



THE
WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP



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Pre-lambing Preparation

It is vital to ensure the nutrition of pregnant ewes is optimal in order to make lambing season as successful as possible. Inadequate ewe nutrition is associated with many lambing issues... watery mouth, twin lamb disease, prolapses, mastitis are just a few! So, especially if last season was difficult, it is worthwhile investigating ewe nutrition.

Body Condition Score

Type of ewe	Target BCS pre-lambing
Hill	2
Upland	2.5
Lowland	3

Assessing the body condition score of ewes pre-lambing will help to guide whether you are feeding them correctly. Body condition is scored on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very thin and 5 being very fat. Target body condition scores are in the table on the left – if you need a hand with how to body condition score please contact us.

It is important to do this regularly and at least 6-8 weeks pre lambing so that diet changes can be made accordingly. It is often a good idea to separate off thin ewes or those expecting multiple lambs and feeding them more to provide increased energy and protein intakes. This is because in the last few weeks of pregnancy the lambs will do the majority of their growing, up to 75% and therefore use the ewes' resources, leaving a thin ewe at high risk of succumbing to twin lamb disease. The combination of scanning and body condition scoring allow for grouping of ewes effectively. It may seem excessive but a thin Twin and ok Twin group etc will pay off when it comes to lambing success and subsequent milk yield.

Metabolic Blood Testing

The timing of these blood tests is vital – they should be performed **3 weeks prior to lambing** – earlier than this some energy issues may be missed, later than this then nutritional adjustments may not provide as much benefit. The sheep you sample should be representative of the flock and ideally include 5 animals minimum from each group – single, twins, triplets. When sampling, we are looking at:

BHB (blood ketone) levels

- Ewes in negative energy balance, will have high ketone levels as they are not getting the energy they require. These ewes try to use body fat as an energy resource, putting them at risk of **twin lamb disease**. Ewes with twin lamb disease appear off feed, dull and depressed initially before it progresses to nervous signs (blindness) and eventually death. With only a 33% chance of survival, it is something we really want to prevent. Ewes with high BHB levels also have a higher risk of **mastitis** due to reduced milk production and poor colostrum production.

Urea levels

- Blood urea levels represent the level of recent protein intake. Protein is essential for production of colostrum and milk. As you well know, good colostrum is vital for future lamb health so poor colostrum is often involved in high incidence of **watery mouth** and **joint ill**.

Albumin levels

- Albumin is a protein produced by the liver. Low levels of such indicates chronic disease such as liver fluke, blood loss from something such as Haemonchus, Johne's disease or chronic undernutrition.

Please make sure that diet changes are carefully managed especially when housing ewes from grazing. If you can offer forages outside ahead it assist with rumen transition and then when hard feed is added it is less of a change.



New advances in navel hygiene... Introducing NoBACZ Navel

Hygiene at lambing time is key to reducing infection and losses. As an industry, we've worked hard to move away from blanket antibiotic use, and now good hygiene is where additional gains will be seen. Good hygiene at lambing or calving can be split into four main categories:

1. Colostrum hygiene & quality
2. Navel hygiene
3. Equipment hygiene
4. Pen hygiene

For this edition, we will focus on new advances in navel hygiene.

Until now best practice has been to apply 'strong iodine' to the umbilicus, and sometimes ear-tagging sites. Dipping (using a non-return dip cup) offers the best coverage of the navel. The aim is to provide desiccation of the umbilicus and disinfection of the surface. However, in recent years iodine supply has become more difficult, and prices have soared! Many clients often advise that it is too easily licked off or drips off the navel and that re-applications are required.



We have stocked iodine alternatives such as Super7plus for some time as a very effective drying agent but there is another product now available. NoBACZ Navel is a liquid solution containing a proprietary blend of shellac and metal salts in an ethanol base. It provides greater desiccation (drying out) of the umbilicus than iodine or chlorhexidine (with or without spirit), and 360° protection by forming a non-colonizable waterproof barrier – protecting the lamb from the environment. Uniquely, it also contains a bitter agent making it lick-resistant so that cows or ewes won't interfere and lick it off the navel.

Flock Health Ltd ran a randomized control trial with 6840 lambs (half having their navels and ear-tagging sites doses with strong iodine compared with half dosed with NoBACZ Navel). **NoBACZ navel demonstrated superior protection compared with iodine** in the study¹ with a **21% reduction in mortality** compared with the iodine group. The study also showed a benefit in dipping over spraying, and a clear benefit in applying product to the ear before tagging. However a dirty, contaminated dip cup won't give the same results so bear this in mind.

For lambs, producers should target eight-week weights of more than 20 kg. In the study, lambs that had NoBACZ navel applied to the navel and tagging sites were more than 230g heavier than their iodine group counterparts at eight weeks.

Please speak to us if you want to know more information around the options for navel care available.

NoBACZ navel is now available to buy from us - call the team to order yours today!



[1] Lovatt, F. (2024). A randomised controlled trial to compare the use of a novel product (NoBACZ Navel) with strong iodine to protect navel and ear tag sites of neonatal lambs (with some additional data on neonatal calves). British Cattle Veterinary Association Congress. October 17- 19, The Celtic Manor Resort, Newport, Wales

Need a lambing refresher? New to lambing sheep? Children keen to help out in the lambing shed?

BEGINNERS LAMBING COURSE
7th & 19th February 2025
2-4.30pm @ Quedgeley Practice

Email farmteam@woodvet.co.uk or call 01452 543 999 to book your place. £35pp.



Wood Vets Farm Team



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