

THREE RIVERS VETERINARY GROUP

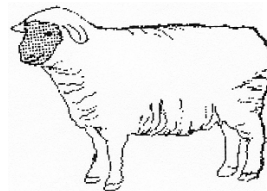
FARM ANIMAL PRACTICE

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SHEEP PRACTICE.

WINTER 2011 NEWSLETTER.



Happy New Year from everyone at Three Rivers Veterinary Group

FAI Assesses New Sheep Lameness Reduction Protocol.

A new management protocol designed to provide sheep producers with a long-term solution to flock footrot problems is being evaluated on three UK farms by FAI Farms.

The practical protocol – which has proved extremely effective in reducing the costs of lameness on a farm in Sussex and involves culling, vaccination, footbathing and early treatment of clinical cases – is now being assessed more widely, thanks to research funding from Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health.

FAI Farms consultant vet Ruth Clements pointed out that lameness is a huge financial and welfare burden on the UK sheep industry. “Quite apart from the negative financial and welfare aspects of sheep lameness, seeing lame sheep in fields year after year is a demoralising sight for farmers. Even when good control measures have been attempted, lameness can still persist – causing chronically high costs in terms of time, labour and medicines. However, if footrot is the cause of your problem – and on many farms very often it is – it can be controlled if you tackle it on a whole flock basis,” she said.

FAI Farms undertakes farm-scale development projects to improve animal welfare within commercial farming systems. Findings are disseminated to UK producers and further afield through the European Farmers Network – an EU-wide group of farmers who demonstrate excellence and innovation. If successful on its own farm at Wytham near Oxford and on two other trial sites in Wales and Northumberland, Ruth Clements hopes the

new protocol will be taken up more widely by UK sheep producers.

Provided farmers take a long-term, combined approach to this problem there’s no reason why significant improvements and cost savings cannot be made,” she said.

The three farms involved in the study have now started on the sheep lameness reduction protocol and the initial 5-point schedule, in simplified outline, is as follows:

1. Cull any badly or repeatedly affected animals.
2. Vaccinate.
3. Quarantine incoming animals.
4. Treat clinical cases early.
5. Take care not to propagate infection at gathering.

FAI Farms will be monitoring the results over the next three years and reporting periodically on the findings in more detail.

Subsidised Diagnostic Service for Barren Ewes.

Farmers running a flock with a barren rate greater than 2% can now ask for a subsidised flock blood test to establish whether the cause of the problem is toxoplasmosis.

Barren EweCheck – the diagnostic scheme supported by Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health – is available from vets from 1st December 2010 until 31st March 2011. Producers concerned about empty or aborting ewes should contact us as soon as possible.

Toxoplasmosis is the main infectious cause of early embryo loss in sheep and a very common cause of barrenness, abortion and weak lambs born alive. Data from the 2009 Barren EweCheck scheme showed that 69% of the

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* ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS CERTIFICATE HOLDER IN CATTLE HEALTH AND PRODUCTION

flocks tested had been exposed to the toxoplasma parasite.

The other main cause of abortion (more often stillborn or weak lambs) is *Chlamydomphila abortus* (**Enzootic Abortion** or EAE). A recent study of the costs of Enzootic Abortion in lowland sheep flocks, estimates that, over a five year period, losses due to abortion and the birth of weak and sickly lambs that die soon after birth can reach £5,000 for every 100 ewes infected.

Fortunately there are vaccines available for both Toxoplasmosis and Enzootic Abortion.

Fluid therapy in lambs.

On average 15% of the lambs born in the UK die within 7 days.

Indoor lambs are more at risk from poor hygiene, inadequate colostrum and unnecessary lambing assistance. Outdoor lambs are more at risk of exposure and predation. The importance of clean lambing pens, dipping navels and not overly interfering with lambing is well known. Likewise everyone, but everyone, knows lambs need to get colostrum as soon as possible.

Nethertheless **five percent** of the lambs born in the UK die from watery mouth every year. Watery mouth is caused by the bacteria *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), which is present in sheep's faeces and builds up in lambing pens. Lambs which have not had an adequate intake of colostrum are especially susceptible. We recommend using **Spectam Scourhalt**, an oral antimicrobial that helps prevent the disease with one simple squirt of medication into each lamb as soon as they are born. **Spectam Scourhalt** has been proven to be as effective as colostrum in preventing *E.coli*.

Souring lambs...

1. **Spectam Scourhalt** is used to treat the bacterial infection.
2. **Rehydion gel formula plus** improves recovery by replacing lost electrolytes and rehydrating the lamb.

Unusually scouring lambs have traditionally not been treated with electrolytes. In all other species electrolyte treatment is regarded as essential to improving survival rates. One reason may be that the older types of electrolyte prevented milk clot formation in the stomach which is essential for milk digestion.

Rehydion gel does not affect milk clot formation in the stomach and therefore does

not affect digestion. Lambs can therefore be kept on milk without making the scour worse.

Mix 2ml in 100ml of milk and feed in a bottle or give 2ml neat (or in a little water) 2 or 3 times daily and leave the lamb to suck from the ewe. The gel is palatable and becomes liquid on shaking (or warming).

Warm them up.....

What are you doing with weak lambs? Hopefully getting some colostrum or milk into them and warming them up. The normal temperature of a lamb should be 39.2-40°C. If lambs can suck they should be put on the teat or given a bottle, otherwise they need stomach tubing. Be careful you do not give too much milk, 50ml per Kg body weight is recommended 4-5 times a day if necessary. For an average lamb this is about 120ml at a time.

Treating Twin Lamb Disease.

We have had by far the best results treating twin lamb disease when we have used **Liquid Life Aid**.

Liquid Life Aid comes in a 1 litre bottle with a dispensing measure.

In cases of pregnancy toxemia 160 ml of undiluted product should be administered using a suitable drenching bottle (a Norbrook 60ml Cattle Pour-on gun is quite useful) Treatment should be repeated 3-6 times daily as required.

Boost 'n' Go.

Boost 'n' Go® is an energy supplement high in glucose and caffeine to help newborn lambs suck their dam's colostrum and thereby acquire life-saving protection against the disease challenges on the farm.

Boost 'n' Go® stimulates weak newborn lambs to suck the colostrum from the udder as soon as possible after birth:

- Fast-acting energy.
- Caffeine tonic effect.
- Palatable oral paste with dial a dose.
- Ready and simple to use (no mixing required).
- Easy to handle with no waste.
- Effect quick and visual.

Boost 'n' Go, Rehydion, Spectam Scourhalt and Liquid Life Aid are all available from the surgery.