



THE
WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP



The ongoing dry weather, with very little or no rain in the forecast is making fattening lambs and maintaining condition on ewes difficult! On most farms now we are hearing that winter forage is already being used to reduce grazing pressure. The following ideas may help to make the best use of pasture during these drier months:

- Strip grazing remaining pasture where possible and supplementing with hay/haylage to make the grass that you do have last that bit longer
- Sheep need to be grouped into priority bands to manage flocks in this ongoing dry weather. Top priority are the fattening lambs, thinner ewes and the tups this time of year. Well-conditioned dry ewes are the lowest priority and can follow along behind lambs, whilst being supplemented with lower quality forage at this time
- Start thinking about planning for next year. If you plan on planting any grass in the autumn, more drought resistant varieties such as cocksfoot, chicory or clovers might be worth looking into. If you're joining some of the stewardship schemes and are planting new lays, have a think to see if you could include these more drought tolerant grasses in the mix. If at all possible, maybe consider planting a root crop for the next year to fatten lambs on



Selecting replacements

It's that time of year again when you will really be starting to notice your superior and most well grown ewe lambs. The selection process for replacement ewe lambs should be on-going and shouldn't be left until after weaning. The process should ideally begin from birth, if possible, recording what that ewe lamb's mother performed like during and after lambing:

- Did the ewe have her lamb(s) ok without any assistance? Did she encourage the lambs to suck? Was the lamb up and sucking within half an hour? If you didn't record this information, do you remember this ewe being a problem around lambing? Has she got a cull mark on?
- Did the ewe lamb's mother have any mastitis?
- Monitoring weights is very important throughout the lambs growing stage, if you have plenty of ewe lambs to select from, you may decide to select against those which were slower growing
- Avoid selecting ewe lambs that have had 2 or 3 bouts of lameness
- Avoid selecting those with overshot jaws

- Avoid selecting those with green/wet mouths, this is often a sign of poor dentition from dropping their cud
- Ewe lambs must be 60% of their adult weight at tupping. The average adult ewe weight will be different on each farm, but the average mature weight of a lowland ewe is likely to be about 80kg. Therefore, in this case you would only select ewe lambs >48kgs and that have a BCS of 3.

If possible, we recommend shearing ewe lambs in August/early September. Shearing has been shown to increase daily live weight gain and helps when they lamb, there is slightly less fleece for the newborn to contend with when searching for the teat!



Preventing Toxoplasmosis and Enzootic abortion

Believe it or not, its that time again! Vaccinating for enzootic abortion and toxoplasmosis is an integral part of preventing the impact of abortion in any flock. Where stock is bought in these diseases will often be present so assume you have a very high risk:

- Sheep need to be vaccinated more than 3 weeks pre-tupping but early vaccination will avoid risking any supply issues
- Breeding ewe lambs that are to be put to the tup this year can be vaccinated from 5 months old. If you don't intend to breed from them until they're yearlings, then they need to be vaccinated in the 4 months pre-tupping, but not less than 3 weeks before tupping
- Toxovax and Enzovax can be given on the same day, however they cannot be mixed so should be administered in different syringes
- Toxovax also has a very short shelf life, usually about 10 days. This is due to the vaccine containing live infective parasite, so only order when you know you have a set date that it can be administered
- Incoming non-pregnant yearlings should be vaccinated pre-tupping in case they have been exposed to toxoplasma and enzootic as ewe lambs. If they have already been exposed, they may abort anyway, however using the vaccine should reduce this risk
- Vaccination with Toxovax will protect for 2 lambing seasons. Re-vaccination with Enzovax is recommended every 3-4 years, so ewe lambs being vaccinated this year are likely to need a re-vaccination when they are 3 or 4 year olds
- Just a reminder, the withdrawal period after administering Toxovax is 42 days, so if you do decide against breeding the odd ewe lamb, whether they go lame several times or have fly strike, whatever the reason, 6 weeks must pass before you can send them to kill. The Enzovax withdrawal is only 7 days.

