



Daleside
Veterinary Group

FARM NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021



Preparing for lambing

Spring is on the horizon once again, and so is lambing season. Late pregnancy can be a stressful time for ewes which predisposes them to various conditions, of which the main ones are outlined in this newsletter.

Pregnancy toxæmia, or twin lamb disease is more commonly seen in ewes carrying multiple lambs. When the energy demands from pregnancy becomes too great for the ewe, she enters a ketotic state. These ewes present as dull, depressed and inappetent and may exhibit head pressing, teeth grinding and blindness. The condition is often associated with dietary insufficiency, which can be due to poor forage quality, inadequate concentrate or high stocking density. We can minimise the risk by ensuring appropriate feed ration according to the ewes condition, stage of pregnancy and number of lambs being carried. To know if ewes in the last month are receiving enough energy and protein in the ration we can take blood samples 2-4 weeks before lambing to assess BHB, urea and albumin

levels. The wrong nutrition at this stage of pregnancy can produce weak lambs that are more prone to disease, along with poor colostrum quality.

Hypocalcaemia – a low level of blood calcium, can occur in late pregnancy and is often associated with a sudden change in diet, a period of anorexia, incorrect mineral balance or a stressful event. Older ewes and those out at pasture in late pregnancy tend to be most at risk. Muscle weakness and tremors, staggering and neck turned back are common signs that a ewe is suffering from hypocalcaemia. Again, diet is vital to prevent hypocalcaemia as well as minimising stressful events such as handling or transporting.

Vaginal prolapse is relatively common to see during the late stages of pregnancy. The risk of a ewe presenting with a vaginal prolapse increases with overfeeding, high body condition, hypocalcaemia, previous difficult lambing and carrying multiple lambs. Hygiene is very important when correcting the prolapse and then using a prolapse retention device such as a prolapse harness or a prolapse spoon. A ewe that has suffered from a vaginal prolapse has an increased risk of one the following lambing season and so we recommend not to breed from her again. Whether you are lambing indoor or outdoor, hygiene is essential. Lambs need dry, clean bedding away from the wind, rain, and snow to thrive. This can be achieved by placing lime down under clean bedding and maintaining a top layer of clean, dry straw. Ensure there is adequate drainage from the lambing pen and remove afterbirths from the lambing area and dispose of them appropriately.



The majority of lamb losses from the time of scanning occur within the first 48 hours following birth. It is therefore a crucial window that will impact greatly on lambing percentage, productivity, and future income. It is essential that the navel of the lambs is dipped in a strong iodine solution (10%). This prevents the introduction of infection via the navel. Navel ill lambs appear generally unwell and suffer from a high temperature. This can lead onto joint ill which is a very painful condition and difficult to treat. Colostrum provides energy and antibody protection to the newborn lamb. To get the best start, a 4kg lamb needs 200ml colostrum in the first 4 hours of life and another 800ml before the end of 24 hours. Remember to check the ewe's udder to ensure there are no problems that could decrease the quality and quantity of colostrum. Here at the practice, we stock high quality lamb colostrum replacer for those cases where the ewe cannot provide enough colostrum.

Watery mouth is a bacterial infection caused by E. coli. Signs include excessive saliva, lethargy, failure to suck and a swollen abdomen. Routinely using oral antibiotics on all lambs is becoming harder to justify as blanket treatment of all newborn lambs is unnecessary, costly and increases the risk of bacteria on the farm becoming resistant to that antibiotic. We therefore suggest a more of a targeted approach and dosing should be reserved for lambs at higher risk of infection, such as:

- low birth weight lambs
- triplets
- lambs born later in lambing period into less hygienic environments where cases have occurred
- lambs born to ill or thin ewes
- lambs born from assisted lambings

As always, we are more than happy to assist if you are struggling with a lambing. We have facilities at our Penyffordd branch for difficult lambings and caesareans, call us on 01978 311444.

Lambing Hamper Competition

We are running a competition on Facebook and Twitter to win a lambing hamper. All you need to do is go to facebook.com/DalesideFarm/ or twitter.com/DalesideFarmVet, 'Like' or 'Follow' our page, and 'Share' the post about the competition. We will be drawing the prize winner on Friday the 26th February. Good Luck!





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Farming connect health clinics

We have been given the green light to be able to restart farming connect health clinics again. However, these must be tied in with other visits and must not be a sole purpose visit e.g. we are on farm for a TB test.

If you would like to discuss how this funding could be used on your farm then please get in touch and a vet will be happy to assist.

Leptospirosis Vaccination

Leptospirosis can have a detrimental effect on a cattle herds profitability but can often go un-noticed.

These losses are mainly due to reduced milk yield, reduced fertility, weak calves, and an increase in the number of abortions. It can also be a human health risk, with farmers at particular risk from the urine of infected cattle. Risk factors for leptospirosis in cattle include buying-in stock of unknown disease status, using a bull of unknown disease status, grazing near waterways and grazing with sheep.

If you remember back to our bulk milk testing campaign a few months ago, we also investigated the prevalence of Leptospirosis on our farms. Out of the unvaccinated herds we tested,

39% came back as being positive. As seen in the graph below, anything above 0.11 is considered to be positive.

Vaccination remains an important control measure and continues to be effective at reducing the incidence of clinical disease and the risk of infection. It is important that your herd is fully vaccinated before Spring turnout because uninfected cattle are more likely to be exposed to Leptospirosis. Natural service also spreads leptospirosis so remember to vaccinate the bull. Currently we have a seasonal offer on Leptospirosis vaccine until the end of March.

For a quote or to discuss vaccinating your herd please get in touch.

