



Early Worm Warning

The sudden increase in temperatures in February puts earlier-born lambs at risk from nematodirus a type of gut worm that causes severe scour and sometimes death in young lambs; warns the Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep (SCOPS) group.

The SCOPS Nematodirus Forecast at www.scops.org.uk/nematodirus already shows many locations at moderate risk, and a confirmed case of disease reported in January-born lambs in Cheshire means farmers need to be on high alert.

Nematodirus eggs look set to hatch much earlier than last year amid recent record-breaking temperatures in February. Locations throughout the UK are already showing a moderate risk on the SCOPS Nematodirus Forecast map, which means a hatch is likely to take place within seven to 14 days if warm weather persists, putting lambs aged six to 12 weeks of age at the most risk. If you are worried about the risk to your flock then we can offer you Daleside Worm Watch. It is a structured plan, including 7 worm egg counts throughout the grazing season with an optional fluke check at the end of the season. This NEW service is offered at a 25% discounted rate. If you are interested then please enquire with a member of the farm team.



Daleside

Veterinary Group

APRIL 2019

Meeting Reminder

Digital Dermatitis: A Successful Story

Location: White Horse Inn,
Overton

Date: Wednesday 3rd April 2019

Time: 10.30am | Lunch Included

Guest Speaker: Sara Pederson
an RCVS Specialist in Cattle
Health and Production Veterinary
Consultant will be coming to talk
about successful Digital Dermatitis
control.

This will then be followed by a farm walk kindly hosted by Mr Mike Done of Asney Park Farm, Erbistock who will be sharing his success story with us.

Please call the office 01978 311444 or email lauren@dalesidevets.co.uk to register your attendance

We look forward to seeing you there!



What to do with the aborting ewe?

Losses at lambing impact profoundly on the profitability of sheep farming.

50% of losses occur before 48 hours of birth, with 30% due to abortion or stillbirth. Most abortions are caused by infectious agents, including enzootic abortion, toxoplasmosis, campylobacter, salmonella and listeriosis. Only 20% of abortions are due to other factors such as poor nutrition, parasite burdens of worms or fluke, and stress. We have an opportunity to control the infectious agents that cause abortion and significantly reduce lamb losses as a result.

Accurate recording of births, deaths and abortions is critical to allow timely intervention when losses get too high. It also allows you to benchmark yourself against other similar flocks and year on year against your own figures. Did an intervention you put in last season work or not? Was it financially beneficial? Some abortions in the flock are inevitable but if abortions/stillbirths reach more than 2% or you

have many abortions over a short time period it would be beneficial to begin investigating the cause.

The best samples to have ready is aborted foetus and placenta. This gives us the best chance of reaching a diagnosis. Acting quickly in the face of an abortion storm allows control measures and possible treatments to be put in place to minimise losses in the rest of the flock.

If you notice after lambing that abortion rates are high we can still diagnose infectious causes in the flock retrospectively. There is a free test for common abortion agents available which involves bleeding 6-8 aborted ewes within 4 months of lambing. Whilst this cannot affect losses this season, if disease is present it can direct vaccination and minimise losses for the next lambing season.

Even without knowing the cause of an abortion you can put control measures in place yourself to reduce disease spread. Any aborting ewe should be permanently marked/ tagged and isolated away from the flock. Aborted material should be collected either for sampling or for disposal. Aborted material and contaminated bedding should be burned. The ewe should remain isolated until after lambing. We would always recommend lambing in gloves for hygiene reasons and good biosecurity but it is especially important in flocks facing abortion problems to prevent spread from ewe to ewe but also prevent spread to humans as many of the agents are also dangerous to human health.

Fortunately vaccination is possible to protect against the two most common infectious causes of abortion; enzootic abortion and toxoplasmosis. Ewes should be vaccinated 3-4 weeks before tupping to give protection for that breeding season. A single vaccination offers long lasting protection.

Acting quickly to mitigate the effects of an abortion storm can save huge losses this year and in those following. Diagnosis of the cause and farm specific control measures will allow a targeted approach to minimise lamb losses and improve the health and welfare of your stock. Even small increases in lambs sold can improve margins on sheep farms and have an economic benefit. It is as with navel ill and should include antibiotics and anti-inflammatories.

Preventing staggers

Estimations suggest that 1% of cattle in the UK will experience clinical grass staggers, with up to 30% of all clinical cases resulting in death and significant direct losses. A far larger percentage of animals, including ewes, will experience sub-clinical cases that may affect overall animal performance.

Grass staggers is a very real threat for suckler and dairy cows at turnout as well as ewes post-lambing. However, it is easily managed by assessing and managing the on-farm risks.

Grass staggers is defined as a deficiency of available dietary magnesium. Magnesium is a key macro-nutrient in the diet and is essential for bone growth and maintenance, nervous system function and an aid to fibre digestion in the rumen. Rapidly growing spring grass typically has a low magnesium content (0.1 to 0.2% in dry matter) which, combined with its low dry matter and rapid transit through the rumen, can result in very low

levels of magnesium absorption into the animal's bloodstream. Magnesium is predominantly stored in the bones of the animal and consequently is not readily available when dietary supply is compromised. Stock therefore rely on daily magnesium supplementation to maintain adequate blood magnesium levels at times where risk is increased such as spring, and autumn.

In addition to the low magnesium content of spring grass, a number of other dietary factors can compromise magnesium absorption in ruminants, further elevating the problem of grass staggers:

To help alleviate the risk of grass staggers long fibre should always be available in the form of hay or silage, to help slow the transition of wet spring grass through the rumen. It is also essential to maintain dietary energy levels (notably starch and sugar) to help prevent excess rumen ammonia, dry matter intake, an adequate supply of minerals, trace elements and vitamins, and to also ensure a suitable supplementary sodium (salt) source is available to readdress the sodium to potassium ratio. Finally, and most importantly, it is vital to ensure stock have daily access to a suitable magnesium supplement.