MARCHES VETS
FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER – MAY 2016

Scald in lambs

Scald is an infectious disease caused by the same bacteria, *Dichelobacter nodosus,* that causes footrot. So, if you leave scald untreated, it is likely to develop into footrot, with underrunning of the hoof. Also, if you don't treat infected sheep promptly, they will spread the infection to other sheep. Treating lame sheep promptly is a vital part of lameness control – otherwise 2 lame sheep will quickly become 20 lame sheep.

How should you treat scald? If it is only scald ie. there's no under-running of the hoof wall, topical treatment with an antibiotic spray or footbathing will generally be effective. For the footbath, a simple walk-through formalin footbath is effective, but only use formalin if in a well ventilated area. The footbath solution should be a maximum of 3% formalin. You need to know how much water is in the bath and to measure the formalin. And the same applies when replenishing the bath – measure the water and the formalin. If possible, the sheep should run through a wash bath before the formalin – this cleans the sheep's feet and avoids the person pushing the sheep through getting splashed with formalin. An alternative to formalin is Digicur.

If sheep are severely lame, check their feet. Don't trim them, but if there is any under-running of the hoof sole or wall, treat them with injectable antibiotics.

If you are struggling to manage a lameness problem in your flock, we will almost certainly be able to help. We will need to visit to assess what infections are present and how bad the problem is, and there's a question! What constitutes a lameness problem? Is it ok to say, 'if you have sheep, you'll have lame sheep!' Not really. Aside from short-term outbreaks of scald, an acceptable level of lameness is considered to be 2%. This means that on any one day, less than 2 % of the flock should be lame.

Grazing topics

With margins so tight, it's more important than ever to maximise animal performance at grass. This will involve optimising grass growth and utilisation, but also consideration of parasite burdens and minimising worm challenge to susceptible stock. This aspect is becoming much more important as resistance in sheep worms is now so common and widespread. In a project on sheep farms in Wales last year, only 1 of 47 farms did not have wormer resistance.

We are holding an on-farm meeting on Thursday 2nd June, when Charlie Morgan, a grassland specialist will give a practical demonstration of how to assess your grassland and advice on the best ways to improve and manage it. And Harriet will discuss targeted parasite control through grazing management and monitoring animal performance.

Worm larvae in a drop of moisture hanging from a blade of grass

We have yet to confirm the venue for the meeting but are planning on a late afternoon start.

Worm Egg Counts
It's worth starting to have worm egg counts done on lambs – especially twin lambs that have been grazing ground that had ewes and lambs on it last year. The best way to submit the samples is as 10 (or more) individual samples per group of lambs. The samples must be from lambs only – the result will be meaningless if there's a mixture of ewe and lambs samples.

Liver Fluke only rarely causes a problem at this time of year. However, if you know that you have liver fluke on your farm, and you generally treat your stock in the winter, it's a good idea to check that the treatment has been fully effective. If it hasn't, stock could be passing out fluke eggs that will maintain infection on the farm. Some studies have shown that if you can stop animals from shedding fluke eggs, it can be possible to eliminate fluke infection from a farm. Furthermore, if animals are carrying liver fluke, this will be adversely affecting their performance.

Flies
On most farms, both sheep and cattle will need treating now to reduce the risk of disease caused by flies. For the control of flystrike in sheep, there are three classes of products:

- insect growth regulators (IGRs) eg. Clik or Clikzin
- synthetic pyrethroids (SPs) eg. Crovect or Dysect
- organophosphates (OPs) eg. Osmonds Gold Fleece or Ectoforce plunge dips

The IGRs are the preferred products because they are less damaging to the environment and to people applying them, but they are only preventive and do not treat flystrike.
The control of nuisance flies in cattle is important as flies can spread eye infections and mastitis. Only synthetic pyrethroid products (SPs) eg. Flypor or Swish are licensed for cattle.
With both sheep and cattle, prevention works better if the animals are treated early in the season, before fly numbers have built up. So, with the warmer weather forecast, this means treating now.

Bull fertility testing
If you've bought a new bull this season, we'd recommend that you have him tested. Also, any bulls where there may be any cause for concern eg too many barren cows last year, or the bull has been unwell or lost condition. Check your bulls now so that you can sort out any problems (eg overgrown feet) well before they are put with the cows. Make sure the testicles are of roughly even size and don't have any hard lumps. If you have any doubts, it's best to the have the bull checked over.

Synchronised AI
Using AI gives you access to superior genetics compared to using your own bull. AI to a natural heat generally achieves the best results, but isn't very practical when cows are at grass. Synchronising heat for fixed time AI is a good compromise, providing your cows or heifers are easy to handle and you have adequate handling facilities.

Are your cows due **BVD** and/or **leptospirosis** booster vaccinations? With BVD, there is now a live vaccine, Bovela, that only requires a single dose as a primary course. This makes it easier to get heifers onto the system.

Other timely considerations:

- **Ovivac P Plus** – lambs need 2 doses 4 weeks apart from 3 weeks of age

- **Clostridial vaccinations for young cattle** – Bravoxin 10 or Covexin 8, two doses four weeks apart to protect against Blackleg and other clostridial diseases