

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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.

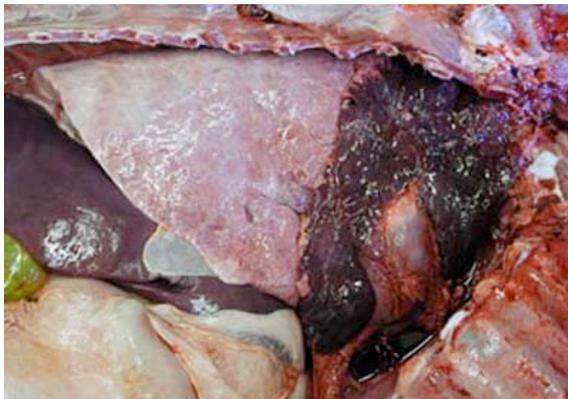


The best way to reach a diagnosis is to take fresh, whole aborted lambs and placentas to the local veterinary laboratory. Please contact the surgery first, in order that the necessary arrangements can be made.

### 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.