



## Ram Breeding Soundness

Now is the ideal time to check your rams for the upcoming breeding season. Identifying issues early allows plenty of time to resolve problems and prevent poor performance. Sperm production and maturation takes 6-8 weeks and with sperm being particularly sensitive to high temperatures anything that causes a fever can cause temporary infertility. Following a health insult or stress it can take up to 2 months before normal semen production is resumed. For chronic conditions e.g. lameness, this period may be prolonged.

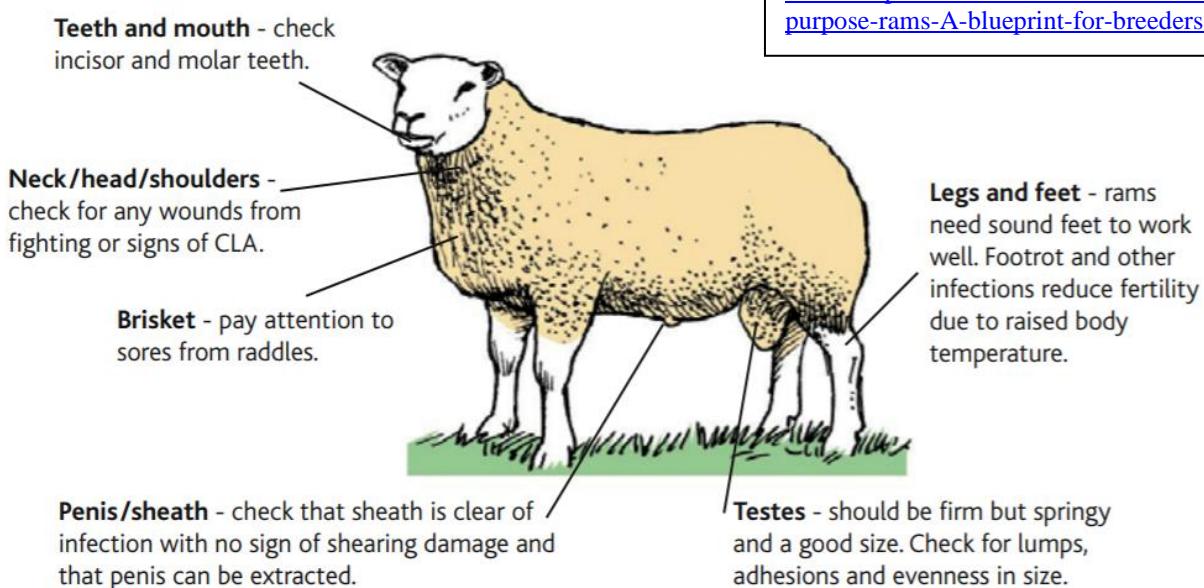
Remember that rams are also much more susceptible to the effects of worms than ewes so if they have been on "wormy" pasture it may be prudent to discuss an appropriate treatment. This links into body condition score and allowing them to have enough energy to produce decent sperm and be up for the job. Aim for rams to be at BCS 3.5 to 4 at the start of tupping. Feeding a high quality, high protein (18 to 20%) ration 6 to 8 weeks prior to tupping may be necessary. However, be careful to not have overfat rams too!

Breeding soundness exams, or MOT, can involve some or all the elements below which we can do for you:

- BCS (body condition score)
- General physical exam – see diagram below
- Scrotal measurement and palpation
- Electro-ejaculation and sperm morphology

Electro-ejaculation would generally only be recommended where there is a suspicion of poor performance in the past. This is where records and the use of different colour raddle markers are useful so that infertile/sub fertile rams are not masked by fertile rams. Ultimately sub fertile rams lead to a loss in profit from less lambs or extended seasons and associated costs. Scrotal measurement and palpation is a great indicator of likelihood of fertility.

<http://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Booklet-Fit-for-purpose-rams-A-blueprint-for-breeders.pdf>

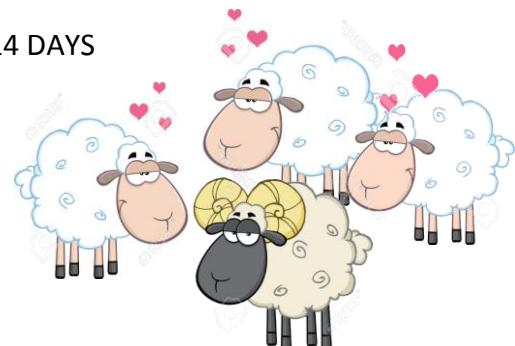


Book in any breeding soundness exams early to give rams plenty of time to recover from any problems identified or for replacements to be sourced and checked. Call the practice now to arrange.

## Teaser Rams

For those thinking of using Teaser Rams this year, vasectomies must be completed 4-6 weeks before intended use to allow for full recovery. It is important to select healthy, fit rams with plenty of libido. We need teasers to last and perform well to be cost effective! Consider using a different breed to your fertile tupps to ensure there are no mix ups.

- Vasectomies can be completed on farm or at the practice. The ram will be under sedation and receive local anaesthetic
- 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
- For the full 'ram effect' use 1 teaser to 50 ewes
- Leave the teaser in for min 48 hours but NO LONGER than 14 DAYS
- Swap the teaser ram for the fertile ram on the same day
- 1 fertile and experienced ram to 25-30 ewes
- Inexperienced ram lambs will need fewer ewes each (ram lambs should not be put with ewe lambs)
- Expect 2 peaks of mating activity at 18 and 26 days.



## Parasitic gastro enteritis (PGE/worms)

The predominantly warm and dry weather may have left some of you short of grass, but it also appears to have kept the number of worms on the pasture low so far. However, with time there will always be a build-up on grazed pasture. To reduce risk of disease and the overuse of worming products leading to possible resistance, management steps should be taken.

### Routine worm egg count testing

- every 2 to 4 weeks
- can be pooled, be sure to get fresh samples from 8 to 12 lambs per group, gently round up in the corner of a field or on the yard for 10 to 20 minutes
- keep cool and bring to the practice asap so no eggs hatch leading to falsely low levels

### Reduce build up with a grazing strategy

- Prioritise "safe" pastures for lambs e.g. silage aftermath, weaning is a good time to move them

### Targeted selective treatments

- Ideally avoid the use of long acting products
- Leave animals on contaminated pasture for a few days post treatment
- Leave strong animals untreated, aim for at least 10%
- Consider post treatment WEC's to check effectiveness, discuss the correct timing with us

### TOXOVAX & ENZOVAX REMINDER

Toxovax (repeat after 2 years) and Enzovax (repeat after 3 years) must be given no later than 4 WEEKS BEFORE TUPPING

**Please consider vaccinating early this year to avoid vaccine order issues. It can be done up to 5 months pre tupping.**

**Call to place early vaccine orders**

### Nematodirus risk still for late lambers

We are still seeing nematodirus eggs on worm egg counts performed in the practice therefore remember if you have lambs aged 6 to 12 weeks now that haven't been treated, there is still a risk. Clinical signs often are sudden death with or without severe diarrhoea making it an important disease to be aware of. This is the only time of year we would advocate the use of a white wormer in lambs.