

# Farm Animal Practice News

Spring  
2019



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**Langford Vets** 

 University of  
**BRISTOL**

# Welcome

**Langford Vets Farm Animal Practice welcomes you to the Spring newsletter**

**The lambing season is well underway, with some of you finishing up already. The weather so far this year has been somewhat different to last year with record temperatures in February, so be on the lookout for signs of worm burdens earlier this year.**

By now you should have received a letter announcing our prices are changing on 1st April. If you haven't received a letter, or have any questions please give us a call.

Sadly, Pete will be leaving us in May. He has been away on paternity leave and will be returning in April for a few weeks before he finishes. We wish him luck in his new ventures, and we have a new vet starting with us in the summer.



## Barren Ewe Checks

As lambing is coming to the end for so many of you it is important to reflect on the successes and setbacks you have encountered this season. If you had any empty ewes then now is the time to blood test them to screen for infectious diseases.

Toxoplasmosis is the main infectious cause of early embryo loss in sheep and a common cause of barrenness, abortion and weak lambs. It has been found that almost all flocks in the UK have been in contact with toxoplasma gondii, which causes toxoplasmosis. This means all breeding sheep can be considered 'at risk'.

For those of you who have not yet finished, it is important to remember that should any of your ewes abort you shouldn't just ignore it. You may find that next year you have a much bigger problem on your hands.

If you do find any aborted foetuses then we are able to carry out a full investigation, on site. Please remember to bring us the foetus and full placenta - without both we are unable to investigate fully.



## Betamox LA Withdrawal Changes

You may have read in the farming press that the withdrawal period is changing for Betamox LA. Following a request from the VMD, Norbrook the makers of Betamox LA are amending the withdrawal period in the UK to incorporate an additional 30% safety margin.

The new withdrawal period will come into place over the next six months. You have until August to use up your current stock, after then you must adhere to the new withdrawal periods, which are as follows:

### Cattle

Meat and offal: 28 days

Milk: 84 hours

### Pigs

Meat and offal: 19 days

### Sheep

Meat and offal: 19 days

Not for use in sheep producing milk for human consumption

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

## Immucol

The Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 requires each calf to consume bovine colostrum within the first six hours of life. In order to provide the calf with immunity to combat the common diseases they will face during their day-to-day lives they rely entirely on colostrum providing them with essential antibodies, energy and vitamins A and D. We all know the importance of ensuring newborns get adequate and sufficient colostrum but what if the dam doesn't have any?

Unfortunately, there are times when there is no colostrum available; it might be poor quality, the calf may not suckle, there might be insufficient quantity or perhaps none at all. The next best option is to use colostrum from another dam. However, if you don't have any available then you must look to using colostrum replacers. There are so many products available on the market but many will only contain energy and vitamins - not the essential antibodies that the calf requires.

The Immucol range is guaranteed EBL, IBR and Johne's free and is 100% natural colostrum. It is a complete replacement for maternal colostrum and is now available from the Farm Animal Practice.



## Watch Out at Turnout

Hypomagnesaemia or staggers occurs when the magnesium intake of the animal is exceeded by the output. This often occurs at turnout for a variety of reasons.

Lush, fast-growing grass has a low magnesium concentration so the animals are consuming less magnesium. The high moisture content of the grass means that it passes rapidly through the animal so there is less time for magnesium to be absorbed. Fertilisers containing potassium and nitrogen, often spread on the pasture prior to turnout, further prevent magnesium absorption in the rumen. Magnesium is lost via the faeces, urine and milk. This means that cows that produce a lot of milk (often cross-bred beef sucklers) are losing magnesium via an extra route. The calves on these cows often have low magnesium levels too as their only source is the cows milk.

Clinical signs seen are muscle twitching, unsteadiness on feet or even sudden death. Prevention is better than cure so magnesium supplementation is recommended for at risk animals. Magnesium boluses can be used to get cattle over the risk period of turnout by slowly releasing magnesium over a period of weeks. They are the best way to be certain that the animal has received sufficient magnesium. Other supplementation methods include magnesium salts in the water (if no other water source is available), dusted pasture, compound feeds or salt licks.



Dirty back ends in lambs is **not** normal - this could be a sign of worms (but could also be caused by lush grass or mineral deficiencies).



## Warning: the Worms are Still Alive

Due to warmer weather and fewer frosts this winter, many parasite larvae which are usually killed off by cold weather will have survived on pasture. This means that animals turned out to pasture are at risk of developing high worm burdens early in the season, and are at a much greater risk of clinical disease.

This is especially true for Nematodirus - mass hatching of infective larvae may occur much earlier than usual this year. 6-12 week old lambs are most vulnerable; severe, often life-threatening parasitic gastroenteritis (PGE) can occur. Keep an eye out on the SCOPS Nematodirus forecast to see the risk in your area.

