



THE
WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP



Lambing is upon some of us, or soon will be for everyone else!
In this month's newsletter we will be discussing colostrum management – the KEY factor to give lambs the best start in life!

#ColostrumIsGold

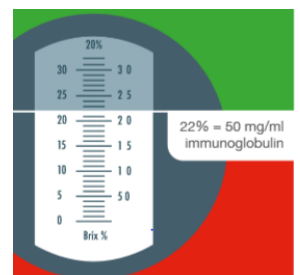
Lambs are born completely naïve to infection, unlike humans, no antibodies cross the placenta therefore their only source of antibodies is via the colostrum. If little or no antibodies are absorbed, then this is termed failure of passive transfer and lambs are at serious risk of disease.

3Q's of colostrum

- **QUALITY** – quality varies greatly from ewe to ewe. A brix refractometer is a device used to measure the quality of colostrum. >22% is the cut off for good quality colostrum, but the higher the better! >26% is considered to be very high quality
- **QUANTITY** - **50ml/kg** as soon after birth (**within 4-6 hours**)
 - In the first 24 hours of life, the lamb must receive **200ml/kg of colostrum** (i.e. a 5kg single must have 1 litre in the first 24 hours)
 - Remember – artificial colostrum is a supplement to ewe's colostrum and NOT an alternative. It should be used as an addition to poor quality ewe colostrum
- **QUICKLY** – research shows that 6 hours after birth, the ability of antibodies to cross the gut is reduced, therefore it is vital that the lamb receives adequate colostrum before this stage. Further to this, the level of antibodies in colostrum declines rapidly after the ewe has given birth. After 24 hours the concentration of the main antibody, IgG drops by 95% so is of no benefit

Using a refractometer

1. Few drops of colostrum are placed on the prism and the cover is lowered
2. Hold up to the light
3. The brix value is the line that is the divide between the light and dark sections
4. After using the refractometer, the prism and cover should be cleaned to ensure no residues affect the measurement of the next sample that is tested



Recent research has shown that inadequate nutrition of the ewe can result in delayed onset of lactation and surprisingly, increases the thickness of colostrum making it harder for the lamb to suck it from the teat. We understand it would be difficult to measure the colostrum of all ewes, try just measuring the quality of thinner ewes, lame ewes and triplet bearing ewes.

Harvesting and storing colostrum

Harvesting colostrum from ewes with plenty is an ideal way to ensure you have colostrum when you need it. Label pots with the date of collection and store it in small amounts, this will make it easier to defrost. Only store colostrum that meets the quality criteria of 22%.

Alternatives if the ewe has poor/little colostrum

In order of preference:

1. Colostrum from another ewe in the flock (preferably a single bearing ewe)
2. Pooled cow's colostrum – feed 10% more as cows colostrum is less antibody dense
3. Artificial colostrum

Making up or re-heating colostrum

- When defrosting colostrum, defrost in a warm bath no hotter than 55°C rather than defrosting in a microwave or with boiling water. The latter two methods will destroy the valuable antibodies in the colostrum
- When making up powdered colostrum, again use 55°C water rather than hot water as boiling water will destroy the fragile antibodies. Once mixed it will be 35°C ready for feeding

Using cow's colostrum

- If you have cows on the farm as well, try and harvest some of their colostrum as it will contain the specific antibodies to the bugs on your farm
- Some cow's colostrum does contain antibodies to sheep red blood cells, which can then produce a fatal anaemia in lambs. This risk can be reduced by pooling cow's colostrum so that these antibodies are diluted down
- If obtaining cow's colostrum from a different farm, try and have it from healthy cows with a known Johnes' status and preferably from cows vaccinated against clostridial disease

New Grad update!

Lambing is in full swing with our early bunch of ewes and so far, so good!

Having a live camera in lambing shed makes life a lot easier during the busy period, it means we can keep an eye on everyone without having to go up the shed and disturb them all too frequently.

The weather has been very kind and ideal for turning out ewes and lambs, hopefully it will stay fairly dry! It's been that mild the grass has been growing, unheard of for January!



Measures to prevent watery mouth

With the uncertain future of the product Spectam, we are emphasising the following measures to reduce the risk of lambs getting watery mouth:

- Colostrum intakes are key – lambs that receive enough colostrum do not get to watery mouth. Try and identify lambs at risk of watery mouth (i.e. triplets), and supplement them all as soon as possible.
- If supplementing lambs, keep bottles and stomach tubes squeaky clean!
- Hygiene – in both bonding pens and main housing pens
 - Clean out bonding pens and disinfect with powered lime disinfectant
 - Main pens should be bedded down as frequently as necessary but keep ewes clean
- Crutching the ewe to remove any daggings
- Always wear gloves when assisting ewes that are lambing
- Use strong iodine (10%) to dip/spray navels as soon as possible, then repeat 4-6 hours later
- If you do find yourself having an outbreak of watery mouth, please get in contact with us at the practice so that we can advise you further

HEPATAVAC P - First time ewe lambs 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.

Ovivac P – should be used to vaccinate youngstock not destined for breeding. Can be done from 3 weeks of age. 2 injections 4-6 weeks apart.

Please call the practice to discuss any queries regarding vaccinations!