

## Farming Connect Advisory Service

Tailored Support to help you meet your goals



## Farming connect advisory service

The Farming Connect Advisory Service grants are now open. The service consists of advice tailored to your farm and can be used to fund a range of health and welfare investigations. One-to-one advice is 70% funded. In order to access the grant money you'll be required to be farming connect registered which can be done for free online or contact via phone on 03456 000 813.



## Well done Guy!

**Congratulations to Guy for winning the Livestock Vet Award for antimicrobial stewardship at the Arwain DCG conference at Aberystwyth.**

## Summer Schedule

**We have a busy summer schedule ahead of us, make sure you come over to say hello to us!**

### Youngstock conference

*20th July*

*Harper Adams University*

### Oswestry Show

*5th August*

### Dairy Day

*13th September*

*The International Centre Telford*

## Pre-Tupping Preparations

Tupping might still seem a long way away but to achieve maximum efficiency, early preparation is vital. Our focus over the next few months will be achieving the correct body condition score (BCS) for mating and of course not forgetting about the rams.

To allow the ewe to recover body condition after lambing, the first step is weaning. This should be done at least 10 weeks before mating. We recommend splitting the ewes into at least three groups – thin, fit and fat and manage their grazing accordingly. Ideally these groups should be re-assessed every 2-3 weeks and ewes reassigned if necessary. If thin ewes on good grazing do not gain condition after 3-4 weeks it would be worth while investigating why - poor teeth, lameness or ill health such as Johne's OPA or Maedi Visna.



As well as assessing the ewes body condition the udders should be checked. Good practice is to record any issues at lambing. Any lumps in the udder could be because of a sub-clinical infection and has the potential to cause problems next spring.

Very low BCS at weaning (<2) has a negative effect on ovulation rate. Nutritional effects on ovulation rate is influenced by combination of long-term nutrition and current levels of feeding. Long-term nutrition should be considered as the most important factor. Flushing ewes before mating can be used as an additional tool for those ewes that are less than ideal BCS in the final run-up to mating. As a rule of thumb, it takes six to eight weeks for ewes to gain one unit of BCS if they are on high-quality grass. Where ewes are lean or resources are limited, there is need to consider early weaning and prioritising the ewes at a much earlier stage.

Ewes are subject to stress when groups of sheep are mixed. Ewe groups should not be changed in the 10 day pre tupping. Stress can led to lower feed intake and can cause reduced conception rates.

Now let's think about the rams. Rams should be checked at least 10 weeks before mating, this gives you the chance to correct any issues prior to breeding.



## The 'Five T's' method

- **Toes**  
Check locomotion, legs and feet
- **Teeth**  
Check for under or overshot jaw, gaps and molar abscesses
- **Testicles**  
Measure and check firmness (like a flexed bicep) with no lumps or bumps
- **Tone**  
Aim for body condition between 3.5–4.0 (spine well covered)
- **Treat**  
Check vaccinations are up-to-date (clostridia, pasteurella), parasites, lameness, shearing

Poor fertility is a consequence of testicular degeneration – soft testicles and poor-quality semen. Testicular degeneration often occurs during hot weather in summer. The scrotum is rich in sweat glands that cool the testicles when exposed to the breeze. However, when rams are hot, they lie down to transfer heat away from their bodies through their abdomen, but while lying on their testicles they can 'cook' them. Ensure rams are shorn, not overfat and have plenty of shade and water to help avoid this. Rams need to be fed a high-protein diet 10 weeks before tupping. If body condition is low, or testicle tone or size is poor, 500g (1lb) of 18% CP feed per day can improve semen quality and quantity. Check magnesium and calcium levels to avoid urinary calculi (stones).

We can test the fertility of rams by collecting and analysing a semen sample. This is vital to be confident that the ram is going to work effectively.

Something that is often overlooked is the timing of purchase. They need at least 3 weeks to allow them to acclimatise to your system, and for their rumen to adjust to a new diet. Though ideally they should be purchased at least 10 weeks before the start of tupping to allow them to be quarantined, treated for worms, vaccinated, checked (as above) and vet fertility tested.

For further information on preparations to tupping please **contact us on 01978 311444**

