



SHEEP NEWS

JANUARY 2013

NUTRITION IN PREGNANT EWES

With poor summer and Autumn weather in 2012, many Winter forages are of poor quality. This coupled with high feed prices means that we potentially have a large number of sheep being in a poorer nutritional status than you would like them to be in the run up to lambing.

In late pregnancy the nutritional demand increases rapidly due to the growth of lambs in the last few weeks leading up to lambing. In addition to this, feed intakes will also drop due to decreased space in the abdomen leading to poorer rumen fill. In extreme circumstances twin lamb disease can result but more likely are **poor lamb birth weights, higher prevalence of lamb death, and poor milk production.**

Blood sampling sheep 2-3 weeks before lambing can give a lot of information about the nutritional status of ewes and allows for ration alteration to take place. Although more accurate advice can be given if sheep are scanned, this is not a pre-requisite to blood sampling. Feed adjustments can result in more economic use of available concentrates.

It is not just the energy levels that are important; correct protein feeding in late pregnancy is also crucial and blood testing monitors both long term protein status and also the more immediate question of rumen degradable protein (RDP) which can be short in housed sheep due to straw or poor quality hay based diets. RDP has a significant effect on colostrum and milk production and therefore lamb health and growth rate. Bypass protein is also important and in some trials, increasing protein supplementation by 20% resulted in heavier lambs at birth, around 30% increase in milk production and almost 90% reduction in worm egg output.

Problems at lambing time attributable to poor nutrition in late pregnancy are very difficult to fix so we highly recommend blood sampling in order to try and prevent potential problems arising. Please contact Dawn, Wendy, Babs or Pippa at the surgery to discuss this further.

SCHMALLEMBERG

Samples taken from cattle across our area has revealed that Schmallenberg virus (SBV) has been with us for several months now. As this newsletter is being typed out, many of you will be scanning - please be mindful that there are other causes of poor scanning than just SBV and if you have any concerns then feel free to at least pick up the phone and have a chat with us.

The main issue with SBV appears to be deformed lambs so be careful with any difficult lambings as it may be that fused joints may make delivery difficult and potentially very traumatic for the ewe.

We are very interested in monitoring the impact of Schmallenberg so would be grateful if you could let us know of any problems you experience this year particularly. Please also remember that the experience from the south of England and the continent is that many units have had Schmallenberg virus go through their flocks/herds without recognising any problems at all, so there is no need to panic!

LAMBING COURSE

We will be running our one day course again this year, sometime in early February. The intention is to arrange a time and venue that is most suitable for as many of the participants as we can. Please can you contact the surgery to express your interest and we will contact you in due course to discuss time/venue.

LAMENESS

This year's wet summer has had a varying impact on lameness levels in sheep around the area, with some reporting much higher levels whilst others have seen very little. Where lameness has been an issue we have seen excellent responses to "Micotil" when other approaches have failed. This has confirmed the benefit of this drug in certain situations despite the initial cost (£2-£3 per ewe) and would encourage any of you with ongoing lameness issues to discuss your problems with us so that between us we may formulate a way forward.

One major factor in flock lameness has been the increasingly common feature of buying in problems with bought-in sheep. We strongly advise you to think about biosecurity issues when buying in replacements, ensuring you isolate them on arrival until you know they are healthy; examining their feet on arrival and footbathing as they come off the wagon is recommended.

FLUKE

We are seeing issues with fluke and will continue to do so as chronic infections have a greater impact particularly towards lambing. Signs of fluke do not just mean "bottle-jaw" but increased "twin-lamb", hypocalcaemia, poor colostrum/milk production and lambs with poor birth-weights etc. Feel free to discuss with us whether you need to treat your ewes and which drug is the correct one to use.

Finally, may we wish you a very happy and productive 2013!

CLEVEDALE VETERINARY PRACTICE

WHITBY 01947 825042
UPLEATHAM 01287 623802
STOKESLEY 01642 711298