



THE
**WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP**



**SHEEP NEWSLETTER
MARCH 2024**

March is here – officially the start of spring, although judging by the weather you wouldn't know! Hopefully it follows the old proverb in like a Lion and out like Lamb. February was another very wet month and with local flooding and wet pasture conditions, many of you are having to keep ewes and lambs in longer than is preferable. This month's newsletter focuses on keeping your flocks healthy in these weather conditions.

These challenging conditions will mean that there is limited suitable pasture for post lambing turnout, putting extra pressure on the housing environment. Therefore, we need to be extra vigilant on hygiene and be aware of the increased risk of illnesses that are linked to damp conditions such as navel ill, joint ill and watery mouth to name a few. Once you can turnout, nutrition needs to be evaluated carefully as poor grass quality or contamination may lead to poor milk supplies in the ewe.

Housing considerations:

- Use plenty of straw in lambing sheds/pens to prevent lambs sitting on damp bedding and provide them with a warm environment – this pushes energy into growth not heat production
- Clean out as frequently as possible, removing all organic matter e.g. straw, faeces etc.
- Use disinfectant powder/lime prior to bedding pens up
- Keep drainage channels clear from blockages of straw to prevent further accumulation of standing water
- Make sure you have plenty of iodine available for dipping navels. Ideally use a dip cup for best coverage but these must be cleaned out twice daily and apply every 6 hours until the navel is completely sealed. If cleaning dip cups isn't possible then spray bottles used well are a better alternative. Iodine solutions should be of 10% concentration. Solutions with alcohol in are also good to help dry the navel.
- Make sure you are up to date with prevention and treatment protocols for the main lamb and ewe illnesses – speak to your vet if you are unsure or would like an up-to-date protocol. Good colostrum and cleanliness are vital for lamb health and are key to preventing watery mouth, joint ill and navel ill. See last month's newsletter for all the information on colostrum management.



Reviving Hypothermic Lambs

A lamb's normal temperature is 39 to 40°C. Lambs can survive in quite low temperatures however, if they are left wet or in a draught, they can quite quickly become hypothermic (low temperature). This is a very common cause of death in lambs, particularly if the mother is not quite up to scratch. Starvation or poor milk volume also causes hypothermia when glucose levels drop dangerously low, and the lamb is unable to produce its own heat. Lambs can be either found dead or in a coma. Triplets below 4.5kg are particularly high risk for hypothermia due to lower brown fat reserves and larger surface area to weight ratio speeding up heat loss. They also have a reduced survival rate from hypothermia so if in doubt feed triplets early on.



If you find lambs standing hunched or recumbent, use a thermometer to check temperature - 37-39°C is mild – moderate hypothermia, less than 37°C is severe hypothermia. In the worst case the lamb will be comatose but don't give up, with some effort it is possible to save lambs even at this stage.

The age of the lamb will affect treatment decision:

- **< 6 hours old** - Still have brown fat reserve. If weak but has a suck reflex – stomach tube with warm colostrum 50ml (ideally from mother), dry thoroughly & place in warming box and monitor
- **> 6 hours old** - Brown fat reserves have depleted – lamb needs energy source urgently. **FIRST** Inject intraperitoneal glucose. **SECOND** place in warming box. Once swallow reflex returns – tube 50ml colostrum.

The Farm Advisory Service offers an online decision tree to help you decide on the right treatment for hypothermic lambs. It can be found at

https://epidemiology.sruc.ac.uk/shiny/consulting/new_born_lambs/

A decision tree for suspected hypothermia and hypoglycaemia in newborn lambs

Please press start to begin.

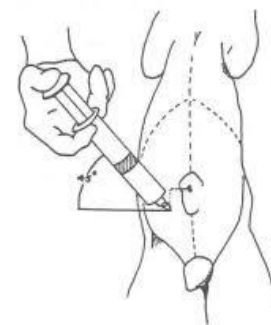
Start



If you are unsure of the lamb's age, ALWAYS assume they are older than 6 hours to avoid risk of a diabetic coma

Intraperitoneal injection

The current available glucose solution is a 50% concentration, this should be diluted to 20% with boiled water and administered warm. E.g. 4kg lamb getting 10ml/kg would require 40ml – 16ml of glucose solution and 24ml of sterile water/cooled boiled water. Hold the lamb suspended by its forelimbs, with its back against your body. Use a 19 gauge 1 inch needle, insert the needle approximately one inch to the side and one inch lower than the umbilicus, pointing the needle in the direction of the lambs pelvis. Slowly inject glucose solution. Ask a vet to show you this technique.



Lambing Course

Thank you for to all attendees of the lambing course. It was a great turnout, and we hope you all found it



useful. The practical lambing simulator and ringing and injection stations we are sure will currently be paying off in lambing sheds around the county as we speak. If anyone has any feedback, please let us know. We hope to run more courses throughout the year so let us know if there is anything you are specifically interested in!

Vet Attestation Form Reminder!



From the 13th of December 2023, if you are a non-farm-assured keeper of sheep consigning animals to slaughter you will need a Vet attestation form in order to trade. The purpose of a vet attestation is to comply with export requirements as some parts of most animals slaughtered in the UK are exported to the EU. If a form is needed, a vet visit may be required for an inspection of animals and a discussion of welfare, health and biosecurity – this is a great opportunity to also discuss any other concerns you may also have on farm. It is important to note that DEFRA's Animal Health and Welfare Review Pathway scheme will also fulfil the requirements for the form, so it is very worthwhile applying to the scheme to gain government funded vet time on farm. Please don't hesitate to get in contact with us for further information about the attestation forms and/or the Animal Health and Welfare Review. **Book your appointments now to prevent the rush and panic before sending animals in**