



Daleside
Veterinary Group

FARM NEWSLETTER

JULY 2020

Team News



This month will see a new face joining the veterinary team. Bedwyr Roberts is joining the practice in mid July having graduated from Liverpool University. Having grown up on the family beef and sheep farm near Denbigh, Bedwyr is passionate about farm animal

medicine. Some of you may already be familiar with Bedwyr. He has previously spent time with us as a student, where he made an excellent impression, and we are really looking forward to having him on board as a permanent member of the team.

Covid-19 Precautions

We would like to say a big thank you to all our clients for being so cooperative and understanding during the present lockdown.

Social distancing is vital and yet not easy to achieve in a normal work situation. We really appreciate that farmers are finding ingenious ways to restrain cattle and sheep for us while still keeping a 2 metre distance. Where circumstances dictate that we need your help to give an animal essential treatment and we cannot guarantee that we can stay more than 2 metres apart we may need to ask any helpers to wear gloves, face away or even to wear facemasks that we can provide. So if we sometimes ask people to stand clear or insist on PPE for everybody, please do not be offended - we only want everybody to stay safe.



Know your Johne's Disease risks, status and how to control the disease

Johne's disease is caused by a bacteria known as *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* (commonly known as MAP).

Johne's disease is a chronic, debilitating and irreversible disease of cattle and all other ruminants that affects the lining of their intestines, reducing its capacity to absorb both fluid and nutrients. While only a small proportion of cattle will show clinical signs of wasting or scour at any one time, it is likely that a much larger proportion of the herd are infected and only showing very mild signs of the disease e.g. higher cell counts, reduced milk yields, and increased susceptibility to other diseases.

The bacteria that cause Johne's disease can be shed in the faeces, colostrum or milk of infected animals, and is able to survive in the environment for a considerable period of time. Animals are usually infected as young calves. Around 80% of infections occur in the first month of life, with the biggest risk period thought to be the first few days of life. Resistance to new infection increases as the animal gets older, and new infections in adult animals are relatively rare. Despite picking up the infection when they are young, they can be infected for a variable length of time, often years, without showing any signs of disease or being a source of disease to other animals. At a certain point, the immune response of the cattle towards the bacteria can change and they will start to show outward signs of the disease. At this point, they also become infectious to other animals.

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For many dairy farms an annual review of your Johnes disease control plan will be due by 31st October. An effective control plan will focus on either reducing the level of Johnes disease in your herd, or preventing it entering the herd if there are currently no signs of the disease. To be able to do this, testing is needed to determine the Johnes status of the herd and ideally the individual cows too. There are plenty of available ways to test for Johnes's disease.

One option for screening a herd is to carry out targeted individual milk sampling of animals with a history of poor yields, weight loss or high somatic cell counts. However, the more samples you take, the more accurate your Johnes's disease status will be. By testing all adult cows regularly, efforts to control the spread of the disease can be targeted at the high risk cows. Care needs to be taken not to carry out Johnes antibody tests too soon after an animal has been TB tested as this can lead to false positive results.

Johnes disease is also a big issue in beef suckler herds, and it can have a big impact on cow and calf performance as well as causing losses from a herd. An increasing number of our suckler herds are testing for Johnes disease by taking annual blood samples from the adults. These test results can then be used to reduce the level or keep out Johnes disease from your herd.

Pre Topping Checks

Being well prepared for topping is vitally important for a compact and successful lambing period. So here is a whistle stop tour of the important things to check and get right:

Teeth: check for broken mouths, but don't forget to check the back teeth too.

Tone/ body condition: This is absolutely vital when it comes to fertility. It takes a full 8 weeks to change one body condition score. BCS targets depend on your breed so check first. Lambs should be weaned at least 8 weeks before topping which makes an ideal opportunity to get you hand in and check condition. Ewes can then be split and managed accordingly to ensure tip top condition for topping. Don't forget to check and monitor your tups' body condition too.

Testicles for tups/ teats for ewes: Cop a good feel! Any lumps or bumps in either type of bag do not bode well for breeding stock. Checking your tup is in full working order is crucial for a compact lambing period so talk to us about a full pre breeding vet check and fertility test for your tups in the next couple of months.

Toes: Topping is a very active time so lameness is not going to do anything for libido or ability.



Treatments/Vaccination: is the other important consideration at this time. Abortion can cause serious economic losses to a flock but luckily we have vaccinations for the two most common causes: enzootic abortion and toxoplasmosis. These diseases account for over 60% of sheep abortions, most of which are caused by enzootic. Enzootic abortion is severely contagious between ewes, it also lies dormant so that seemingly unaffected ewes can abort the following year. Toxoplasmosis does not spread between ewes but it spread by cats. Luckily the vaccinations for both are very effective as long as they are given at the appropriate time prior to mating. Talk to us about an appropriate vaccination schedule for your flock as soon as possible.

