward length under 3cm will limit energy intakes significantly. Ensure that ewes are receiving adequate protein and energy – this may require continued concentrate feeding until spring grass is being maintained at 4-5cm height. Aim for 4-6cm minimum for fresh ewes.

### 3. Parasite Management to Maximise Lamb Growth

#### Nematodirus

Every year we highlight the risk level for Nematodirus in our area. At present the risk is **LOW to MODERATE** (NADIS map as 02/04/2020) but we expect this to rise sharply. Please be aware that farms at sea level should expect a hatch in 7 to 14 days if the good weather continues, with every 100 metres above sea level expecting to lag 7 days behind that.

Lambs at risk during the hatch are those that are 6 – 12 weeks old as they start to ingest sufficient amounts of spring grass. Mass infection of lambs will often result in deaths before diarrhoea is seen so make sure at risk groups are identified early and all deaths are submitted for post mortem. Speak to us at the practice about selecting the correct class of wormer for Nematodirus.



#### Coccidiosis and Worms

As milk production declines, lambs start to ingest grass in ever increasing quantities. Ingestion of low levels of cocci and worm eggs on this grass, triggers the body to start developing immunity against these parasites. However, if the amount of parasite eggs is too high then we see clinical signs of parasitic gastroenteritis (PGE). This presents as diarrhoea, faecal stained fleeces, weight loss or failure to gain weight, dull or lethargic lambs and in extreme burdens, dead lambs. In the right weather conditions, it can also result in cases of fly strike if left. By grazing pastures used for young lambs last year, the level of parasites is significantly higher and so an initial management step in to rotate the pasture that is used for turnout and young lambs each year using clean or well rested pasture where possible.

In order to accurately manage parasite burdens we need to monitor two things:

- **Average daily weight gain** – weigh lambs regularly well ahead of weighing for drafting fat lambs.

Lambs that are gaining less than 200g/day needs action. Either nutrition is insufficient or there is a parasite burden limiting the amount of energy that can be converted into muscle and skeletal development. This warrants further investigation and the next step is:

- **Faecal parasite count** – cocci oocyst and worm egg count every 4 – 6 weeks or if loose faeces seen.

Collect teaspoon sized samples of fresh faeces from lambs only. Sample 10% of the lambs in the group and submit the samples to the practice. Keep the samples cool and out of direct sunlight to prevent the oocysts and eggs from hatching out and giving a false reading. We will report back whether a wormer or cocci treatment is required. The colour, consistency or smell is not diagnostic of what parasite is involved.

#### 4. Check for Orf

Orf cases on lambs mouth will spread rapidly throughout a flock and will cause mastitis to spike. Orf can spread from lambs to a ewe's teats when feeding. This results in very painful lesions and the ewe will resent or entirely stop feeding lambs. This engorgement of the udder with milk often leads to mastitis and hypothermic lambs. Avoid grazing rough pastures with lots of thistles when lambs are investigating forage at around 4 weeks old. Be vigilant of Orf lesions in the flock and speak to us if you suspect you have seen lesions.

#### 5. Foot Health – Right Foot Forward

Do not turn out lame ewes with lambs – this will only spread infectious lameness to lamb crops on the same pasture. Foot rot prevalence is strongly linked to outbreaks of Scald in pre-weaned and weaned lambs due to picking up the bacteria from foot prints, around feed and water troughs, gateways and handling systems. Scald significantly reduces lamb growth rates and will delay finishing. If lameness is identified in the lambing shed, treat the affected ewe in isolation and ensure she is sound and the infection is cleared up before turnout. Always ensure pens are mucked out between ewes to prevent further spread. Speak to us about the best approach to lameness management. We have accredited advisors for the Lameness 5 Point Plan that can help you to implement the management strategies.