



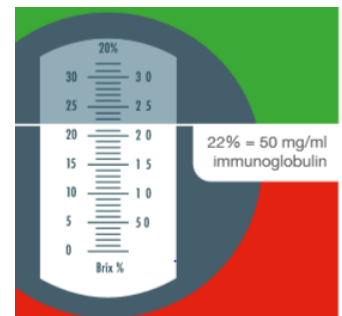
Lambing time is here! This month's newsletter focuses on one of the most important aspects for lamb health... **COLOSTRUM**. Lambs are born completely naïve to infection as, unlike humans, no antibodies cross the placenta and their only source of antibodies is via the colostrum. Good colostrum management plays a key part in preventing many neonatal diseases – watery mouth, joint/navel ill, hypothermia etc – and sets off a positive pathway to improving future growth rates.

GET YOUR COLOSTRUM MANAGEMENT RIGHT – FOLLOW THE 3Q's

1. **QUALITY** – quality of colostrum varies greatly from ewe to ewe and you cannot predict the quality from its consistency or colour - just because the colostrum looks thick and creamy, does not mean that it is good! A Brix refractometer should be used to measure the quality of colostrum. They are quick and easy to use and instructions for use can be read below...



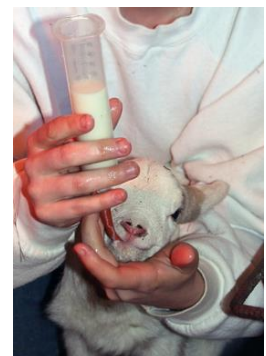
- Firstly, using a pipette place a drop of colostrum onto the prism and lower the cover case.
- Hold it up to the light and look through the eye piece.
- The brix value is the line that is the divide between the light and dark sections.
- **>22%** is the absolute minimal cut off for good quality colostrum, but the higher the better! >26.5% is considered to be very good quality.
- After each use, the prism and cover should be cleaned to ensure no residues impact the measurement of the next sample that is tested.



We understand it would be difficult to measure the colostrum of all ewes, so if you're using it for the first time, try measuring the quality of thinner ewes, lame ewes and triplet bearing ewes. If very few ewes are meeting the minimum level then it is a sign that we need to review nutrition in the flock. Please contact us at the practice to purchase a refractometer or for further advice.

2. QUANTITY

- ALL lambs should receive **50ml/kg in the first 4 - 6hrs** of life (aka 200ml per 4kg lamb);
- They should have a total of **200ml/kg in the first 24hrs** (aka 800ml per 4kg lamb)



3. **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 cut off. 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%. Whilst this still provides good fat and protein it will not provide immune protection.

Poor nutrition can cause reduction in quality and quantity of colostrum → perform metabolic bloods 3-4 weeks pre lambing to ensure any nutritional issues can be addressed to prevent this.

Harvesting colostrum

All lambs should be checked for sufficient colostrum intake – triplets, weak lambs and those whose mothers suffer with mastitis need to be supplemented. Freezing good quality colostrum from ewes with plenty to spare is an ideal way to ensure you have colostrum when you need it. Single bearing ewes are ideal candidates, but make sure the single lamb gets their fair share first! Containers must be immaculately clean, and they should be labelled with the date of collection. Freezing in small amounts (up to 100ml) will help to speed up the defrosting process.

If a ewe does not have sufficient colostrum:

- The next best thing would be to get colostrum from **another ewe in the flock**
- **The second-best option, would be pooled cow's colostrum**, however you need 10% more as cows colostrum is less antibody dense. Ideally, if you have your own cows, their colostrum would be better than cows' colostrum from another farm because it would contain specific antibodies to the bugs present on your farm. If obtaining cow colostrum from another farm, ensure it is pooled and that it has come from cows with a known current negative Johne's status.
- **Artificial colostrum is a supplement to ewe's colostrum and NOT an alternative.** It should be used as a last resort, and those lambs which receive only this should be very closely monitored for signs of illness

If you've managed to freeze colostrum, that's brilliant! But now great care must be taken when defrosting it to ensure you don't lose those priceless antibodies! We would advise that it is defrosted in a warm bath no hotter than 55°C. Do not defrost in a microwave or with boiling water, as these two methods will destroy all the valuable antibodies in the colostrum.

Schmallenberg Virus

As many of you are probably already aware, we have unfortunately seen a national increase in the incidence of Schmallenberg this year. Schmallenberg virus causes disease in sheep, cattle and goats and is spread via midges (*Culicoides species*), not directly from animal to animal. Most transmission occurs when midge population is high, typically in late summer/early autumn (August/September) when the weather is warm. If sheep are bitten in the first 25-50 days of pregnancy deformities are seen in lambs. Malformations observed include bent limbs and fixed joints, brain deformities and damage to the spinal cord. Neurological signs may also be seen and surviving lambs are often described as 'dummy lambs' - they are blind, wobbly, unable to suck and sometimes seizure.



SAVE THE DATE...
Beginners Lambing Course
14th of February 2024

2 - 4.30pm, Hartpury University
There's only a few spaces remaining for the lambing course... Please contact the office before the 7th of February to book your place!

As you can imagine, deformed lambs make for a difficult birth and veterinary supervision may be required. To reduce the risk of ewe injury, caesarean sections may have to be performed.

Contact us if you have a high barren rate and/or get lambs that are deformed, weak, stillborn or die within a few days. APHA are offering free testing for Schmallenberg disease – it is important to do this so incidence can be tracked to inform better prevention mechanisms and future vaccination.



Wood Vets Farm Team



@woodvetsfarmteam