



THE
WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP



Did you suffer with **poor scanning percentages** like many others last year? **Well now is the time to investigate!** The months are flying by as usual and tupping time will soon be here, especially for those lambing early next year, and so it is vital to prepare a check list to ensure ewes and rams are in tip top condition before the breeding season. This month's newsletter will focus on how to prepare for tupping...

TUPPING CHECK LIST

1. Fertility test rams

Don't always blame your ewes for high barren rates (>2%) - check your rams out too! **Call us to get them booked in for a full health MOT.** Ill health and infections will affect ram fertility so it's vital to make sure your rams are healthy before the breeding season begins. It is far better to know which rams are fit for breeding and how to group tups together for optimum results.

2. Body condition score (BCS) whole flock

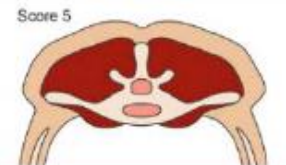
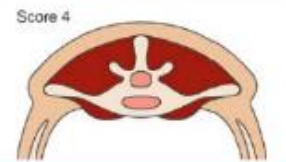
Do not underestimate the importance of regularly condition scoring your flock. It is an easy check to perform which can give you crucial information about the health of your flock and identify any problems present.

To perform body condition scoring correctly, you must FEEL the condition rather than just looking at the sheep. Using your thumb, assess the fat cover over the vertical ribs and using your finger and assess the roundness of the short ribs (horizontal processes). Score using the chart on the right (*courtesy of AHDB: Managing ewes for Better Returns*). Ensure that the same person, using the same hand, performs body condition scoring each time to reduce variation between scores.

The target for ewes and rams at tupping is 3-3.5/5. Record BCS of each sheep to create an average for the flock and health check those of poor BCS. **We can offer training on BCS and perform it for you through our vet tech service – please get in touch for more information!**

3. Trace element test 6-8 weeks prior to tupping

Poor conception can be caused by deficiencies in selenium, vitamin B12, copper and iodine. It is really important to test for deficiencies before bolusing as over supplementation can lead to toxicity especially of Copper. Investing in trace element testing will save money and time on boluses that aren't going to give a return on investment.



<https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/managing-ewes-for-better-returns>

4. Create a thorough cull list

Go through your ewes with a fine-tooth comb – you don't want to be breeding problems into your flock. Check for bad udders and lumps, lameness and broken mouths. Remember to also go through this year's lambing records and cull ewes who had suffered with vaginal prolapses as this is often a genetic and heritable trait.

5. Fluke control

Subacute fluke can have a major impact upon fertility. Consider testing for fluke burden to influence treatment decisions. Testing can be performed by testing for coproantigen in faeces or blood testing lambs for antibodies which indicate fluke exposure. By testing youngstock, you can create a picture of your CURRENT, rather than historic, exposure which is vital in order to make the right treatment decisions. Fluke risk can be controlled by fencing muddy areas away, preventing mud build up (e.g. placing hardcore around water troughs and gateways) and limiting grazing of high risk pastures, especially those with natural water courses, to SPRING rather than autumn/winter.



6. Investigate any infectious causes of abortion

Border disease, Toxoplasmosis and Enzootic abortion can all cause abortion which lead to high barren rates. Get in touch to find out how to test for these diseases.

7. Vaccinate with Toxovax and Enzovax



Toxovax and Enzovax are essential vaccinations for any lambing flock to help to prevent abortion storms. Sheep need to be vaccinated more than 3 weeks (Toxovax) and 4 weeks (Enzovax) pre-tupping but with typical shortages of vaccines this year, early vaccination will avoid risking any supply issues. Ewe lambs can be vaccinated from 5 months of age and need to be vaccinated between 4 months and 3 weeks prior to tupping. Toxovax and Enzovax can be given on the same day, but should NEVER be mixed in the same syringe. Toxovax also has a very short shelf life, usually about 10 days, so let us know when you need it for so we can order it at the appropriate time for you (Shelf life after dilution according to directions is 2 hours). Vaccination with Toxovax will protect for 2 lambing seasons and re-vaccination with Enzovax is recommended every 3-4 years.

8. Select ewe replacements wisely

Your ewe lambs are the future of your flock so they have to be your best! Go back through your records to check the health of the dam – don't select replacements from ewes that had mastitis, required lambing assistance or who had poor maternal instincts. Don't select replacements with overshot jaws or green/wet mouths as this is a sign of poor dentition and don't select those who have been treated for lameness. Ewe lambs must be 60% of their adult weight at tupping so select those over 48kg and BCS 3 as the average adult lowland ewe weighs about 80kg. Ewe lambs do have lower ovulation rates when compared to adult ewes so expect more singles than twins but an extra lamb produced in the first year of life can reduce the overall greenhouse gas emissions of a flock (AHDB, 2021).

9. Shear in August/September

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

