



May Bank Holidays

It's been a busy couple of months here at the practice, we couldn't have wished for better weather to welcome in this year's crop of lambs, but it's time for that grass to get growing!

Just to remind you about the two May bank holidays, these will be on the **5th May** and **26th May**. As always, one of our vets will be on duty to assist you with any emergency work but the office will be closed on these days.

Bull fertility testing

Is your bull up to the job this summer? When it comes to achieving good fertility rates in our cattle, there is a lot of focus on cow infertility, with the fertility of the bull quite often taken for granted. Infertile bulls are rare but recent studies have shown that more than 20% of UK bulls are classed as subfertile.

Does it matter if he's subfertile?

The short answer to this is yes. Typically a fully fertile bull running with about 50 cows, should be able to achieve a conception rate of about 60%, resulting in 94% of cows getting pregnant in a 9 week service period. If we were to compare this to a sub-fertile bull only achieving 40% conception rate, the number of cows pregnant drops drastically to 78%. Not only do we get a drop in overall pregnancy number, we also fail to reach the target of 65% or more cows calving in the first 3 weeks of the calving period. Getting bulls tested about 6-8 weeks prior to the mating period will provide a good indication of current ability but also allow time for plan B if there are doubts about his fertility.

A bull fertility test typically takes about an hour and consists of a physical examination and evaluating a sperm sample. Lameness is often one of the main failing points when it comes to assessing soundness to breed. Laminitis is a real concern when buying a bull, pre-sale diets are designed to push the bulls ready for sales and a sudden change of diet from a high concentrate diet

to forage can cause inflammation in their feet, leading to a lifetime of foot problems. This can be avoided by gradual change in diet. Lameness is also capable of reducing libido and has a dramatic effect on semen quality which may last for several months.

When taking into account all the costs associated with feeding and keeping a bull, these add up to approximately £1660/year; you want to make sure he's fertile! To look at it another way, a bull will cost you on average, £55 per calf born if he sires 30 calves in a mating season or £33 per calf born if he sires 50; so its worth making sure he can produce lots of calves; BEFORE he begins work! Bull fertility should not be taken for granted as the consequences can be catastrophic.

Speak to one of our vets for more information on 01978 311444. Funding opportunities are available through farming connect.





As previously mentioned, unlike other strongyles causing parasitic gastroenteritis, faecal egg counts are of little value in early diagnosis which is best determined on clinical signs, grazing history and online forecasts for your area. Treatment protocols should involve a 'white' wormer as unlike other round worms there is very little-known resistance issues. As well as using wormers it is good practice to not graze lambs on land grazed by similar aged lambs during the previous year, this breaks up the lifecycle of the worm and reduces our dependence on worming products.

To discuss worming this spring and throughout the grazing season, please contact us on 01978 311444 and speak to one of the team.

Nematodirus risk

Nematodirus is a type of round worm that primarily affects lambs. The ingested larvae live in the mucosa of the small intestines affecting absorption of nutrients and causing protein loss, diarrhoea and weight loss. Affected lambs often have a tucked-up appearance and dull rough fleeces. If left untreated mortality rates can be high. Coccidiosis causes disease in lambs of around the same age, it is important to differentiate between the two, or in some cases both infections can occur together.

The main risk period of Nematodirus is late spring, the larvae require a temperature of 10-15°C to become infectious. When this happens, we see a huge flush of infective larvae on the pasture. Some of you will be aware of the forecasting tools available online to try and predict when this will be, these rely on local weather station to estimate the 'spring flush'.

Ingested larvae damage the small intestine, causing inflammation, and severe protein and water loss resulting in diarrhoea and dehydration. It often happens suddenly, and mortality can be high. As the clinical symptoms are caused by the worm larvae, faecal egg counts are not always useful to diagnose Nematodirus infection in young lambs at the early stage of the disease, as by the time eggs are detected in the faeces, infection has already occurred, and it is often too late. However, FECs can be used to confirm an outbreak. Lambs that do survive and recover often acquire a strong immunity to re-infection.

To view the risk of Nematodirus in your area, please visit the link below.

<https://www.scops.org.uk/forecasts/nematodirus-forecast/>

Sunflower competition

It's that time of year again! After a very disappointing crop of sunflowers last year, Guy has sourced some seeds from a client of ours, we are expecting big things.

Keep an eye out for updates on our social media pages! Can Guy win it for an unprecedented two years running?

