



Daleside
Veterinary Group

FARM NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2024



Christmas Party

Our annual Christmas Party will be held on Tuesday 10th December 7:30pm at The Wrexham Rugby Club, it would be great to see you all there and remember there will be a prize for the best Christmas jumper! Please let us know by the 6th December if you are intending on attending.



Happy retirement!

David has been a familiar face working as a farm animal vet in the Wrexham area for over 30 years and has decided that now is the right time to retire. I'm sure you would all like to join us in wishing David the best of luck with his retirement and we are all grateful for your hard work, care and compassion over the years.

Christmas opening hours

24th December - 8:30am-3pm

25th - 26th December - Emergency service

27th - 30th December - Back to normal office hours 8.30am-5.30pm

31st December - 8:30am-3pm

1st January - Emergency service

Our medicine delivery service every Tuesday and Friday is largely unaffected by the holidays. To manage the increased demand, our delivery service will now be leaving the practice earlier on delivery days, and so please get your orders in before the end of the previous day to help us ensure we have what you need in stock, and to get your order to you. If you are collecting medicine from the practice, please ring beforehand to ensure we have sufficient stock to minimise your waiting times.



Ewe pregnancy scanning

The tups have been busy over the last couple of months, with the next step being pregnancy scanning to determine their success, but it's not all down to the tups with scanning percentage being influenced by several factors. Barren rates within flock should be below 2%. Greater than that warrants further investigation. Reasons for a high barren rate include:

- Poor conception rates
 - This is due to females not cycling at the beginning of the mating period, or fertilisation failure. These can be identified by a lot of ewes repeating or as empty at scanning
- Early embryonic death
 - This is often linked with infectious or nutritional deficit. These are often identified as empty at scanning, or the scanner might see some signs of resorbing embryos



The first step in investigating poor scanning results is understanding the history of the farm. Ewe nutrition prior to tupping is a great place to start – What were their body condition scores prior to tupping and has there been a change during the tupping period? Thin ewes at tupping generally scan poorly due to the link between energy and egg production. This process takes weeks and so nutrition prior to tupping can be highly influential, the traditional method of flushing can help to stimulate a strong oestrus cycle, but establishing a good nutritional plane a couple months prior to tupping is equally important. On the other end of the scale, overfat ewes can be an issue. Whilst they might not have a high barren rate, it is proven for them to carry fewer lambs.

Ruling out nutritional deficits leads us onto the next stage of the investigation – infectious diseases. Over 80% of infectious abortions are caused by three pathogens, Enzootic abortion, *Toxoplasma gondii* and *Campylobacter*. We can take blood samples from barren ewes and assess their antibody levels, this will enable us to establish whether they have been in contact with any of the pathogens mentioned above. If in the unfortunate situation of poor scanning results are caused by infectious disease, there is hope, vaccination is an option for enzootic abortion and toxoplasma.

Let's not forget about the rams. I'm sure many of you will be running multiple rams in the same batch of ewes, this will minimise the effects of a sub-fertile ram. However, we would still recommend to get them fertility tested prior to tupping season.

Establishing the reason for high barren rates is important for the future profitability of the farm. Funding is available for further investigation. To discuss your scanning results, contact us on 01978 311444 and speak to one of our vets.



Cryptosporidium vaccination

We have some exciting vaccine news! The UK's first vaccine to protect cattle against the parasite *Cryptosporidium parvum* has been approved for sale. *Cryptosporidium* is a protozoan disease that infects a range of mammals. In cattle, at peak shedding, billions of oocysts (infectious eggs) are excreted in the faeces for 7-10 days. Only 17 oocysts are needed to cause infection, so a single calf has huge potential to infect others.

Over the last four years, 33% of calf scour samples submitted to the APHA were found to have *Cryptosporidium* present. Infection causes severe damage to the lining of the intestines, resulting in reduced ability to absorb nutrients, water and salts. This leads to profuse watery diarrhoea, dehydration, weight loss, dullness and sometimes death in calves 1-4 weeks old.

Research has shown that the damage sustained in the small intestine never fully recovers and can even have a negative impact on a dairy heifer's milk yields throughout her life. This unique vaccine is administered to the dam in the third trimester of pregnancy and must be completed at least 3 weeks before calving, this enables plenty of time for antibodies to be produced and deposited in the colostrum. The protection of calves depends on adequate ingestion of colostrum and transition milk from vaccinated cows, and so, as discussed in last month's newsletter, colostrum management is vital for the vaccine to work.

Some of our farmers are routinely seeing issues with cryptosporidium and are using Halofuginone as treatment/prevention, could this new vaccine benefit your farm?



Smallholder Vaccine Day

Our first smallholder vaccine day is being planned for Thursday 16th January 2025. For anyone who is signed up to the smallholder club we will be ordering and distributing vaccine on this day on a shared basis, spreading the cost of the vaccine bottle between our members. To make sure you are eligible, please ensure that you are registered and signed up before 31st December 2024, and email keeley@dalesidevets.co.uk with how many animals you have to vaccinate.