



Happy Easter! This spring turnout could not be more different to 2020, the ground is drying out and the sunshine we have had has encouraged some much needed grass growth. Deadweight lamb prices have risen again and are 87.2p (last week in March) up in comparison to the same week last year, encouraging given some uncertainty with Brexit and COVID.

Whilst the majority of lamb losses are seen during the lambing period, turnout to weaning can also be problematic. Keeping good records of lamb losses can help determine where you may have issues. AHDB suggest a target of <3% for losses from turnout to weaning. What were your figures last year and what can we do differently this year? Target daily live weight gains of 300g/day should be achievable but more commonly less than 200g/day are seen. Lambs are very efficient at converting milk into growth but the ewe needs to match the demand from the lambs. Ewe feed intakes increase approximately 50% post lambing to match milk production which will peak at 3-4 weeks, additional feeding is required usually in the form of concentrates until grass is over 4cm high. A typical feeding plan of 0.5kg of high protein concentrates/lamb reared would support milk production and reduce the ewe milking off her back. Other factors which may contribute to reduced lamb growth include;

- Coccidiosis – typically seen in lambs from 4-6 weeks of age and can cause high mortality. The main risk factors include use of nursery paddocks, poor colostrum intake, high stocking rates and mixed age groups. It will be important to rule out Nematodirus as the 2 can present very similarly. Control can include medicated creep feeds or strategic dosing
- Orf (painful and reduces feeding)
- ewe mastitis (lambs not sucking)
- Nematodirus
- Pasturellosis – where there is a history of pasturellosis, consider vaccination of lambs from at 3 weeks old



Despite the rather chilly wind today as I sit writing this, with the rise in temperature it is time to think about Nematodirus and the risk to your crop of lambs. *Nematodirus battus* is an internal gut parasite and is typically seen in lambs which are grazing pastures **grazed by the previous years crop of lambs** (lamb to lamb transmission). Disease in the south can be seen from April and the current NADIS parasite forecast puts our region in moderate risk area for the time of year.

Larvae are very resistant to desiccation and low temperature and are able to overwinter on pasture. Pasture larval hatch tends to occur when the temperature increases above 10°C after a cold spell. The presence of larvae on pasture tends to coincide with increased grass intakes of lambs. Risk factors for disease include lambs consuming significant amounts of grass typically 6weeks +, co-infection with

coccidiosis, weather (cold spell followed by increased temperature above 10°C and lambs under stress (triplets, fostered lambs, other disease challenge).



Flock Check Reminder – Following on from the previous article on abortion and losses, we are able to offer testing under the MSD flock check scheme to assess for toxoplasmosis and Enzootic abortion. It will give you an idea if you have these abortive agents circulating in your flock. We will need to sample barren ewes or those scanned in lamb which did not subsequently lamb. Please speak with one of our vets to arrange testing for your flock.

Clinical disease will present in a number ways;

- Dull/depressed lambs off suck
- Profuse yellow/green scour
- Reduced growth rates
- Sudden death.

Worm egg counts (WEC) cannot be used as a reliable indicator of infection as often we see clinical disease before the presence of worm eggs in the faeces. Hence a common presentation is sudden death. Post mortem examination of lambs typically shows large numbers of eggs and worms in the small intestine. If infection cannot be prevented by utilising ground which was not grazed by last years lambs, white drenches are effective against this parasite with very few cases reported of resistance. Timing of doses should depend on farm history alongside NADIS parasite forecasts and regional weather trends, repeat treatments are usually necessary to cover age spread of lambs and not all treatments coincidence with hatching due to the variability of hatching larvae.



Lockdown has seen people flock to the countryside to enjoy all it has to offer and whilst we are happy to see people taking in the wonderful scenery there have been increased reports of sheep worrying. With the turnout of ewes and lambs to grass now might be a good time to place signage at gateways and stiles which cross land with ewes and lambs at foot to encourage people to keep their dogs on leads and prevent worrying. The National Sheep Association produce some useful signs which you can print off from their website.

*******New Bank Details*******

For those of you who kindly send your payments to us by BACS, please be advised that our bank details have now changed. Please see below the new details with immediate effect:

Bank: Natwest Account Name: Wood Vet Group Account Number: 55248454 Sort Code: 60-60-05