



With the first month of the year over we have started to see some of you for lambing's, sick Ewes and plenty of health plans!

Unfortunately lambing doesn't always go to plan so it is always worth keeping good records even if it is just a simple tally of any lamb or Ewe deaths with reasons. This can help to reveal a trend that may need further investigation or an adjustment to protocol. Not only can this be useful for evaluating at a later date, but it can also highlight a problem that needs immediate attention. For example, an abortion rate of over 2% is highly likely to indicate an infectious cause so would warrant investigation. It is thought that many farmers accept much higher levels than this. With tight margins in the sheep industry reducing lamb losses is critical.

Costs associated with infectious abortion:

- Loss of income from lamb sales
- Cost of feeding a non-productive Ewe
- Medicines to treat Ewes that are ill after abortion
- Labour costs to look after any weak lambs
- Potential vet costs
- Replacement costs

Before control measures can be put in successfully it is important to understand the cause of abortion. Submitting fresh abortion materials – the placenta and lamb/s is key. Samples from multiple Ewes that are fresh will yield the best results. It is important to remember that many of the infectious causes of abortion can have a detrimental effect on humans especially pregnant women so be aware to wear gloves, bag up samples well and always call us first to make sure we can accept them in a safe manner. This is also useful to protect other Ewes in the lambing shed, be careful to clean up any abortion material, fluids or contaminated bedding and isolate the affected Ewe/s. Alongside this we can also take blood samples from any barren Ewes to add to the picture.

Common causes of abortion:

	Cause	Source	Possible Appearance	Treatment	Prevention
Enzootic abortion	Bacteria Chlamydomphila abortus	Abortion material Infected sheep	Freshly dead lambs Thickened placenta Well Ewe	Antibiotics can help to reduce numbers in an outbreak	Cull infected Ewes Vaccinate Buy in accredited stock or maintain a closed flock
Toxoplasmosis	Coccidial type parasite	Bedding or feed contaminated	Freshly dead or mummified lambs	In feed coccidiostats can be used but are	Can keep affected Ewes Vaccinate

		with cat faeces	White spots on the cotyledons of the placenta Well Ewe	needed to be fed consistently	Neuter farm cats and prevent vermin from accessing sheep fed
Campylobacter	Bacteria	Carrier sheep Wildlife	Nothing specific	Nothing very effective	Aborted Ewes gain immunity but can become carriers. No UK vaccine, possible to import
Salmonella	Bacteria Various strains	Carrier sheep/cattle Contaminated feed/water	Nothing specific Ewe may be ill	Antibiotics can help in an outbreak	Avoid mixing pregnant ewes with cattle Provide clean water and prevent contamination of feed A vaccine is available for one strain (not seen in the UK yet)
Listeria	Bacteria	Soil Soil contaminated silage	Nothing specific May get other Ewes with "meningitis" in the flock	Nothing effective against abortion	Take extra care when making silage especially big bale and avoid feeding spoilt silage

With Enzootic abortion especially, if Ewes are infected within the 6 weeks pre-lambing they are unlikely to abort until the following year. With this in mind a small increase in abortions this year could lead to a catastrophic number next year. Making isolation of affected Ewes and diagnosis of cause important, allowing you to reduce spread and implement a control/vaccination plan at the right time. Vaccines are not a fail safe so you need to make sure you are using them correctly and in conjunction with a farm specific control plan. Please discuss any concerns with a vet who can help you make a plan.

Reference: The Flockmaster's Guide to Abortion and Vaccination – MSD

<https://www.msd-animal-health->

[hub.co.uk/sites/default/files/content/media/104180_flockmasters_guide_a5_v2020.pdf](https://www.msd-animal-health-hub.co.uk/sites/default/files/content/media/104180_flockmasters_guide_a5_v2020.pdf)

HEPATAVAC P

For those of you that are due to lamb in March/April don't forget your Heptavac P vaccinations. First time Ewes 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