SHEEP NEWSLETTER
SEPTEMBER 2022

Now is the time to be going through ewes, pulling out culls and generally getting them ready for tupping, as time will soon be around to putting the tups in and restarting the cycle! It has been an extremely dry season and this has made it difficult for ewes to put condition back on after rearing and weaning their lambs. Do bear this in mind when pulling out cull ewes, but also don't use it as an excuse for known problem sheep! We hope you have been able to sell some lambs in this challenging climate and have got a good price for all of your hard work.

In this month's newsletter we will be discussing purchasing replacements and reminding everyone of how to best treat incoming animals if you have bought or are buying sheep in this year.

How best to treat incoming stock to minimise the risk to your sheep at home

Many of you will be looking to buy in sheep in the next few weeks or may well have bought replacement ewes or tups already. A replacement ewe rate of 20-25% is typically the target for a commercial flock.

- Treating against Gutworms:
    - Treating new sheep with Zolvix on arrival is an absolute necessity nowadays. We appreciate it is more expensive than the more general wormers, however there is nothing more expensive than buying in another farm's resistant worms! Treat incoming stock and leave in a shed/yard for 48 hours before being let out to grass. Pasture that has been grazed this year by ewes and lambs is ideal, as it will allow the new sheep to pick up your farm's susceptible population of worms. Zolvix was traditionally marketed as a quarantine drench, but it is also very good for treating lambs late in the summer season/early autumn to clear out resistant worms to the general or older class of wormers. We can split down to doses of Zolvix to make sure you have what you need for new stock.

- Protecting against Fluke:
    - Not all farms will have a problem with fluke so do ask the vendor you are purchasing sheep from. A quarantine flukicide product like Closantel should be used and repeated 6-8 weeks later, this product still works very effectively at killing adult fluke in sheep.
    - You should avoid using Triclabendazole to treat incoming sheep against fluke, products such as Cydectin Triclamox contain this flukicide. There is already severe widespread resistance to this flukicide and by using it on incoming ewes, especially this time of year after a very dry summer, is not advised and is likely a waste of money. Triclabendazole should only typically be used when there is a high risk of acute fluke infection to lambs which has been diagnosed or where there is clinical suspicion due to weather forecasting/history on farm.

- Sheep scab:
    - Sheep scab is a constant worry when purchasing any incoming stock. Dipping is the best way to ensure sheep are free of sheep scab and is the most effective treatment. However, we do appreciate that it is difficult to get a contractor in to dip a small proportion of a flock.

Historically, injectable Ivermectins and Moxidectins have been used to treat incoming sheep however there is now growing resistance of the sheep scab mite to these products. If using injectable Ivermectins/Moxidectins to prevent or treat sheep scab, they must be used correctly. Each product has its own requirements for use, so you must read the datasheet for the product to stand the best chance of working. For example, treatment with Doramectin requires only 1 injection but untreated and treated sheep must be kept separate for at least 14 days, whereas treatment with Ivermectin requires two injections 7 days apart.

- o We now offer a sheep scab ELISA test which tests sheep for antibodies to sheep scab. Sheep do not need to be scratching to have this test performed and it has been designed to identify sheep with the itch before they show clinical signs of the disease. This test is a simple pooled blood test and it is recommended to sample 12 animals. The test can reliably confirm sheep scab as early as 2 weeks post infection, so it would be beneficial to test ewes 2 weeks after they have come on farm, (this would allow for a positive result if infection had been picked up in market or in transit to/from the market). If buying privately, then you could sample straight away.

- Buying from markets:
    - o This route of purchasing sheep is quite often the easiest and the most social, but carries the most risk for buying in disease. Chronic and insidious wasting diseases like Johnes, Maedi Visna or Ovine pulmonary adenocarcinoma (OPA) are most commonly bought in via this route. If you do buy from markets, try and buy from flocks who you have purchased from previously and therefore know and trust, or from flocks with a HiHealth status (MV or Johnes accredited). Do try and buy ewes privately off farm and bring them home in your trailer that you know is clean and has had no known diseased livestock in.

- Enzovax and Toxovax:
    - o These vaccines are given to prevent and reduce the impact of enzootic and toxoplasma abortions. Enzovax must be given at least 4 weeks prior to tupping and Toxovax at least 3 weeks prior to tupping, but both vaccines can be given from 5 months old. Both of these vaccines can be given on the same day, as long as they are administered in sperate syringes. Just a word of caution with enzootic abortion: A ewe that has already met infection, for example as a ewe lamb may still abort even if she is vaccinated. This is because the infection is already lying dormant in cells waiting for that animal to become pregnant and cause its damage to the placenta. However, it is far better to vaccinate than see who has and hasn't been exposed.

- Quarantine:
    - o This should be done for at least 1 month, but if at all possible, try and keep sheep separate until after lambing. That way, if some of the ewes are carrying enzootic abortion, your main flock are not exposed to this infection. Quarantining will allow for ewes with early lameness due to Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD) or Footrot to show clinical signs and be picked up and treated, marked and isolated before spreading infection to the rest of the flock.