### What can you do?

- Faecal Egg Count (FEC) ewes pre-lambing and lambs
- Selectively treat ewes shedding the most eggs - often these are the ewes under the most pressure in late pregnancy (lower body condition, younger ewes, and triplets). Leave **at least** 10-20% ewes in each grazing group untreated
- FEC ewes every 6 weeks whilst they are feeding the lambs (producing milk immuno-suppresses the sheep)
- FEC lambs from 6 weeks of age and then at 5-6 week intervals after that, earlier if there are any signs of poor growth or scour
- The faecal egg counts will also detect any coccidia
- Always make sure any treatment you give is effective
- Correct dose (check your dosing gun! Studies have shown there is massive variation between what a dosing gun may say, and what it is delivering)
- Correct animal weight - dose to the heaviest
- Level of resistance - if you suspect the product has not worked then you can perform a faecal egg count reduction test (FECRT) to test for resistance - this involves repeating FEC 2 weeks after worming (7 days for yellow drench - LV). Each test costs only £8.52!
- Product choice - discuss with your vet an appropriate product for your flock

### Appropriate pasture management

- Especially for the prevention of Nematodirus in lambs, avoid putting lambs on pasture that sheep were on the previous year.
- If your worm problem persists, speak to your vet as it may be worth investigating reasons for this such as trace element deficiency.

### How to take a good pooled faecal sample

- Gather sheep into a corner of a field and hold them there for 10 minutes
- Use a pair of disposable gloves to collect fresh (soft and ideally warm) faeces from different piles
- Collect the same amount of faeces from each pile (a couple of pellets from each pile, or about the size of a 50p coin)
- You must collect samples from at least 10% of the group
- Samples must be kept refrigerated in an airtight container or plastic bag, and delivered to the vets for analysis within 48 hours of collection.

# Salmonella: Spot it, Stop it

Salmonella can be devastating in cattle herds due to the potential scale and severity of an infection. It is also a risk to people and outbreaks can have serious public health implications. The signs of Salmonella infection are varied and not always obvious as they can be the same as those caused by many other diseases, so it is vital to contact the practice if you spot any of them, particularly: diarrhoea, pneumonia, abortion, milk drop, blood poisoning, joint infections and death.

They may affect any age, from young calves to adults so keep Salmonella in mind when you spot signs in all age groups.

## Diagnostic testing

Depending on the signs of disease shown, different samples may be taken and sent to the laboratory to get an idea if Salmonella is circulating on your farm and if it is responsible for the clinical signs you are seeing. Salmonella may be diagnosed via bulk milk testing, blood samples, tissue, faeces and post mortems. Analysis of aborted material is also very valuable.

## Biosecurity

Salmonella bacteria are easy to introduce to the herd and difficult to eradicate. They are shed in faeces with times of stress, such as calving and transport; triggering a spread of infection from carrier animals. Salmonella can be introduced to a farm by replacement stock, birds or rodents, feedstuffs or watercourses, muck or slurry, and even on clothing or vehicles. Checking the health status of source farms when buying in stock is critical. Biosecurity should always be considered, including quarantining new or high risk animals.

Prevention is much more effective than an attempted cure with Salmonella, therefore vaccination is an important part of an overall herd management programme. Ask us what's best for your herd. Getting started with vaccination is simple with a 2 dose primary course, followed by a single dose annual booster; essential to maintain continuous protection. Salmonella is not going away any time soon, but the good news is that you can take many steps to reduce the risks of disease outbreaks. Contact the practice to make sure you have the right plan in place to protect your stock, your farm workers and yourself.



## Farm Animal Practice Opening Hours

Mon - Fri 8.30am - 5pm

## Telephone:

01934 852 650

24 hour emergency cover

# Fly Control

Blowfly strike is a major welfare concern and an important cause of ill thrift and death in affected animals.

## Control methods

- Chemical pour ons
- Plunge dips
- Farm management

Graze on exposed and unsheltered pastures where cross winds deter flies  
Dagging / crutching - start in April and repeat every 4-6 weeks  
Shearing  
Control GI parasites and scours  
Nutrition - access to dry forage if on rich spring pastures  
Control of mites / skin diseases and infected cuts  
Control of footrot - the smell is very attractive to flies  
Do not overstock  
Ensure well drained fields  
Keep dung heaps away from stock  
Monitoring to ensure chemical preventatives are applied at the right time  
Fly traps can also be used to reduce fly populations  
Tail docking is often cited as necessary to reduce risk of fly strike, however, the ability to shake an undocked tail may deter flies from landing. It is the amount of soiling around the tail and the length of wool, not necessarily the length of the tail.

**Sheep require daily inspection for flystrike during high risk periods**

# Farmers Meeting

Weds 1st May - 7pm - Langford Vets

With lambing coming to an end it is time to reflect on the successes and pitfalls from this season. If you had any abortions this year then it is important not to ignore them - you could find yourself with a much bigger issue next year! This meeting will cover when and who to vaccinate as well as other preventative measures you can take.

Another important issue with our flocks is lameness. It is one of the biggest health and welfare problems facing UK sheep farmers. Lameness can cause visible pain, reduced performance and costs the sheep industry millions of pounds. During this meeting we will tackle lameness in your flock, with an emphasis placed on prevention.

This event is kindly sponsored by MSD.

Book online: [langfordvets.co.uk/farm/animal/practice](http://langfordvets.co.uk/farm/animal/practice)

Email us: [farmpractice@langfordvets.co.uk](mailto:farmpractice@langfordvets.co.uk)

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