



Daleside
Veterinary Group

FARM NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2021



Coccidiosis in Lambs

Coccidiosis is caused by the parasite *Eimeria*, which invades the gut wall, resulting in diarrhoea, reduced growth rates and can even cause death if left untreated. It is commonly a problem in lambs between 2-8 weeks old as they start to graze and ingest the oocyst (egg) from the grass.

The main risk factor for coccidiosis is high stocking density in intensive systems, with the most contaminated areas often being around creep feeders – therefore, it is important to move the feeder around every couple of days. *Coccidia* oocysts are killed by direct sunlight, heat and drying out, reducing the amount of mud around the feeders will result in a lower environmental build-up of oocysts. It is also important not to graze later born lambs on pasture previously grazed by earlier lambs. A high number of oocysts will be present in the environment along side reduced immunity in younger lambs will result in clinical disease.

History and clinical signs are vital to diagnose coccidiosis, alongside Faecal egg counts. This can be done by us here at Daleside. All that is required are fresh faecal samples from a range of lambs, remember to refrigerate the samples if it is not being examined immediately. Based on the results we can advise on whether oral drench treatment will be appropriate and which product to use.

Spring Is In The Air

Now the clocks have gone forward, and the weather is improving, life feels more optimistic. It is great to see cattle and sheep out grazing as we travel on our rounds. The continued progress with the COVID vaccination program also gives reason for optimism that before too long life can gradually begin to return to some degree of normality.





means that the damage to the guts is done by the immature worms that are not yet producing eggs and so faecal egg counting is not a reliable indicator of risk for this species. However, there are ways to minimise the risk and treat effectively.

Main risk factors

If your lambs are grazing pasture that carried lambs last spring and you answer yes to one or more of these questions, your lambs are at risk.

- Are they old enough to be eating significant amounts of grass? (generally 6-12 weeks of age but may be younger if ewes are not milking well)
- Do you have groups where there is also likely to be a challenge from coccidiosis? For example, mixed aged lambs are a higher risk
- Has there been a sudden, cold snap recently followed by a period of warm weather?
- Have you got lambs that are under other stresses e.g. triplets, fostered, on young or older ewes.

If you cannot avoid high risk pasture grazed by lambs the previous spring and decide you need to treat for nematodirus, we advise the use of a white (1-BZ) drench. These are still highly effective against this parasite on most farms and suitable for young lambs. To help with the timing of the drench there are online tools to help us determine the risk, Nematodirus forecast on the SCOPS website evaluates the weather to try and determine when the eggs will hatch on pasture. By using this in combination with your grazing history we can treat the lambs before signs of clinical disease.

We have been able to secure some great prices on wormers and coccidiosis treatment for this coming grazing season. Please contact the practice for any queries about worming or to get a quote for wormers and we will be happy to advise you.

Worm Control

By now many lambs will be out on pasture starting to eat grass and depending less on the milk from the ewes. Cattle turnout time is also fast approaching. This brings the new challenge of worm control throughout late spring and summer.

With resistance to wormers becoming more of a concern year after year, gone are the days of blanket treating everything at set dates. We encourage proactive monitoring to enable us to only use wormers when necessary to reduce the drive of resistance and as a way of being more cost-effective.

Faecal egg counting is a quick and easy way of monitoring the worm burden on your farm and enables us to make worming decisions on a case by case basis. As with the coccidiosis sampling mentioned above, all that's needed are fresh faecal samples dropped off at the practice for a quick result – a coccidiosis and worm check can be done on the same samples. We now have a special offer of 4 for the price of 3 on all faecal egg counts!

It must be noted that there is one exception to relying on faecal egg counts. Nematodirus in lambs has a slightly different lifecycle to the other gut worms. This subtle difference





doesn't stand out easily in milk and can be confused with mastitis clots.

Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health have recently launched Ubroseal Blue. This update to classic Ubroseal, from white to easier to see blue, can help you to be confident of best practice when it comes to teat sealant administration and removal. Blue teat sealants have been popular for some time in other countries such as the USA.

Ubroseal Blue (similar to the colour of Bluetac) is clearly visible. This makes it easier to be sure that all teat sealant has been removed when stripping out after calving and before milking. It is also easier to differentiate traces of teat sealant from mastitis clots. The blue colour also helps to highlight if traces are getting through to the milk filters - if you're seeing traces of sealant regularly in the milk filters it's worth reviewing administration and removal protocols.

The blue colour will not stain the milk if it does get into the bulk milk tank and it is perfectly safe if indigested by calves. For advice on how to administer and remove the teat sealant or to discuss drying off cows in general one of the vets will be happy to discuss this further.

Ubroseal Blue

The benefits of internal teat sealants for cows at drying off are well established - reduced risk of new infections during the dry period results in fewer cases of mastitis in early lactation.

Until now, all teat sealants in the UK have been white in colour. Whilst this is what we're all used to, it does have some disadvantages in that white teat sealant

Barren ewe checks

Have you experienced more barren ewes or an increase in abortion rates this lambing season? Blood sampling these ewes to check for the presence of antibodies could help us determine the cause and advise on prevention for next year.

The two most common causes of barren/abortions in ewes are Enzootic abortion and Toxoplasmosis, both of which have an effective vaccine available. Some funding is available for these tests.

If this is something you have experienced this year, then give us a call to arrange an appointment.

