



THE
**WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP**



SHEEP NEWSLETTER JULY 2023

It's shaping up to be a hot summer with temperatures reaching 30 degrees in June! Hot and dry weather conditions can impact flock health with poorer grass growth, increased fly populations and the risk of heat stress. This month's newsletter focuses on dealing with the heat...

Preventing heat stress

It is really important to monitor for signs of heat stress in hot weather. These include panting (especially with mouth open, head down and tongue extended), shade seeking, increased standing (with front legs in a wide stance), decreased eating and even immobility and staggering.

To prevent sheep from suffering from heat stress, ensure pastures provide plenty of shade. In paddocks with limited tree coverage, large man-made shade structures should be used (e.g. stacked hay bales).

Water requirements are increased in hotter weather so make sure troughs are clean, in the shade and big enough to provide 5 litres per ewe. Sheep with a one-inch fleece are more comfortable than more closely shorn sheep as fibres aid more rapid dissipation of heat so consider shearing earlier in the season. Avoid stresses such as handling when hot, performing tasks such as vaccination and drenching in the evenings or early mornings when temperatures are lower. It is also better to feed at cooler times of the day too as the rumen produces a lot of heat!



Call us immediately if you are concerned your flock are suffering with heat stress for advice on treatment

Fly strike

The flies are unfortunately back with a vengeance, and we have had many reports of fly strike already. Signs of such are interrupted grazing, nibbling behaviour, stamping or other signs of irritation and discomfort. Examine sheep showing these signs immediately and follow the treatment protocol below.

Treatment:

1. Clip away wet & discoloured wool until dry fleece and healthy skin is present. Maggots often extend further and deeper under fleece than you think!
2. Clear away all maggots and scrape the area clean. Kill all removed maggots
3. Apply antibiotic spray (e.g. Engemycin spray) to the whole affected area
4. You must use a TREATMENT product (e.g. Crovect or Spot On) on the surrounding fleece to kill any residual eggs or larvae to prevent an ongoing cycle

It is vital to detect strike as soon as possible – consult veterinary advice if affected sheep show any signs of illness as systemic antibiotics and fluids may be required in severely affected stock



Blowfly Strike

As with all illnesses, it is always **better to prevent the problem in the first place!**

- Dag regularly - *not only does this help to reduce the risk of fly strike it is also a great opportunity to examine your flock for other health issues and record body condition score. Take samples from ewes and lambs that are scouring to test worm egg and coccidia count.*
- Prevent and treat Footrot immediately - *flies love smelly feet!*
- Apply fly repellent at regular intervals during the summer season according to the product datasheet - *a table of products is listed above.*

Product	Treatment or prevention	Protection duration	Withdrawal period
Clik	Prevention	16 weeks	40 days
Clik extra	Prevention	19 weeks	40 days
Crovect	Prevention & Treatment	6-8 weeks	8 days
Spotinor	Treatment	Treats established strike	35 days

Vasectomies and Teaser Tups

July is here already and if you are thinking of getting a teaser done to tighten your lambing block, now is the time to do it! A vasectomy involves removing a portion of the vas deferens (the tube that carry the sperm) to render the tup infertile without the removal of the testicles. By still having their testicles, teaser tups still produce pheromones which produce a hormonal response in ewes, causing them to start cycling again after the long days of the summer. Teaser tups should be introduced to the ewes at a ratio of one tup to 40-50 ewes just before the onset of the breeding season. Ewes must have been isolated from males (sight, sound & esp. smell) for at least a month, as ewes that are already cycling will not be affected by the introduction of teasers.



Most ewes have a heat within 3 days of teaser introduction but this is silent (no behavioural oestrus as no progesterone priming) so no mating occurs. Some of the ewes have a second short cycle leading to a silent heat 10 days after teaser introduction. Therefore, as sheep have a 17 day cycle, mating will occur 3-4 weeks after teasers are first introduced, with peaks at 20 and 27 days. The teasers should be left with the ewes for a minimum of 48 hours but **NO LONGER** than 14 days. You should swap the teaser rams for the fertile rams on the same day and use a lower ratio of 1 fertile tup: 20 synchronised ewes.

Vasectomies can be performed on farm or at the practice by one of our vets. It is best to starve the tup overnight before the procedure to avoid excess muck and allow for light sedation. You must ensure 6-8 weeks has elapsed before putting the teaser in with your ewes to ensure remaining sperm are no longer viable and wounds are healed.

So which ram should you choose as the lucky candidate? The ideal candidate should be a good homebred ram with good expected longevity i.e. good teeth (no overshot jaw), no history of lameness and good libido (i.e a 2 year old ram that has been successfully used previously). Rams can be vasectomised from around 8 months old but don't overuse them until they're shearlings as they will have more libido when they're older. Ideally use a breed that mates naturally during months you plan on using e.g. Poll Dorset, Suffolks or Charollais. A different breed to your fertile tups is always a good idea and an obvious tag so mistakes don't happen with identity.

It's Show Season!

Good luck to all our clients in the upcoming shows this summer. We hope you reap the rewards you deserve with the lovely stock you have produced!



Progesterone synchronisation

Another method of tightening your lambing block using synchronisation is via the insertion of progesterone sponges. The sponges should be inserted for 12-14 days so that upon removal the ewe to ovulate. Again, ensure there is a ratio of 1 fertile tup to 20-25 ewes as the ewes will all be cycling at the same time and so more ram power is required to serve them all successfully.

If fixed time artificial insemination is being performed, it is recommended to do so 55 hours after sponge removal. To obtain an optimal synchronization of ovulation, an intra-muscular injection of PMSG can be given at the time of sponge removal for optimal ovulation.

Please get in touch if you are interested in booking in a tup vasectomy or ordering progesterone sponges