

December 2011

## Feeding the Pregnant Ewe

An article by our own Alex Sindrey

Better feeding of ewes in late pregnancy has two benefits:

- Increases birth weights and colostrum quality thus reducing lamb mortality
- Reduces ewe deaths through improved immunity

The type of protein provided is important! Crude protein (CP) tells us nothing about the quality of the protein – what is needed is the Digestible Undegradable Protein (DUP). DUP is the protein that can be used by the animal. Feeding the wrong type of protein is not only ineffective but actually uses up the equivalent of 150g of barley per day, as the ewe must use energy to get rid of this waste protein.

Soya bean meal and specialist products with protected proteins have more DUP. As a general rule of thumb it is best to supplement 100g of soya/day for each lamb carried for the last 3-4 weeks of pregnancy. This has reduced worm burdens, reducing the need for wormers, and by continuing with 100g of DUP extra during lactation, increased lamb weight gain by 20%.

At a cost of about £4 a head, farmers will get a potential return of £10-£12

For maximum feed efficiencies feed high quality silage or grass throughout pregnancy. If you have silage with metabolisable energy (ME) of 11 MJ, and CP of 14-15%, you do not need to feed any extra energy just supplement DUP.

Make sure that the silage is readily available, allowing enough trough space, and sort twin and triplet groups before 4 weeks prior to lambing

Remember it is very important to:

- Have your silage analysed for ME, protein and trace elements – to formulate the correct ration.
- Body condition score – to help target feeding



### Forthcoming Feeding and Breeding Meeting for Sheep

We are holding a meeting on behalf of our sheep clients on **Thursday December 15<sup>th</sup>** starting with **PIE & CHIPS** from 12.30pm, meeting starting at 1.30pm at the **Bank House Hotel, Uttoxeter**.

The meeting will be run by **Dr John Vipond a Sheep Specialist at the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC)**, who has a particular interest in Sheep nutrition. The meeting will cover “Feeding and Breeding Efficient Sheep” with particular attention to feeding the pregnant ewe, as well as an overview of practical rations and feeding to reduce lamb losses.

If you would like to attend please book with the Farm Office - 01889 567200.

### Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme ( FFIS)

FFIS is part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and is a scheme of support, developed to help farming, forestry and horticultural businesses in England to become more efficient at using resources.

Funding is available for Animal Health and Welfare projects which bring about significant improvements in farm animal health and welfare. There are many items which can be applied for once they have been identified as a priority in a farm health plan prepared by your vet.

Eligible items include sheep weigh crates, upgrade of cattle crush, cluster flushing systems, heat detection systems and milk pasteurisers for example.

The first round of applications runs from 16<sup>th</sup> November to 17<sup>th</sup> January 2012 and the grant rate is up to 40% in non upland areas with a minimum grant per application of £2,500 and maximum of £25,000.

For more information contact your local DEFRA RDPE delivery team.

### Testing for Liver Fluke.

Liver fluke is becoming an increasing common problem in UK dairy herds.

November, December and January are the ideal months to test for the presence of liver fluke in your dairy herd. This can be done with a bulk milk sample.

Liver fluke in dairy cattle causes body condition loss, reduced milk yield and milk quality and in severe cases anaemia and oedema seen as “bottle jaw”.

If liver fluke is detected then dairy cows need to be treated during their dry period as all flukicides have a milk withdrawal.

