

February 2011

Too Many Barren Ewes?

If more than 2% of your flock of ewes is barren, we can offer a subsidised flock blood test to establish whether the cause of the problem is Toxoplasmosis.

Barren Ewe Check, supported by Intervet-Schering Plough, is available from now until the 31st March 2011. This scheme pays for the laboratory testing, the farmer paying for the vet visit and time taken to blood test 6-8 barren/aborted ewes.

Toxoplasmosis is the main infectious cause of early embryonic loss in sheep and a common cause of barrenness, abortion and weak lambs born alive. Data from the 2010 Barren Ewe check showed 86% of flocks tested had been exposed to the Toxoplasma parasite.

Toxoplasmosis is an environmental contaminant spread by infected cats. A single cat dropping can contain enough eggs to infect more than 100 ewes! Toxoplasma infection can be controlled effectively by a vaccination regime.

Is Sheep Abortion a problem?

If you have had more than two abortions in one week or a flock rate of more than 2%, then you should take steps to identify the cause. Many of the infectious agents are also capable of causing the birth of small, weak non-viable lambs.



The best way to reach a diagnosis is to take fresh, whole aborted lambs and placentas to the local veterinary laboratory. Please contact the surgery first, in order that the necessary arrangements can be made.

Dealing with aborted ewes:

- Assume all abortions are infectious and could spread disease to ewes and people.
- Isolate all aborted ewes until any discharge has stopped and give an antibiotic injection, as they are at a higher risk of developing a uterine infection.
- Carefully dispose of lambs, placentas and dirty bedding and disinfect the area where abortion occurred.
- Mark aborted ewes in case they need to be blood tested at a later date.
- Do not foster lambs onto aborted ewes. If Enzootic abortion caused the abortion then fostered ewe lambs can become infected.
- Many abortion causing diseases (EAE, toxoplasmosis, listeriosis, campylobacter and salmonella) are zoonotic and can cause serious illness in people.
- Pregnant women should avoid contact with sheep at lambing time, including handling dirty overalls and equipment.
- Always wear gloves when lambing ewes and wash hands thoroughly before eating, drinking or smoking!

Pneumonia a problem this winter!



It has been a troublesome winter for respiratory disease with many outbreaks requiring large numbers of cattle to be treated.

Early Detection is Essential!

A large group of at-risk store cattle were each fitted with an intra ruminal bolus containing a temperature sensor.

Cattle recorded high temperatures for an average of 48 hours *before* being identified as suffering from pneumonia and treated by the farmer.

60% of untreated cattle had lung lesions at slaughter.

Consider whole group treatment - A Case Study



Pneumonia started in a group of 167 finishing beef cattle.

The cattle were divided into 3 groups:

Group 1 (13 animals) - All clinically affected were treated with Zactran and an anti-inflammatory.

Group2 (62 animals) - Preventative treatment with Zactran.

Group 3 (92 animals) - Monitored and treated if developed clinical disease as per group 1.

Results:

Group 1 - No relapses following treatment.

Group2 - No cattle developed pneumonia.

Group3 - 26 cases of pneumonia requiring treatment(28% of group). No relapses following treatment.

Remember, recovered cases can also be blood tested to check for serological evidence of viral causes. This can then form the basis of a preventative vaccination plan for future years.

There are some schemes available to make the cost of this testing more attractive. Please ask for details.